

**Constructions of the Environment in Nepal:
Environmental Discourses on Air and on the Ground**

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Abstract

While analyses of media constructions of the environment are proliferating, there has been very limited research conducted on environmental media communication in Nepal. This research aims to explore mass mediated and local constructions of the environment in Nepal so as to compare constructions of the environment both in the media and in local contexts.

Media analysis focused on episodes of the *Batabaran Dabali* programme in Radio Sagarmatha (broadcast from May 2009 - April 2010), while local constructions were accessed via eight focus group discussions held with 80 participants in Nepal. Analysis employed both content and discourse analytic approaches, although precedence was given to the discourse analysis as the study is mainly focused on exploring contested constructions of the environment. The content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* identified climate change as the most newsworthy story. The analysis indicated that the programme supported many news values despite being a predominantly non-news programme. Discourse analysis revealed that the construction of the environment is contested among members of a variety of public spheres which are not unified. In the media, the environment was characterised as complex, linked to constitutional, political, legal, economic and cultural systems. In local contexts, the environment was also framed in multiple ways: as something concrete which can be experienced in daily lives, and also as complex and relating to environmental science.

The study clearly showed that elite experts used the media as a discursive terrain while marginalising the contribution of other publics to the construction of environmental agendas in Nepal. Thus, the study not only raises a concern regarding the elitist nature of environmental media discourses but also questions the possibility of the enhancement of environmental communication in Nepal if the same top down approach of communication continues.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Objectives of the study	6
1.2 Overview of the Chapters	6
Chapter 2 The Media Landscape in Nepal.....	10
2.1 Historical Development of the Media in Nepal	10
2.2 The State of the Media in Nepal.....	16
2.3 Major Publication Houses and Media Owners.....	22
2.4 Media and Environmental Communication in Nepal.....	25
Summary.....	27
Chapter 3 Public Sphere Theory, News Values and the Agenda-setting Role of the Media.....	29
3.1 The Public Sphere	29
3.2 News Values.....	43
3.3 Agenda-setting	57
Chapter 4 Media, Environment and Science Communication.....	63
4.1 Media and the Environment	64
4.2 Science Communication.....	76
Chapter 5 Methodology.....	83
5.1 Media Discourse.....	84
5.2 Focus Group Discussions	88
5.3 Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent.....	100
5.4 Data Management, Coding and Translation.....	101
5.5 Analysing the Data: Discourse and Content Analysis	105
Summary.....	112
Chapter 6 The Representation of the Environment in <i>Batabaran Dabali</i>	114
6.1 Source Contexts.....	114
6.2 Environmental Discourse and Primary Definers of the Environment.....	116
6.3 Newsworthy Topics and News Values.....	120
6.4 Environmental Problems or Risks Type Mentioned	128
Summary.....	130
Chapter 7 Local to Global Challenges: Competing Constructions of the Environment and Climate Change in <i>Batabaran Dabali</i>	133
7.1 The Contested Terrain of the Environment in <i>Batabaran Dabali</i>	133
7.2 Climate Change: the Dominant Environmental Discourse in <i>Batabaran Dabali</i>	148
Summary.....	164

Chapter 8 Power, Knowledge and Citizens: Constructing a Triangular Relationship with the Environment in <i>Batabaran Dabali</i>	167
8.1 Competing Constructions of the Government and Citizens	167
8.2 The Discourse of Co-responsibility	175
8.3 Framing Public Knowledge	178
Chapter 9 Locally Contextualised Representations of the Environment	185
9.1 A Construction of the Environment and Environmental Problems	185
9.2 State vs. Citizens: A Representation of a Conflictual Relationship	200
9.3 Self Reflexivity and the Environmental Citizenship	206
Summary	212
Chapter 10 The Environment, Communication and Multiple Public Spheres..	213
10.1 Focus Group Participants and their Media Use	213
10.2 Local Construction of the Role of the Media	216
10.3 The Framing of Environmental Media Coverage	226
10.4 Media Coverage of Climate Change	234
Summary	237
Chapter 11 Conclusions	238
11.1 Newsworthiness, Agenda-setting and Media Framing of the Environment	240
11.2 Multiple Constructions of the Environment	243
11.3 Environmental Media Communication	253
11.4 Citizenship, Political Power and Responsibility	254
11.5 <i>Batabaran Dabali</i> : Part of the Elite Public Sphere?	256
11.6 Recommendations	260
Postscript	264
References	266
Appendices	283
Appendix 1: Content Analysis Coding Schedule	284
Appendix 2: Topic Guide	287
Appendix 3: Invitation Letter to Expert Groups	292
Appendix 4: Information Sheet for Expert Participants	293
Appendix 5: Invitation Letter to City Groups	294
Appendix 6: Information Sheet for City Professionals	295
Appendix 7: Questionnaire for City and Expert Groups	296

List of Tables

Table 5.1 VDC (Village Development Committee) Level Data of the Districts.....	90
Table 5.2 Details of the Focus Groups	97
Table 6.1 Time Distribution of the Programmes	115
Table 6.2 Organisational Affiliations of the Interviewees.....	116
Table 6.3 Programmes Supporting to News Values	123
Table 6.4 Quoted Actors and Quoted Sources.....	127

List of Figures

Figure 5.1 Nepal Boundaries and Municipalities.....	91
Figure 6.1 Dominant Headline Themes.....	121
Figure 6.2 Environmental Problems or Risks Type Mentioned.....	129

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis explores how the environment is constructed in the media and in local contexts and explicates the role of the media in environmental communication in Nepal. As there has been very limited research conducted on environmental communication through the media in Nepal, my research will help to understand how the Nepalese media construct the environment and develop meaning among audiences, both those with easy media access and those with more restricted access.

In terms of information about the environment, “[m]uch, maybe most, of what we learn and know about ‘the environment’, we know from the media, broadly defined” (Hansen, 2011: 8). However, information about the environment provided to us is without a doubt selective in nature, since the information goes through selection criteria i.e. “through the application of news values, and the various organizational and occupational constraints that govern the news making process” (Anderson, 1997: 72). In addition, the “values” of media practitioners and sources also play an important role in mediating the environmental coverage in the media (Anderson, 1997). In this regard, the media play a key role in the construction of environmental meaning as “mass media constitute a key public arena” in successful claims-making and framing the environment as a social problem (Hansen, 2010: 39). It is therefore important to explore how the environment is constructed in the media and understand how such environmental communication through the media is received in multi-mediated contexts.

According to Cox (2006: 12), environmental communication is a “symbolic medium that we use in constructing environmental problems and negotiating society’s different responses to them”. He points out that environmental communication works both as a “pragmatic and constitutive vehicle” and as such is a form of “symbolic action” (Cox, 2006: 12). In this view, the constitutive function of environmental communication “helps to constitute, or compose, representations of nature and environmental problems themselves as subjects for our

understanding” (Cox, 2006: 12). Similarly, pragmatic function of environmental communication helps to educate, alert, persuade, mobilise people and thus potentially contribute to addressing environmental problems. Cox explains that the two functions of environmental communication are interlinked as the constitutive function of environmental communication can be powerful enough to invite “pragmatic communication”. Therefore environmental media, with its constitutive function, is an influential sphere of representation. As Cox (2006: 28) explains,

“News media act not only as voices in their coverage of issues and events but as conduits for other voices that seek to influence public attitudes. These voices range from scientists and corporations to radical environmentalists. The news media also are a constitutive force through their *agenda-setting*¹ role.”

Thus, media provides its own voice combined with other influential voices of scientists, environmentalists or corporations, making it powerful in defining social reality (Cox, 2006). However, most of the communication that we receive from the media is mediated, because the media do not just transmit what is available as news or information; rather, media products come to the publics after being selected, structured and shaped into a piece of meaning (Hall, 1982).

In fact, as noted earlier, the media play “an active role in the construction, inflection, and framing of both issues and claims-makers” (Hansen, 2010: 39) while going through the organisational procedure of de/selection mechanisms in choosing what to report. It is therefore essential to understand what makes news in the media and who determines the newsworthy characteristics of environmental issues. In the same way, it is crucial to understand what role sources play in terms of meaning construction. Study of environmental media coverage is therefore essential to understand how the media develop discourses and construct meaning in the public arena. Media representations of the environment and the public understanding of environmental problems are clearly inter-related, and thus alongside scrutiny of media context is a need for investigation of the local constructions of actors in particular cultural, economic and social contexts. Anderson (1997: 201) argues that while the media play a significant role, “local knowledge, everyday experience and

¹ “The alleged ability of media to affect the public’s perception of the salience or importance of issues; in other words, news reporting may not succeed in telling people what to think, but succeeds in telling them what to think about” (Cox, 2006: 30).

cultural values” also play important roles in making sense of media texts. In this view, it is essential to understand how environmental knowledge is shaped both by the media in a complex socio-cultural context and also by local knowledge in local contexts. Indeed, there are competing constructions of the environment, not least in a country like Nepal, where media coverage is not nearly as saturated as in many western countries.

According to Hansen (1991: 443), most media research on environmental issues follows a similar path to that of media and communication research, which explores how media coverage influences “public opinion” or “political decision making”. However, in such research programmes both the “dynamic interaction of these different fora of meaning production” and a wider socio-cultural context are rarely given due consideration (Hansen, 1991: 443). In addition, there is also a greater likelihood of media influence if individuals possess “little direct experience or knowledge of a given issue” or a social problem (Anderson, 1997: 202). Consequently, it is important to understand the ways in which the media collect and contextualise environmental reports and exactly how this shapes public perceptions - and indeed, whether these “public” perceptions are actually “public”. In other words, it is equally important to compare these constructions with unmediated representations circulating in local contexts.

The history of the media in Nepal is said to begin in the 1950s, after the end of the Rana regime (see Chapter 2). However, environmental coverage was not given due consideration in the media until the formation of the NEFEJ (Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists) in 1986. Since then, the field of environmental journalism has been growing in Nepal (albeit in a limited way) and various government and non-government organisations are beginning to focus on environmental media communication through radio, television, newspapers and online. NEFEJ (with a membership of most of the journalists working in the environmental sector in Nepal) is at the forefront of developing environment programmes and reporting in the media. It has also carried out some studies of the media coverage of the environment in Nepal. While useful, these are limited to media coverage surveys (see Gajurel, 1994; 1995; 2004). Similarly, there have been some studies by environmental organisations such as WWF Nepal and UNDP-led

Western Terai Landscape Complex Project (WTLCP) which focus mainly on analysis of media coverage in project areas of these respective organisations (see Sigdel, 2007a; Sigdel, 2007b). While environmental communication in the Nepalese media continues, to date no in-depth study has been made of environmental media discourse in the country. As far as I am aware, neither has there been any research on constructions of the environment at the local context. This study is unique in both regards and should provide a basis for future studies in the constructions of the environment in the media and on the ground.

For this study, I selected the *Batabaran Dabali* programme aired by Radio Sagarmatha for the analysis of media texts, as it has a special position in the environmental communication sector in Nepal. The programme, which has broadcast for almost one and a half decades by NEFEJ, is the longest running environmental programme in Nepal. Thus, it could be said that the programme carries the history of environmental media communication in Nepal and it provided a useful platform to understand the representation of the environment in Nepalese media. In order to compare and contrast media construction with local representations, 80 participants from rural, city and expert groups (from a wide variety of audiences in terms of location, experience and knowledge about the environment in different contexts) were recorded in discussion groups. These provided the data for analysing local constructions of the environment in Nepal.

In this research, a conceptual framework was used comprising: public sphere theory, news values, the agenda-setting role of the media, media and social construction of the environment, science communication and public understanding of environmental issues. These were chosen for the following reasons:

Firstly, the public sphere is a useful conception for comparing the media and local constructions, and for exploring citizen participation, inclusion and exclusion. The concept was useful in finding out how the universal characteristic of the public sphere idealised by Habermas is challenged by the multiplicity of the publics. It was also useful in finding out how the media acts as part of the elite public sphere by excluding women and marginalised groups of people. Secondly, an understanding of news values in this research was useful in exploring how the news

criteria of environmental issues are evaluated. The study aimed to identify significant issues and agendas in the media and to see whether news values apply in a predominantly non-news programme. It also aimed to analyse influential factors in the de/selection of environmental topics.

Thirdly, the concept of agenda-setting provided an understanding of how such a programme sets its agenda in a public domain. An integration of theoretical frameworks of public sphere, news values and agenda-setting in this research not only helped in understanding how messages in *Batabaran Dabali* are developed, mediated and distributed but also provided an overview of how this is received and re-constructed by audiences.

Finally, the conceptual framework comprising of the media and social construction of the environment, science communication and public understanding of environmental issues aided in understanding the highly complex nature of constructions of the social issues in the media as well as in the local contexts. The theoretical understandings applied in this thesis were useful not only in identifying how the media and local representations were interlinked, but also of use in understanding constructions of publics, governance and civic responsibilities, in order to explain the relationship between state and citizens.

With this theoretical guidance, the thesis will show how the meaning of the environment is constructed differently both in the media and in local contexts in Nepal. It will explicate how the construction of the environment often oscillates between two opposite spheres i.e. power and powerlessness; active and passive citizens; abstract and concrete issues; lay and expert knowledge; urban and rural residents; local and global issues; and the problems of developed and developing nations. Furthermore, it will illustrate how news values are considered important even in non-news programme. The analysis will also show how *Batabaran Dabali*, a programme aired in community radio station, acts as part of the elite public sphere by privileging expert discourses and overshadowing other competing publics in constructing the environment.

In this study, content and discourse analysis of media coverage of the environment was complemented by discourse analysis of data derived from a series of focus groups exploring public reception of media messages and local constructions of environmental issues. No previous studies of environmental media coverage in Nepal have adopted the discourse analysis method, so this study also constitutes an entirely new methodological approach in research on the Nepalese environmental media.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the thesis are as follows:

First, this research examines the environmental agendas and issues given significance/prominence in the Nepalese media and explores the news sources and source contexts so as to investigate the media representations of environmental stories.

Second, with an aim to understand how the environmental stories are mediated, the study seeks to identify how discourse is used in constructing social reality about the environment. The study also explores the constructions of publics, governance and also civic responsibilities embedded in environmental discourses.

Third, in order to compare and contrast the construction of the environment among different groups of people, the study also seeks to understand the nature of the interface between the construction of the environment in elite urban and more rural settings. Finally, the study explores how lay and expert groups receive environmental media coverage and investigates the role of the media in environmental communication in Nepalese contexts.

1.2 Overview of the Chapters

This thesis is formed of eleven chapters including the first introductory chapter. Chapter 2 of my thesis explores the historical development of the media landscape in Nepal. As it is not possible to understand how environmental communication takes place in Nepal without analysing the situation of the media in the country, it is essential to provide a general overview of the media. The historical development

is explained in terms of different political phases as these have had a profound effect upon the media. It reflects media communication with respect to different media genres and examines the major publication houses and media owners in Nepal. The chapter also provides a brief overview of environmental communication in Nepalese media landscape.

Chapter 3 examines the forces of inclusion, selection and exclusion in media representations. It extensively discusses theories of the “Public Sphere”, “News Values” and “Agenda-setting” and their relevance and use in media communication. The first section discusses the theory of the public sphere in terms of its origin, critical review and theoretical difficulties and explores the significance of understanding the public sphere in analysing media. This can elucidate how the media and the publics are interlinked in the multi-mediated environment of publics of different orientations. The second section of this chapter covers the role of news values in the de/selection mechanisms of the media. It extensively discusses classical accounts of news values and also explores how news values continue to be added. The third section explores agenda-setting theory and examines the influence of corporate agendas in the media.

In Chapter 4, the first section explores how the environment is socially constructed and examines the factors that mediate environmental coverage in the media. It also explores the relationship between media coverage and public concern towards environmental issues. The second section discusses issues around communicating science to the publics, the notion of lay and experts in communication relating to science and its relevance in communicating about the environment in the media.

Chapter 5 sets out the methodological framework adopted in this thesis. It explains how the data collection was conducted in two complementary parts, both in the media and in the field. The characteristics of focus group discussions are discussed and the ethical considerations adopted during the field work in Nepal outlined. The chapter discusses the data management, coding and translation procedure applied in this research before discussing the analytic approaches of content analysis and discourse analysis.

In Chapter 6, the results of content analysis of the *Batabaran Dabali* programme are presented. The collected weekly programmes of the entire year (May 2009 - April 2010) give an idea of trends in the environmental topics highlighted. This analysis reflects the type of major newsworthy stories, experts and influential voices in environmental reporting in *Batabaran Dabali* in particular and Nepal in general.

Chapters 7 and 8 present discourse analysis of media texts in *Batabaran Dabali*. Chapter 7 covers the examination of how meaning is developed through talks and texts in this programme. This chapter mainly discusses how language is used in constructing the social reality about the environment and also explores how environmental knowledge is shared and relations are shaped by the discourse. The chapter explores how the discourse of expert interviewees along with the host of the programme significantly constructs the environment. It also illustrates how the expert discourses shift away from local environmental issues to the global issue of climate change. Chapter 8 explores the relationship between the government and civil society and examines how interviewees on the programme emphasise the co-responsibility of the citizens for solving existing environmental problems by enlisting citizen rights and responsibilities in the new constitution. This chapter also explores how interviewees and the host in *Batabaran Dabali* construct public environmental knowledge, both as lacking as well as credible.

Chapter 9 discusses points of convergence and divergence between lay and expert as well as rural and urban environmental constructions, based on the findings of the focus group discussions (with three different categories of the publics, having both lay and expert knowledge of the environment) held in Nepal in April 2010. It also examines the construction of a conflictual relationship between state and the citizens and explores how expert notions are challenged by lay knowledge.

Chapter 10 presents a brief description of focus group participants and their media use. Next, it illustrates how the focus group participants frame the role of the media both as significant and degenerating and presents the findings on how lay and expert groups construct environmental media coverage in various ways. It also

explores how these participants frame issues related to climate change as significant.

The concluding chapter discusses insights gained from the preceding analysis and its usefulness in the light of existing literature. It also outlines recommendations and discussions for future research.

Chapter 2

The Media Landscape in Nepal

As it is not possible to understand how environmental communication takes place in Nepal without analysing the situation of the media in the country, it is essential to present a general overview of the media first. This chapter of my thesis will therefore create a basis for understanding the media situation as a whole. The first section explores the historical development of the media landscape in Nepal. The historical development is described with reference to different political phases as these have had a profound effect upon the media. The state of the media in Nepal will then be explained in terms of major forms of mass media such as radio, television, newspapers and the internet. The third part of this chapter will examine the major publication houses and media owners in Nepal. The last section briefs the historical development of environmental communication in the Nepalese media landscape.

2.1 Historical Development of the Media in Nepal

The history of Nepalese media begins in the “dark period” of the Rana Regime. During some periods, the Nepalese media has boomed and enjoyed comparative freedom, however, at other times it has been strictly under the control of government. In this regard, Nepalese media history has changed according to the political scenario in the country. The history of the Nepalese media can be divided into the following phases²:

2.1.1 “Dark Period”: the Rana Regime (1846 - 1950)

Nepal was ruled by the Ranas from 1846 and 1950. A bloodbath in 1846 provoked by the Rana brothers (popularly known as Kot massacre) led to a puppet monarchy

² The phases ‘Dark Period’: the Rana Regime (1846 - 1950); First Democratic Period (1951 - 1960); King’s Direct Rule: Panchayat System (1960 - 1990); The Restoration of Democracy until the takeover by the King (1990 - 2005); King’s Direct Rule (1 Feb 2005 - 26 April 2006) were categorised by Banjade (2007) for his analysis of historical development of radio broadcasting in Nepal. The phase ‘After the Restoration of Democracy in 2006’ is a category cited from Nepal Press Freedom (2009).

in the country under the strong Rana autocracy. During the Rana rule, Nepal was in a period of complete isolation from the external world. In this time, the king and the royals were kept away from the affairs of state. The 104 year long period under the Rana regime is therefore considered as the “dark period” in Nepalese history (Shrestha³, 2002: 145). During this period, there was no press freedom in the country. However, the development of the mass media in Nepal began with the introduction of the hand press by the Rana Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana in 1851 (Devkota, 2002). The hand printing press, bought in the United Kingdom during his visit in 1850, was only operated for “printing official documents” (Tamrakar, 1996: 3).

According to Devkota (2002), the printing of the first monthly magazine *Sudha Sagar* in 1891 signifies the beginning of Nepali journalism. It was published by Pundit Naradev Motikrishna with an aim to uplift the Nepali language where stories and poems were mainly published. However, this magazine has not been archived even in the national libraries in Nepal and hence no one today knows exactly what it looked like (Devkota, 2002). As Devkota says, among the people who have seen this magazine, one is the renowned historian Baburam Acharya who unfortunately lost these magazines in the devastating earthquake of 1934. Though *Sudha Sagar* came into existence as the first newspaper, *Gorkhapatra* launched in 1901, also popularly referred to as “the eldest living daily”, is considered the first official newspaper (Devkota, 2002).

The launching of *Gorkhapatra* daily could be seen as an attempt to heighten public awareness by the Rana Prime Minister Dev Shamsheer, since it occurred during a period when the concept of citizenship and democracy were not flourishing in the country (Devkota, 2002). The prime minister was sacked from his position and extradited from the country by his own brother Chandra Shamsheer because of his progressive policies, including the formation of a parliament. During the 31 year rule of Chandra Shamsheer no other newspaper was published in Nepal. However, *Gorkhapatra* continued publishing despite difficulties. It was the only media for Nepalese people during this time as radio was limited to the people in power (Devkota, 2002). Although radio sets entered Nepal during mid 1920s, the

³ No relation to the author of this PhD thesis.

government seized radio sets from the public in 1939 prohibiting listening to World War II news. Radio sets were limited to the Rana family members until the rule of Prime Minister Juddha Shamsheer Rana. However, Rana Prime Minister Padma Shamsheer lifted the ban on public possession of radio sets in 1946. As there was no radio transmission facility in the country, the first news Nepalese people were able to listen to was foreign (Devkota, 2002).

2.1.2 First Democratic Period (1951 - 1960)

Radio broadcasting started in the country with the establishment of Radio Nepal in 1951. The history of the media in Nepal therefore is said to begin in 1950s, after the end of the Rana regime. However, radio broadcasting was initially limited to the Kathmandu valley. After five years, with the establishment of a powerful transmitter of 5 KM short wave, Radio Nepal was accessible from all parts of Nepal and some parts of India (Devkota, 2002). In this period, several pioneering journalists published newspapers when democracy was still in its transitional phase. However, most of the newspapers tended to push the agendas and ideologies of particular political parties (Dahal, 2002 cited in Banjade, 2007: 65). The democratic transition in the country did not last even for a decade. Although the period 1951-1960 was characterised by political freedom, the media could not flourish due to a lack of skills and professionalism. The time also reflects the institutionalisation of the media with the formation of Nepal Journalists Association in 1952, which is an autonomous apex body of professional journalists in Nepal (Nepal Journalists Association, 2012).

2.1.3 King's Direct Rule: Panchayat System (1960 - 1990)

In 1960, King Mahendra suspended the parliament and imposed an authoritarian Panchayat system, an indigenous political system with party-less government headed by an assertive monarchy (Dahal, 2002 cited in Banjade, 2007: 66). After the introduction of the Panchayat System in the country, the government introduced the Press and Publication Registration Regulation in 1963. The rules and regulations regarding the printing press restricted press freedom in many ways (Tamrakar, 1996).

In 1962 Rashtriya Samachar Samittee (National News Agency) was established. However, the news and views published were totally under government control as the agency itself was headed by the Chairman cum General Manager appointed by the Nepalese government (Onta, 2006). While the constitution guaranteed the “freedom of expression as a basic right, in practice this right was severely curtailed” (Lamsal, 2008: 143). For example, many journalists who attempted to write against the government were arrested. Nepalese journalism became severely handicapped under the strict censorship of the government authorities (Lamsal, 2008). Although the situation was not favourable to private media, some private newspapers managed to survive and continued to publish. During the three decades (1960-1990) of the Panchayat system, publications of matters pertaining to political parties, freedom of speeches and freedom of political organisations was banned (Banjade, 2007). As Banjade (2007: 67) points out, Radio Nepal “remained a propaganda machine of the government during the 30 years of the Panchayat system”. In the absence of any other private broadcasting in Nepal, state owned broadcast media were a very powerful source of information in the country (Banjade, 2007).

2.1.4 The Restoration of Democracy until the takeover by the King (1990 - 2005)

In 1990, the King and the government were pressurised by the political parties for a change. The 1990 People’s Movement (Jana Andolan in Nepali) started with massive pro-democracy protests by the publics, led by the political parties. As a result, the new constitution of 1990 in Nepal set up a parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarch. A drastic change occurred in the Nepalese media sector after the emergence of a multi-party system in 1990. The traditional and political values of the Panchayat system changed; for example, “[t]ight censorship of the media was lifted” (Pandey, 2002: 77). Freedom of the press and publication was assured by the constitution of Nepal in 1990. This resulted in opportunities for the private sector to become involved in the media field (Nepal Press Freedom⁴, 2009). As Onta (2006: 2) states, the launch of two privately owned broadsheet

⁴ Nepal Press Freedom is the official online page of Freedom Forum (a non-governmental organisation, which works towards institutionalising of democracy and protecting and advocating human rights as well as press freedom). The site informs about the incidents of press freedom violation in Nepal. (www.freedomforum.org.np).

dailies of Kantipur publications, *Kantipur daily* (in Nepali) and *The Kathmandu Post* (in English) in 1992 marks the beginning of “a new era in print journalism”.

In addition to daily newspapers there was a boom in several weekly, fortnightly and monthly magazines in Nepal in this period. Moreover, a media-friendly policy led FM stations to run from both community as well as commercial sectors (Onta, 2006). In 1997 Radio Sagarmatha, run by a non-government organisation, was established as the first independent community radio in Nepal as well as in South Asia. It was known as community radio as the programmes were designed with the involvement of local people (Lak, 2005). This was an innovation in the country; government-controlled Radio Nepal was characterised by a one-way flow of information. Initially the community and commercial radios stations were not allowed to broadcast news bulletins and current affairs programmes, but in 2003 the Supreme Court of Nepal finally allowed transmission of news. Around 46 independent stations (including 14 in Kathmandu alone) rejoiced at this decision (Lak, 2005). In fact, the 1990 People’s Movement in Nepal led to “massive growth in the volume and variety of media in Nepal” (Onta, 2006: 6). Moreover, the favourable conditions for the media in the country gave rise to a growing number of people working in journalism. Onta (2006) considers factors which played a role in the rapid growth of the media in Nepal, such as the promulgation of The Constitution of Nepal (1990), increasing involvement of private and non-government sectors in the media, growth in the advertisement market as well as the promotion of the Nepali language. According to Onta, the promotion of Nepali language in this period by Panchayat regime helped connect different ethnic groups of multi-language people in the county into a single Nepalese identity.

In terms of media development, as Banjade (2007: 69) points out, the post-1990 period can be described as a period which, alongside media friendly regulations, also experienced “pluralism in media ownership”. However, the landscape of Nepalese media changed with the start of political turmoil in the country after the mid-nineties. The country faced political instability at the beginning of the Maoist movement in 1996, which was further accentuated after the mysterious royal massacre on 1 June 2001 when King Birendra and nine other royal family members were shot dead (CPJ, 2002). Following the incident, the throne was inherited by

King Birendra's younger brother Gyanendra. Immediately after the royal massacre, most of the mainstream media were prevented from broadcasting news. Telephone lines were cut and public gatherings prohibited. Those who dared to write or publish news and views regarding the royal massacre were also threatened by the government. The editor-in-chief of *Kantipur Daily* was jailed for nine days for publishing the opinion of Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, a senior Maoist leader (CPJ, 2002). This period also saw massive use of the Internet by Nepalese abroad wanting to know about the happenings in the country (Kasajoo, 2003-2009). After the declaration of emergency in November 2001, there were profound challenges to the media in Nepal. A large number of journalists were detained in November and by December 17 journalists had been imprisoned (CPJ, 2002).

2.1.5 King's Gyanendra's Direct Rule (1 Feb 2005 - 26 April 2006)

When King Gyanendra assumed complete power in a bloodless coup on 1 February 2005, several top politicians were put under house arrest. Civil life was severely restricted by cutting telephone lines, proscribing public gatherings as well as curbing media such as limiting radio broadcasting to entertainment programmes alone. While the country once again faced the imposition of a State of Emergency, the Nepalese press suffered its worst form of suppression to date when the government restrained press freedom and implemented various restrictive ordinances, even though the nation's constitution guaranteed full press freedom. The days following 1 February have been called the "darkest episode" in the 100-year history of journalism in the country (Khatry, 2005). Private sector news such as from FM radio broadcasts was totally banned and private TV stations experienced several restrictions, such as limiting programmes to mostly entertainment based and not allowing news transmission against the government and royals (Nepal Press Freedom, 2009). This not only resulted in limitations in producing programmes; several journalists were made redundant as the media could only develop entertainment programmes. In addition, critical journalists were repeatedly arrested despite court orders for releases (Nepal Press Freedom, 2009). As the media had proved to be the worst form of enemy for the government, they had to operate directly under the control of armed soldiers situated in their offices (Khatry, 2005). The achievements of the democratic system of 1990 thus

disappeared in the country (Khatry, 2005). Moreover, as Khatry (2005) accounts, the media was not merely the victim of the government restrictions but also the victim of violent Maoist insurgency in the country. According to Khatry (2005: 2), journalists were “threatened”, “harassed” or “tortured” and there were several cases where journalists were “displaced”, “disappeared” or killed mercilessly during this period. In just over a year, 18 journalists lost their lives while being in the profession (Khatry, 2005).

2.1.6 After the Restoration of Democracy in 2006

Press freedom was restored after the restoration of democracy in Nepal in April 2006. During this time, laws and regulations approved by the king that posed restrictions to the media were abolished. However, threats and attacks to the journalists were not lessened although the government made an effort to protect press freedom (Nepal Press Freedom, 2009). According to Nepal Press Freedom (2009), a total of 676 journalists and media workers faced various incidents of press freedom violation with three journalists losing their lives during the two year period from April 2006 to April 2008. The year 2007/2008 saw some achievements in the media sector with the promulgation of acts such as the Rights to Information Act-2064 and the Working Journalists Act-2064. In addition, the Interim Constitution-2064 also guaranteed the freedom of press and expression, the other achievement in the Nepalese media landscape. However, these Acts and provisions remained on paper as there had been no proper implementation or follow-up on these measures (Nepal Press Freedom, 2009). On 28 May 2008, a new era in Nepalese history started as Nepal was declared a Republic, thereby abolishing the 240-year-old monarchy. However, the media situation has not drastically changed as media workers are still occasionally victimised, and the press is still liable to threats from vested interests if they receive coverage to be unfavourable to them.

2.2 The State of the Media in Nepal

Despite being a developing country, most modern forms of the media are now available in Nepal. However, access to the media depends on the area and the status of people in the country. While the people in the capital city enjoy access to all national and international media, areas remain where people have little access to the

media, particularly print media (Kasajoo, 2003-2009). However, the situation is changing as the number of radio towers, FM stations and satellite transmission of television channels is increasing. However, in a country where 18.1 million people live without electricity (ADB, DFID and ILO, 2009), it is not easy to communicate to the entire population via electronic media like radio and television.

Although people living below the poverty line in Nepal fell from 30.8% in 2003-2004 to 25.2% in 2010-2011, Nepal is still one of the poorest countries in the world, where more than 32.5% people are living on less than \$1.25 a day (Central Bureau of Statistics Nepal, 2011a). This clearly shows that many people in Nepal cannot afford to buy newspapers or own TV or radio sets. In terms of print media, while 37.3% of the urban population can access a newspaper at home, only 6.7% of the rural population are able to do this (Equal Access, 2006-2007). In remote areas, even though people want to read newspapers, it is not possible because of the lack of transportation facilities to reach every corner of the country. Access to print materials is still limited to the forms of children's school books, posters, pamphlets (used during election time) and wrapping paper in remote villages in Nepal (Kasajoo, 1998).

According to the Broadcast Audience Survey conducted by Equal Access (2006-2007), while radio and television are the most (80%) preferred sources of the media in Nepal, with the growth in email and Internet facilities, delivering messages has become much easier and faster. Many of the remote places, which are deprived of good transportation facilities, have started gaining access to world-wide information from the internet irrespective of difficult terrain. As Kasajoo (2003-2009) points out, there has been inconsistency in the development of one or other sector in the country, particularly Information Technology. Indeed, unequally distributed development in the country means that in some places people have access to more advanced technology before they are provided with basic facilities (Kasajoo, 2003-2009).

2.2.1 Radio Broadcasting

The state-owned Radio Nepal, the first radio station, started broadcasting in April 1951 (Radio Nepal, 2009) and enjoys special status. Until October 1995 it was the

only radio station which could air programmes within Nepal (Onta, 2006). Although there is a growth of various forms of communication in Nepal, as Onta (2006: 4) says, Radio Nepal is “the most powerful” medium in the Nepalese media landscape “with the communication infrastructure unmatched by any other institution”. However, Tamrakar (1996: 5) argues that Radio Nepal “quite often presents government policies, programmes and information that are not too different from government propaganda”. Nevertheless, as Radio Nepal is the only accessible source in many parts of the country, there is no choice for many people. It has therefore made people more dependent on listening to the national radio station for “news about the matters that concerns him or her” (Tamrakar, 1996: 5). However, as Dahal (2002a: 45) points out, the problem with radio has been the “representation of news and views from all walks of life”. This is because “the information flow is still largely a one-way process, from the centre to the local and not vice versa” (Dahal, 2002a: 45). To some extent, this gap seems to be fulfilled by community and FM radio stations where many programmes aim to be participatory.

As Banjade (2007) points out, the monopoly of government-owned Radio Nepal ended with the establishment of Radio Sagarmatha as an independent radio station. Radio Sagarmatha has not only been a pioneer in setting up a trend in community radio broadcasts, it also established itself as a “trailblazer in the movement of independent FM radio in Nepal” (Onta, 2006: 4). Since the instigation of Radio Sagarmatha, many further FM and community radio stations have been set up. Mainly two kinds of FM stations entered into Nepalese media: community and commercial stations. As Kharel (2008) points out, both community FMs run by the local government and non-government organisations had a large impact on information dissemination in the rural sector in Nepal, which has many interactive programmes.

The current landscape of FM broadcasting in Nepal shows that a total of 323 FM licences were issued by August 2009, and as a result operational FM stations increased to 186 of August 2009. While there are 195 operational FM radio transmitters, there are 4 multiple channel FM broadcasters and 5 multiple site FM

broadcasters (Equal Access, 2009). Kathmandu valley has the highest number of FM radio operators in the country - currently 28 operational FM radio stations (Equal Access, 2008). The so far neglected areas in the country such as mid- and far-western Nepal have also progressed in terms of FM radio operations. However, as Onta (2006) points out, the radio stations outside Kathmandu valley are very weak in terms of their institutional capacity as they lack funding, equipment and trained journalists.

The increase in FM radio stations has not been similarly recorded in any other countries in Asia. However, around 40 Nepalese FM stations are controlled by political parties (Bhusal, 2007). In this regard, political figures have found their way to voice and market themselves with the mushrooming of FM stations in the country. Bhusal (2007) therefore questions whether such FM stations can function as neutral media. Nevertheless, the role of community radios is considered important in Nepal as these “had become a powerful tool in forming public opinion and making citizens aware of their democratic rights” during former King Gyanendra’s direct rule in 2005 (Deane, 2008: 146). As Deane (2008: 149) writes:

“Community radio in Nepal, a majority medium reaching nearly 65% of the population, played a central role in mobilising peaceful mass protest against the monarchical dictatorship in the country, and ultimately securing a transition to democracy.”

As Deane (2008) points out, community media have been important in Nepal firstly in imprinting the importance of grassroots communication; secondly, these were important for democracy and development to flourish in the country. In this regard, Radio Sagarmatha, the first community radio station, had an important role in liberating the voices of the community.

2.2.2 Television Stations

Nepal Television, one of the youngest television stations in Asia, came to existence in 1985. The station reaches 72 percent of the population in the country. While its signal covers more than fifty countries, Nepal television airs programmes through terrestrial, satellite as well as digital networking (Nepal Television, 2012). Though it came into existence two and half decades ago, progress in this sector did not gain

speed until 2002. Until then, Nepal Television produced its own programmes and sold its time slots to private operators (Onta, 2006).

Nepal Television is the most powerful television station in terms of its coverage. However, poverty in a family restricts many households from owning a television set. Dahal (2002a: 45) points out that “not only income levels but also lack of infrastructure” such as electricity is the major causes which prevent the majority of the population’s accessibility of information in these media. However, with the penetration of private television stations such as Kantipur Television, Channel Nepal, Image Channel, Nepal 1 and Sagarmatha TV, the scenario is somewhat different now due to competition in the broadcast arena.

Currently, there are a total of 21 companies which have received television broadcasting licences (Equal Access, 2009). Although there is growth in private broadcasting in the country, Dahal (2002a: 45) suggests that these developments are linked to business motives and hence are not “a serious attempt to fill the void in the national information landscape”. In Dahal’s (2002a: 45) view, television or “other high-tech electronic media” in Nepal could have filled the gap in information dissemination. However, these too operate with commercial interests. He therefore points out that the media in Nepal “have yet to prove to what extent they are a response to and a reflection of social pluralism” which represent “needs, interests, views and ideologies” of the publics (Dahal, 2002a: 48).

2.2.3 Print Media

In Nepal, with a literacy rate of 53.73% of the population (6 years of age and over) (Central Bureau of Statistics Nepal, 2001), nearly half the population do not use print media. Newspaper registration shows a significant number of newspapers (2038 registered newspapers) in Nepal (Press Council Nepal, 2008). However, only 514 newspapers are in publication. Among these, there are 89 dailies, 4 bi-weeklies, 381 weeklies and 40 fortnightly newspapers. While most of these publications are printed in offset press, a total of 82 publications are still printed by letterpress (Press Council Nepal, 2008). Among these published newspapers, *Kantipur*, a broadsheet daily owned by Kantipur Publications Private Limited, is the most

popular Nepali language daily. Other broadsheet dailies which are widely read include *Nagarik Daily*, *Gorkhapatra*, *Annapoorna Post*, *Nepal Samachapatra*, and *Rajdhani*. The popular English dailies include *The Himalayan Times*, *The Rising Nepal* and *The Kathmandu Post*. These have also been listed as the top three English newspapers of Nepal according to web popularity ranking (International Media and Web Popularity Ranking, 2008).

There are also large numbers of weekly and fortnightly newspapers published in the capital and in regional areas. In addition, magazines such as *Himal* of Himal Media and *Nepal* of Kantipur Publications are considered significant in terms of political coverage. Indeed, the numbers of printed newspapers and magazines are increasing and print publications are gaining momentum in the country. However, Pandey (2002: 80) points out that in Nepalese print media, there is not just “excessive party meddling which has tarnished the quality of reporting” but this has also “failed to give objective information”. He adds that “[t]here is a fair degree of distorted news and views in most vernacular weeklies” (Pandey, 2002: 80). Moreover, the media in Nepal are criticised because these have been the “powerful means for state authorities, political parties and leaders to exhort the citizens actively support their policies” (Dahal, 2002a: 30). In this view, the media in Nepal are generally “tightly compartmentalised into divergent interest groups” (Dahal, 2002a: 30) in which print media in particular is limited to catering to the interests of the urban elites in Nepal.

2.2.4 The Internet

In a small landlocked country like Nepal, with 80% of land area being mountain and hills (ADPC, 2007), there are several obstructions for the expansion of information technology. Nevertheless, as in some other sectors, such as education, government, non-government offices and business houses, Nepalese mass media have also been inclining towards the use of internet. Though the internet has become a necessity in the urban population, reaching the entire rural population via the internet is still a distant dream (Onta, 2006). The *Nepal Digest*, produced with the efforts of some of the Nepalese in US during the late nineties, was the first Nepali e-magazine in the Internet. The e-magazine, registered in New York, USA,

was first published in 1989 by the The Nepal Digest Foundation⁵ (The Nepal Digest Foundation, 2005). The 1990s also saw a gradual increase of internet use in Nepal. However, out of the total population of Nepal there are 2,031,245 internet users as of 31 December 2011 which is just 6.9% penetration, per ITU (Internet World Stats, 2011).

In recent years, with the growing use of computers by educational institutes, government and non-government organisations, educated Nepalese have increased their use of the internet. Though relatively few of the population are seen to be exchanging information through cyber space, the trend is growing. As Kasajoo (2003-2009) writes, every week dozens of websites are launched in Nepal. However, these go unnoticed even by the people for whom the websites are developed. While the number of website registrations grows, ‘www.nepalnews.com’ is considered the most popular site for online news (WAVE, 2005). Nepal’s most popular online site is visited by 40 thousand people daily around the world while visitors from Nepal itself total a mere 15 percent (Kasajoo, 2003-2009). Recently, internet connections at home or for personal use are rising. However, significant numbers of users come from the development organisations (Onta, 2006). In this regard, the internet has become “yet another technology and medium available to Nepal’s elites for their own interests and pleasure, both professional and personal” (Onta, 2006: 138). Indeed, in a country where the majority of the population is deprived of electricity and only 2 percent of the people “can afford to buy a computer” (Onta, 2006: 138) in the current context, it is unlikely that the internet could become a place for democratic discussions.

2.3 Major Publication Houses and Media Owners

Nepal saw massive growth in the media after 1990. However, almost two decades later Nepalese media have not uniformly reached different parts of the country. There is still a large gap in urban and rural media circulation. Moreover, Nepal’s media are capital-centric, as “[a]lmost all of nationally influential print and electronic media is produced in Kathmandu” (Onta, 2006: 21). While no regional media are sufficiently successful in creating its national presence, the high

⁵ The Nepal Digest Foundation is a global not-for-profit information and resource centre which is operated by a team of Nepalese in USA.

concentration of the media in Kathmandu “represents the Kathmandu establishment point of view” (Onta, 2006: 22). In fact, the newspapers published from the central region do not reach people in remote villages (Kasajoo, 2003-2009). Out of 26 million people in the country, half of the published newspapers in Nepal are accessible only to the 2 million people of Kathmandu (Kasajoo, 2003-2009). While people in the capital have access to all forms of modern media, people in other parts of the country are deprived of even basic information. Though radio has become one of the sources which can reach large numbers of people, there is still a large section of population who cannot afford a radio set. While state owned Radio Nepal and Nepal television remain as the major broadcasters, community radio and FM stations have played a significant role in the development of the media in Nepal.

In terms of ownership, independent FMs are categorised into “community, commercial and state-run” stations (Mainali, 2002 cited in Bhattarai and Ojha, 2010: 11). However, as Bhattarai and Ojha (2010: 11) point out, this is “a classification used by radio advocates” and hence not a “result of government policy”. They therefore claim that until the end of 2009, “Nepal had no laws on ownership” and as a result “broadcasting remained largely unregulated” (Bhattarai and Ojha, 2010: 11). However, in terms of funding, while commercial radio stations have to depend solely on advertising revenues, community radio stations have categorised their funding sources as “community contributions”, “donor assistance”, “programmes in partnership” and “advertisements” (Banjade, 2007: 83). According to Banjade (2007), three types of community stations exist, which include radio stations owned by non-government sectors such as Radio Sagarmatha and Swargadwari FM, radio stations owned by cooperatives such as Lumbini FM and Muktinath FM and local government-owned stations such as Community Radio Madanpokhara. Radio broadcasting in Nepal therefore shows diversity in terms of ownership. Though the quantity of community radio stations and FMs has increased, government-owned Radio Nepal still dominates other radio broadcasters due to its nationwide reach. As in television broadcasting, there are no other channels which can challenge the wider coverage of state owned Nepal Television.

Kantipur Publications, established in 1993, remains the largest privately owned media house. Kantipur Publications publishes the Nepali broadsheet daily *Kantipur* daily (250,000 copies) with the largest readership in Nepal. It also publishes *The Kathmandu Post* daily (50,000 copies), *Nari Monthly* (36,000 copies), *Saptahik Weekly* (100,000 copies) and *Nepal* weekly (37,000 copies). It has also expanded its broadcast area with Kantipur Television Network and Kantipur FM 96.1 which has a growing popularity in Nepal. The online portal of Kantipur Publications (e-magazine) ‘www.ekantipur.com’ serves as the central accessing point to its online publications (Kantipur Publications, 2012). Though there are many other private media houses in existence, the concentration and hold of the media by Kantipur Publications has not been overridden by any other private media house. Moreover, as there is no regulatory body that checks such trends of the media concentration by a single organisation, the media field in Nepal is “quite open” (FES Nepal, 2003).

The growth of private sector media in Nepal has brought some changes in media operation in the country as it could break the barrier of information control under the government monopoly. Moreover, these private media houses could earn public trust by more investigative reporting and writing against corruption in the government. As Dahal (2002a: 46) states, this sector has been a “powerful counterpart in the news business”. Although private media have some advantages over government controlled media, they also attract criticism. Pandey (2007: 1) argues that the big publishing houses have ‘monopolised’ the media market in Nepal. One example is Kantipur Publications which operates a television station, FM radio, newspaper dailies and weeklies as well as fortnightly and monthly magazines.

Kharel (2002) argues that the government’s control of the media (including private media) leaves the Nepalese media little opportunity to cover other development issues. He further writes that Nepalese media are “in the hands of a few powerful interest groups in key urban areas” such as businessmen and as such “their contribution in freeing political society and providing equal opportunity to all is minimal” (Kharel, 2002: 22). This has resulted in an increase in the communication and information gap between the urban and remote areas in Nepal. As Kharel (2002: 22) puts it, this difference in information concentration has “widened the

knowledge divide between the core and the periphery and the rich and the poor even further”. Hence, Kharel (2002: 22) adds: “In no way do the media constitute a vibrant public sphere in rural Nepal” (the conception of the public sphere will be re-examined in Chapter 3). Indeed, as Kharel suggests, media concentration in urban areas in Nepal has caused a growing disparity of information distribution between urban and rural areas. Besides, as there is “only one news agency [Rashtriya Samachar Samittee] in the country”, both the government and the private media access information from the same source (Dahal, 2002a: 47). Although the agency has national networking capacity with offices in all the 14 zones in Nepal, it can hardly present itself as an independent organisation which “puts pressure on NG [Nepal Government] as the watchdog media organization” (Onta, 2006: 234). The ownership pattern of Rashtriya Samachar Samittee shows that it operates from 51 percent of shares of the government, 25 percent of the shares from its employees and the remainder “owned by the public[s]” (Onta, 2006: 233).

The country lacks investment in creating alternative news agencies. Dahal (2002a: 47) states that investors have more interest in advertisements than the bigger picture of their “public interest role”. In addition, there are some foreign investments in the media sector in Nepal despite objections from the majority of local media houses (Dahal, 2002a). As Dahal (2002a: 46) states, the “Nepalese public arena is being used to promote the private interests of not only the local interest groups but also foreign ones”. Certainly, as Dahal has pointed out, the media in Nepal have not been able to establish themselves as part of a vibrant public sphere.

2.4 Media and Environmental Communication in Nepal

In Nepal, there has been a growth of various forms of media since the 1950s. However, particular attention to environmental issues emerged only in the mid 1980s when environmental journalists formed a network to work under the umbrella organisation - the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ). This was formed with the aim to promote awareness among the publics through the use of mass media in Nepal (NEFEJ, 2009). As Koirala (2006: 43) states, with the establishment of NEFEJ, not only did environmental reporting in Nepal become more organised, it also “contributed substantially to include provision for

conservation in the constitution of Nepal in 1990”. Similarly, Koirala (2006: 43) notes that at the same time the “media convinced major political parties to include environment and conservation in their election manifesto”. Though the media made some effort in the environmental conservation sector, research conducted by NEFEJ on media coverage on biodiversity on 11 dailies, 6 weeklies and 2 fortnightlies (from January 2003 - December 2003) reflects that environmental coverage in Nepal is confusing due to lack of research and technical information (Chalise, 2006).

NEFEJ currently produces environment focused television programmes (Aankhijhyal), radio programmes, a monthly magazine *HakaHaki* (Hard Talk) and other publications focused on environment and conservation issues (NEFEJ, 2008). Radio Sagarmatha, the station which runs under the umbrella of NEFEJ, is the first community radio in South Asia. It was established in Nepal in 1997 after many years of struggle with the government of Nepal. Radio Sagarmatha covers as many as 90 programmes a week. *Batabaran Dabali*, which is an environmental discussion programme, is notable due to its “incisive discourse” as claimed by the station. Further environmental programmes aired from Radio Sagarmatha include *Bhukampia Surakshya* (earthquake precaution), *Pani Ra Sarsaphai* (water and sanitation) (Radio Sagarmatha brochure, n.d.).

The work of NEFEJ has been complemented by the growing network of the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) Nepal. However, SEJ Nepal, formed in the 1990s, is currently stagnant after the central president of SEJ Nepal left the country in 2006. Among the other environmental media networks, Youth Awareness Environment Forum (YAEF), established in 1994, operates through Environment Cycle Radio FM 104.2 MHZ has been broadcasting environment-related programmes from Kathmandu since 2004 (YAEF, 2006). Besides its regular publication of an environment magazine, one of the major initiations of YAEF has been to obtain a licence to open the only environmental television station, ETV, in Nepal (IUCN, 2010). However, this has not been operational until now. Another addition to this venture is the establishment of environmental radio Radio Prakriti 93.4 MHz in 2010, which is aired from far western Nepal. Thus it is clear that the Nepalese media sector have recently paid considerable attention to the field of

environment communication. While environment communication in the media started more than two decades ago, there are still many media outlets which have hardly any environmental programming. The emergence of hundreds of community radio stations and FMs and the inclusion of environmental programmes on some of these stations fills this vacuum to some extent where radio is the only source of information to many.

However, as the inclusion of many of the programmes in Nepalese media depends on funding from larger or concerned organisations, sustainability of these programmes in radio or television is at stake and depends heavily on funding situations. According to Gunawardene (2007), the funding difficulty faced by one of the most popular environment programmes, “Aankhijhyal” of NEFEJ in Nepal Television is due to reluctance of broadcasters to invest money in such programmes. Moreover, there is reluctance for many environmental programmes to be included on radio or television as there is not only the production cost to bear, but airtime also has to be paid for on these media. For example, NEFEJ not only produces *Aankhijhyal* (an environment programme) at its own expense but also pays for airtime on Nepal television (Gunawardene, 2007). In this view, many of the environmental programmes in the media are dependent on funding from larger environmental organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Summary

Nepalese society has witnessed an unprecedented growth of the media in Nepal since the 1990s. However, Nepalese media has faced different challenges in the shifting political contexts. Though the print media came into existence before electronic media, it has not yet been able to reach to all parts of Nepal due to the difficult terrain of the country coupled with illiteracy and poverty. Radio is the most available and popular choice of the media in most parts of the country including Kathmandu valley where more than fifty percent of the media exist. Television follows the radio in terms of accessibility, while print publications come in third place. While most of the media are Kathmandu centric, many of the remote areas

have begun to have information access via the internet. The development of computer technology has made information access faster not just in the capital city, but also to the places where transport facilities are rare. However, Nepal lacks a developed infrastructure in setting up information technology as one of the main sources of information exchange. In terms of ownership, Nepalese media reflect diversity as there are investors from multiple sources i.e. government, private, non-government, cooperatives, community and foreign body. These reflect diversity in terms of media messages as their targets are seen to differ. While the efforts of NEFEJ in promoting environmental awareness through different forms of media is considered important, lack of funding remains one of the major challenges in sustaining environmental programmes in the Nepalese media.

Chapter 3

Public Sphere Theory, News Values and the Agenda-setting Role of the Media

This chapter provides a theoretical framework for the study of the public sphere, news values and the agenda-setting role of the media. In the first section, theories of the public sphere and their usefulness in studying media will be discussed. The discussion will mainly focus on the concept of the public sphere idealised by Habermas, critical responses to the Habermasian concept of the public sphere and also on how the public sphere has been challenged by the emergence of a multiplicity of publics. The second section will discuss the theory of news values. Since the media are driven by competition for newsworthiness that challenges the concept of the public sphere, it is essential to understand how news values play a role in determining newsworthy characteristics of a story. The theory of news values will be discussed in terms of classical accounts and will also reflect how news values continue to be redefined by different scholars. The third section of the chapter describes agenda-setting theory, its role in the media and how it is challenged by the multiplicity of audiences. Similar to newsworthiness, agenda-setting is also highly selective and plays a role in media constructions. Therefore, the concepts of the public sphere, newsworthiness and agenda-setting are treated as inter-related in the constructions of the environment in the media. The conceptualisation of the topography and function of media processes has been used in this thesis to inform analysis of the data (drawn from the media as well as from the field in Nepal) in understanding media constructions of the environment and also exploring the role of the media in locally contextualised representations of the environment.

3.1 The Public Sphere

The concept of the “Public Sphere” was first introduced by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere - An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, published in 1962 in German. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* is the publication most often cited in discussions about the public

sphere. The publication mainly traces the development as well as the decline of a bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the historiographical account of the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the public sphere constitutes a representative publicity which is headed by a king or noble in the Middle Ages. Then in the eighteenth century the literary public sphere arises, which later transforms into the political public sphere. According to Habermas (1989), the same political public sphere represents private people coming into public places for a rational critical debate which later developed as a new social class - "the bourgeois". Habermas finds that with growing intervention from the state in the economy of civil society in eighteenth century Europe, people started reasoning publicly and critically, especially when complaining to tax officials or debating with other officials. Habermas then describes how early capitalism in the eighteenth century gave rise to the formation of civil society with a new economic structure which differentiates between the function of households and economic production. He views the growth in industrialisation as a reason for the separation of public life and private life as people emerged from domestic pursuits to participation in an economically active society.

In Habermas' view, bourgeois critical discussions of socio-political issues in coffee houses, salons and bars became the foundations of bourgeois revolutionary movements. According to Habermas (1989: 27), the "bourgeois public sphere" not only signifies the place where "private people come together as a public"; rather they also "make public use of their reason". Habermas thus describes the public sphere as the space where people gather to discuss their common public affairs in a process of rational contestation as well as oppose exploitative forms of existing power in society:

"By 'the public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body."
(Habermas, 1974: 49)

According to Habermas then, the public sphere is necessary for the formation of public opinion. This is only possible when "private people come together"

(Habermas, 1989: 27) in a public place and pursue discourse on matters of common concern. However, Habermas states that public opinion is not merely generated from any discussions in a public place, but is developed as a result of “criticism” and also “control” of the public and operates informally in public gatherings as well as formally i.e. in court hearings. In this regard, public opinion is “a product of a communication process among masses that is neither bound by the principles of public discussion nor concerned with political domination” (Habermas, 1989: 240).

Habermas highlights the formation of the public sphere to lie mainly in public places, and describes this kind of communication as emerging in coffee houses and salons in Great Britain and France. Habermas explains that in both of these countries coffee houses and salons “were the centers of criticism - literary at first, then also political” (Habermas, 1989: 32). By the first decade of the 18th century, London already had 3000 coffee houses which were regularly visited by intellectuals. According to Habermas, therefore, these places in towns of eighteenth century Europe became public spheres where public opinion was formed. Habermas (1989: 30) characterises the functions of the town as:

“[...] the life centre of civil society not only economically; in cultural-political contrast to the court, it designated especially an early public sphere in the world of letters whose institutions were the coffee houses, salons and the *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies).”

Habermas views the public sphere in this era as mainly rooted in “the world of letters” although its main function was political (Calhoun, 1992: 185). In this regard, the town acted not only as the place for economic activities, but was also where people discussed socio-political topics, especially those published in pamphlets or newspapers. Habermas (1989: 41) explains important developments of the media in this era with regards to the periodical (firstly, “handwritten correspondence” and thereafter “printed weekly or monthly”) which became the publicist’s instrument of criticism. Thus:

“*The bourgeois public* sphere could be understood as the sphere of private individuals assembled into a public body, which almost immediately laid claim to the officially regulated ‘intellectual newspapers’ for use against the public authority itself.” (Habermas, 1974: 52)

In this view, the media played an important role in connecting private individuals in public spheres. In the form of intellectual newspapers, it became the means of carrying public opinion against public authority at this time. Habermas therefore claims that there was no public sphere before the advent of print media. However, he also explains that in the 1830s, literary journalism started to transform into commercial journalism in England, France and the United States at approximately the same time, which resulted in the public sphere bringing greater benefits to private individuals (Habermas, 1974). Habermas (1989: 160) claims that “as soon as and to the degree that the public sphere in the world of letters spread into the realm of consumption”, the same public sphere started to become “apolitical” in nature. In this regard, the bourgeois public sphere and its political role in that period also started changing its form. Habermas (1974: 54) gives the reason behind the change in the bourgeois public sphere as follows:

“Because of the diffusion of press and propaganda, the public body expanded beyond the bounds of bourgeois. The public body lost not only its social exclusivity; it lost in addition the coherence created by bourgeois social institutions [...].”

In this view, according to Habermas, the public sphere expanded beyond the boundary of the bourgeois public sphere due to growth in the media. This growth led to the public sphere of bourgeois society losing its integrity as a critical public sphere. Increases in literacy, the development of mass media and the growth of capitalism had a significant effect on consumer-oriented society. The media played a major role in degenerating the public sphere, transforming the critical public into a passive consumer public (see Chapter 3.1.2). In this regard, although Habermas initially described the crucial role of the media in the formation of the public sphere, he later explained how a number of historical developments, including advancement of media technologies, contributed to unfavourable changes in the public sphere.

3.1.1 Critical Responses to the Theory of the Public Sphere

Following the publication of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, many social theorists, thinkers and writers used the term “public sphere” to describe the socio-political situation and public participation in society, topics generated by

the media as well as debates created in academic writings. This makes it a key conceptual element of media analysis. Deane (2005: 77) notes that “[t]he relationship between media, democracy and the public sphere has been the subject of intensive and increasing academic debate over the last forty years”. Habermas’ concept of the public sphere remains a popular starting point when discussing public participation in a democratic society (Dahlberg, 2005). Scholars such as Hohendahl and Russian (1974), Jakubowicz (1991), Fraser (1992), Calhoun (1992), Benhabib (1992), Outhwaite (1994), Mah (2000), Bentele (2005), Dahlberg (2005) and Butsch (2007) are among many who have analysed the Habermasian concept of the public sphere and its usefulness. The concept is also considered important in many disciplines of humanities. As Hohendahl and Russian (1974: 48) put it,

“The profoundly stimulating influence of this work is just becoming apparent in related disciplines. Media research, sociology, but also humanistic disciplines such as art history and literary history, owe a decisive impetus to Habermas.”

Indeed, as Hohendahl and Russian claim, study of the public sphere has been an important topic in different disciplines ever since the notion emerged. However, it is not free from criticism. As Holub (1991: 2) observes, “[s]everal books appeared as direct replies to this work, and scores of essays augmented, corrected, or rejected his account of the public sphere”. There is still considerable debate about the meaning of the term. The main focus of this debate concerns the origin and structure of the public sphere, the characteristics of information exchange among citizens in the public sphere, its changing nature and role in society. Although social theorists agree with the concept of citizen participation in the public sphere, many criticise Habermas’ conception of the public sphere (Dahlberg, 2005). Habermas’ concept was mainly criticised for the “exclusivity” of the bourgeois public sphere (Calhoun, 1992). One of the critical responses to the Habermas’ concept of the public sphere was the publication of *Habermas and the Public Sphere* in the 1990s.

It may be seen as historically questionable that Habermas considers that the bourgeois public sphere was the “universal” public sphere as the “bourgeois public’s critical debate took place in principle without regard to all preexisting social and political rank and in accord with universal rules” (Habermas, 1989: 54).

However, the public sphere identified by Habermas was not a universal public sphere as it does not include women and people of lower social classes. For example, Nancy Fraser (1992: 117) criticises the bourgeois public sphere and questions whether the “the idea of the public sphere an instrument of domination or a utopian ideal?”. She points out that the problem with the liberal public sphere idealised by Habermas is that it “fails to examine other, nonliberal, nonbourgeois, competing public spheres” (Fraser, 1992: 115). As membership of the bourgeois public sphere had some preconditions, such as education and ownership of property, the bourgeois mass included privileged citizens and excluded the views of the vast majority of people in society. Fraser thus asserts that the Habermasian model of the public sphere cannot be considered universal as it could not accommodate people of all categories. Indeed, several (Fraser, 1992; Butsch, 2007) claim that it is not possible to assume a single public sphere in today’s multi-media complex society. Rather, as Fraser conceptualised, the public sphere should be considered as “multiple, sometimes overlapping or contending public spheres” (Calhoun, 1992: 37). This concept is useful in this study in analysing how an earlier conception of the Habermasian public sphere is challenged by multiple and competing public spheres in local contexts in Nepal where issues of environmental concerns are discussed and debated in order to seek solutions (e.g. the rural community forest users groups), leading to competing constructions of the environment that are not resolved in consensus.

In terms of a multiplicity of publics, Butsch (2007: 9) after reviewing various empirical studies in *Media and Public Spheres* writes: “The overall impression of the chapters in this book confirms the criticism that few public spheres meet the standards of Habermas”. In regard to this, Butsch (2007: 9) points out that there exist “public spheres of varying sorts and qualities”. He thus argues:

“If we relax the criteria of reasoned deliberation among equals for a common good, and we accept the presence of multiple public spheres, then we find public spheres of all sorts in many places, included, abetted or unrestrained by today’s pervading media.” (Butsch, 2007:9)

Indeed, Habermas’ concept of the public sphere underestimates the existence of public spheres of many forms. Therefore, although this thesis uses the concept of

the public sphere to explore constructions of the environment in the media as well as in local contexts, the thesis challenges the Habermas' idealisation of the public sphere since the study sees the existence of multiple forms of public spheres.

It is widely "acknowledged that 'the public' is a very heterogeneous group; it is as multifaceted and unpredictable as the individuals that compose it" (Burns et al., 2003: 184). Therefore, the term "publics" or "public spheres" are used in this thesis indicating that while the thesis adopts the concept of the public sphere, it supports critics' viewpoints that publics are multiple and subject to forces of power and exclusion (e.g. newsworthiness). The terms "publics" or "public spheres" are used interchangeably in this thesis because both represent a multiplicity of individuals in society. This is unlike Habermas' concept of the "public" or the "public sphere" in which the members of the public sphere are bound by "common consensus". The term "public" also recurs in this thesis as part of commonly used terms in science communication such as "public understanding of science", "public environmental knowledge", "public concern", "public claims-making", "public-agenda", "public arena". It should be noted that in this usage the term "public" does not refer to Habermas' concept of the "public" but should be read as "publics" representing heterogeneous groups of people.

Certainly, as discussed earlier, Habermas' concept of the public sphere fails to accommodate public spheres as multiple spaces of communication. While there has been serious concern among scholars about the exclusivity of the public sphere, Niklas Luhmann is one of the theorists probably best-known for his debate with Habermas. While Habermas focused on the role of rational critical debate in building public consensus, Luhmann believed that it is very difficult to reach a consensus because people hold different perceptions and his main focus is on the communication which occurs within the social system (Outhwaite, 1994). In contrast to Habermas' concept of the public sphere, for Luhmann, it is "not necessary to combine the concept of public sphere with implications of rationality or irrational elements of 'mass psychology' " (Bentele, 2005: 708). In this view, Habermas and Luhmann's concepts of the public sphere differ because for Luhmann the public sphere does not necessarily require rational or irrational elements in communication among the citizens. Luhmann thus questions

Habermas' ideal public sphere where the citizens discuss issues to reach a common consensus. Instead, Luhmann considers the public sphere as a significant sphere where a political system observes the external environment; he doubts the emergence of public opinion in this process, as these opinions do not exactly represent what people think. As Luhmann (2000: 105) points out,

“Public accessibility of communications in the political apparatus of domination is thus expanded with the aid of the printing press, and only afterwards does the idea emerge of public opinion as the ultimate authority for judging of political affairs.”

Thus, according to Luhmann, the media did not play a role in opinion formation as in Habermas' earlier concept. Rather, the idea of public opinion emerged only after the development of press, who played a role as a carrier of public opinion. Luhmann (2000: 105) therefore outlines the functions of the mass media to be “not the production but the representation of the public[s]”. In this regard, the media as such do not play a role in the formation of a public sphere; rather it just represents a public sphere in accordance with the media interest. In fact, the media help create pseudo-environment among the publics and therefore the world perceived in pseudo-environment cannot be considered real (Lippmann, 1922).

As Deane (2005: 178) notes, “[m]uch commentary on media in relation to the public sphere over the recent years portrays an almost linear process of the erosion of the public sphere and the media's role in creating it”. Outhwaite (1994: 11) however states that liberal-conservatives do not consider the situation to be as serious as Habermas' portrayal of the degeneration of the public sphere as a consequence of the media. He puts it thus:

“For Luhmann, for example, public opinion as a sphere of communication becomes, like most things, more and more differentiated, specialized, institutionalized and professionalized. It is no longer appropriate, if it ever was, to think in terms of a subject of public opinion, the ‘public’ whose opinion is claimed to be.” (Outhwaite, 1994: 11)

In this regard, Outhwaite highlights Luhmann's attempt to separate the publics from public opinion; Luhmann regards society as the sum of all communications occurring in the social system and not as a network of individuals unified by

common beliefs. Hence, in modern societies where communication forms are highly differentiated, these operate independently according to their own specific functions. Indeed, in a society where multiple forms of publics exist, it is unlikely that the individuals possess common beliefs. This makes constructions of the environment even more complex due to the multiplicity of publics in media society. However, Luhmann's formulation of communication in the public spheres is not fully accepted by scholars. He is criticised for underestimating the uncertainty in the complex communication environment of today's multi-faceted communication-driven world.

Grant (2004: 218) notes critically in respect of Luhmann that "the communication theoretical components of Luhmann's systems theory are in need of revision" as he considers that Luhmann's theory of communication "tends to underestimate uncertainty in communication". As Grant (2004: 221) puts it: "communication is inherently uncertain by virtue of its reliance on media, agents, contexts and listeners". Here, he highlights the uncertainty brought about by multiple causes in a communication system in society. In this sense, "[t]he uncertainty of communication actually means that even when we think we choose clear, stable form of the *penumbra of unselected information* remains" (Grant, 2007: 183-184). He therefore stresses the fact that unlike in the past, system theory should not underestimate uncertainties in communication in a changing public sphere. Grant (2000: 15) argues that "the public sphere tends to lose its substance and also needs to be reconsidered". He puts it as: "Public sphere - whether in Enlightenment times or in today's media worlds - is composed of communications whose contexts cannot be located so easily" (Grant, 2000: 15). It is therefore necessary to understand the complexities which communication brings in society as it is multi-faceted and its context has changed over time mainly due to consumer culture. Indeed, as Grant suggested while considering the constructions of the environment both in the media and in local contexts it is imperative to understand how the media operate, who the audiences are and what the local contexts are since all of these factors are responsible in creating uncertainties in a communication system. Thus, this study seeks the data from both the media and the local contexts to understand how the media and local constructions are interlinked and explore constructions of the environment in multi-mediated complex society.

3.1.2 Media and the Public Sphere(s)

As McKee (2005: 5) notes, “academic writing systematically uses the term ‘public sphere’ to describe the virtual space where communication about public issues takes place, in everyday discourse we often talk about ‘the media’ instead”. As both are not “exactly interchangeable”, he points out that “public sphere is a bigger thing than just ‘the media’ ” (McKee, 2005: 5). McKee (2005: 5) stresses the importance of the media since “only in the mass media that *vast populations* of people can come together to exchange ideas”. Thus, the media are the arena where the contestations take place among the members of the public spheres. However, competitions for newsworthiness and selection processes play a role in deciding whose voices to be included.

Deane (2005: 177) notes, “[t]he role of the media has been particularly highlighted by Habermas in forming a crucial constituent and catalyst for the existence of the public sphere”. Habermas emphasises the critical role of the media in the public sphere in the eighteenth century when responsibility focused on highlighting political controversy. However, the press which articulated the reasoning process during the enlightenment time changed as the members of the public sphere started losing “their common ground” (Calhoun, 1992: 25) and due to these transformations, the public sphere became “more an arena for advertising than a setting for rational-critical debate” (Calhoun, 1992: 26). In this regard, the orientation of mass media changed to the extent that “[b]y the same token the integrity of the private sphere which they promise to their consumers is also an illusion” and “[t]he world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only” (Habermas, 1989: 171). Certainly, as Habermas terms it, although the media today appear as a vehicle in creating the public sphere, this is just a false impression because its orientation towards consumers is inclined more towards the sustainability of the media system. In fact, the concern of the mass media is “simply to be a commercial success” (Luhmann, 2000: 39). One of the main reasons for the commodification of the media has been the growing competition in a consumer-oriented market where the “content is increasingly being shaped by the demands of advertisers and sponsors who pay for the newly liberalized media, and an increasingly intense focus on profitability” (Deane, 2005: 182).

As most of the media operated today are heavily dominated by the need for the generation of profit, they cannot be considered as a reliable basis for opinion formation. Moreover, the availability of multiple sources has resulted in fragmentation of society based on consumptions (Calhoun, 1992). Indeed, the growth of the media and an “information explosion” (Luhmann, 2000) generated by various media sources has opened up more challenges as the scenario is becoming more complex. As Luhmann (2000) outlines, the information explosion is in fact giving rise to loss of its “information value” in a communication system. This means that the media, must process more information in a compressed timescale. However, Luhmann (2000: 20) points out that the notion of “information value” seems to differ in the case of an advertisement which is “repeated several times in order thus to inform the reader, who notices the repetition of the value of the product”. Luhmann (2000: 20) points out how the “reflexive figure of the information value of non-information” is used in advertising, making use of the same, old, and repeated information.

In terms of information other than advertising, Luhmann (2000: 19) claims: “[i]nformation cannot be repeated; as soon as it becomes an event, it becomes non-information”. Luhmann (2000: 20) thus points out that “in inevitably transforming information into non-information” media itself creates a kind of vacuum in an information system; “[i]n actual fact, every communication generates social redundancy”, which means the “immediate need for new information”. Certainly, there is no limit on information required. This necessitates more options in communication media sources. According to Grant (2007: 183):

“[...] the indeterminacy of the range of communication options we have at our disposal in different cultures, different languages, different media and different social roles is not actually determinable at all.”

Grant (2007: 167) points out that today there are many communication options from which to select, and as a result, there is limited attention in “an information-rich global communication system”. Therefore, the greater number of communication options do not signify extensive information-sharing among the publics because people have limited attention spans. Moreover, the availability of varieties of the media such as multiple television channels does not mean

information at lower cost or free flow of information because many are available only in pay-services. This means that one has to spend more to access better programmes signified as quality information. Nightingale (2007: 185) points out:

“[...] the change from free-to-air services to pay-services that involve multiple contractual arrangements between clients and providers, means that television’s capacity to communicate the public sphere[s] to the masses can no longer be taken for granted.”

Here, television, although it has the capacity to reach extensive publics, is limited by its pay-to-view programmes, and this restricts its reach. On the other hand, the growth and multiple choices in the media and programme selection have amplified confusion among consumers as the different programmes have different viewers, generating fragmentation of the mass viewers. Indeed, modern day people rely heavily on the reality brought forward by mass media. People are thus seen to become adapted to a ‘mediatised’ environment and enjoy their participation in the public spheres which the media have populated. This kind of participation is considered an important aspect of today’s information world - be it in print, radio, television or the internet. For example, SMS voting for television programmes is popular, where viewer participation gives some sense of unlocking the gap. In this regard, Nightingale (2007: 190) writes:

“While the emphasis on ‘participation’ may suggest that TV voting actually grooms the audience for public sphere activity, the lack of transparency in the voting process and its commercial character must also be taken into account, since similarities to the democratic principle of one person one vote is strongly challenged by this position.”

Moreover, the availability of voting services to many persons many times without consideration for “one person one vote” challenges the democratic principle of the voting system in terms of representation of person by vote counts. While Nightingale highlights voting systems in television channels, similar reflections can be seen in different forms of media; radio is no exception. Although there are flourishing community radio stations worldwide, as in Nepal, a question arises in terms of true participation and democratic role in complex media systems driven by the competition for newsworthiness.

Studies such as that carried out by Lax (2007) in the UK indicated that the expansion of radio stations due to new “digital technology has not resulted in a diversity of voices” in these stations (Butsch, 2007: 12). This study also reveals that such expanded media technology does not recreate a quasi-universal public sphere. Rather, it intensifies the “refeudalization resulting in a dimension of the public sphere” as there remains “concentration of radio station ownership in the hands of a few large broadcast organizations that deliver national programming with little local content” (Butsch, 2007: 12). Indeed, such ownership may significantly impact the contents of the media to favour corporate owners. Therefore, the content of such national programming, though claiming to have diversity and inclusiveness, can be an example of exclusion. Taking this into account, this thesis addresses the question of whether the *Batabaran Dabali* programme, aired on a popular community radio station (Radio Sagarmatha) can be part of a participatory, rationally discursive public sphere through discussions on environmental issues among the interviewees on the programme. In other words, it examines the role of *Batabaran Dabali* in constituting a public sphere. While Radio Sagarmatha claims to be participatory in nature, this study raises the question of inclusion of the “voice of the voiceless” in *Batabaran Dabali* (see Chapter 6.2.2). The study reveals that *Batabaran Dabali* not only excludes women and low caste people but its contents are also of little relevance to locals, although the station claims to be non-commercial community radio station.

Long before Habermas published *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Walter Lippmann in 1922 had documented the deterioration of the media in his classic *Public Opinion*. Lippmann is influential as he was one of the first to give insights on how mass media affects policies regarding publics (Langbert, 2008). Lippmann’s analysis is relevant to this study as it addresses many current issues of mass media communication. In this book, Lippmann (1922: 32) stressed the need for the media to work in parallel to political organisations so that it can contribute to political decision rather than just act behind as “apologist, critic, or reporter”. He argues that the deteriorating situation of the press, where opinions are translated by the media, means that the media cannot be a mirror of public opinion.

While many raise concerns regarding the inclusive capacity of the public sphere, there is a growing issue about the amount of time and attention people pay to becoming active citizens who contribute to opinion formation. Peters (1995: 14) points out:

“Recent debates about public opinion and democratic theory turn precisely on this issue: should the public[s] participate in civic life actively, or is it enough that they have access to news and information in the media?”

Indeed, in Peters’ view there is also growing concern towards the level of participation. In addition, he asks: “how can the ‘public[s]’ participate when the media seem the sole providers of public space[s]?” (Peters, 1995: 14). This in fact seems true today as the media has occupied almost every sector whether political, social, economic, religious or educational. However, many scholars are questioning whether the media actually impacts the public spheres. As Butsch (2007: 3) puts it: “The debates have produced fewer answers and no consensus on what is a public sphere, or whether or in what form it exists”. Although many scholars are critical of the public sphere theory, it still is important because of its strength in formulating “multi-dimensional perspectives” at societal, institutional and communicative levels (Sangsingkeo, 2011: 43) and therefore is valuable in this study to analyse the data from the media and focus group discussions held with a variety of groups (lay and experts) in rural and urban settings. It is used to understand how *Batabaran Dabali* situates itself as an elite public sphere (consisting mostly of high-caste educated male members of society) and to understand how it is challenged by the multiplicity of the public spheres such as micro public spheres emerging in rural villages in Nepal.

The concept of the “public sphere” is used throughout this thesis “to refer to the realm of influence that is created when individuals engage in communication through conversation, argument, debate and questions” (Cox, 2006: xx). In this thesis, “democratic”, “vibrant” and “attentive” public spheres refer to Habermas’ conceptualisation of the ideal public sphere that plays an active role in public activities, while the “passive” public sphere refers to the public sphere that lacks involvement of citizens in public reasoning. Similarly, “elite” public sphere refers to Habermas’ earlier conception of public sphere which was criticised for not being

inclusive enough in accommodating women, lower class and socially marginalised people. The “multiple”, “alternative”, “more inclusive”, “competing” and “micro” public spheres refer to the concepts put forward by those who criticise Habermas’ normative public sphere. The thesis will reflect how the concept of universalism of the public sphere is challenged by the various forms of public spheres as well as by the media’s operational focus on newsworthiness and agenda-setting. Rather, the drive for newsworthiness intensifies selections contributing to multiple constructions of the environment in the media.

3.2 News Values

This research aims to examine the issues and agendas given importance in the media and explore media sources as well as source contexts so as to identify media representations of environmental stories in Nepal. It is therefore essential to understand how the media identify a story as newsworthy and as such is given consideration in its coverage. It is also important to understand “why some stories emerge into the media arena, and others do not” (Lester, 2010: 72) with implications for public sphere theory. Several studies (Anderson, 1997; Cox, 2006; Lester, 2010) suggest that not all environmental stories receive similar attention in the media (see Chapter 4). Indeed, in a globalised heavily-mediated environment of multiple publics, there is intense competition for attention. Thus the notion of what makes the headlines - newsworthiness - takes centre stage. As Greer (2007: 26) points out:

“Newsworthiness is shaped by *news values* - those criteria that determine which events come within the horizon of media visibility, and to what extent, and which do not.”

Indeed, “an increasing newsworthiness of events increases the probability that it becomes a news story” for the journalists whereby the newsworthiness of an event or news story is established by considering several news values (Schwarz, 2009: 1). Therefore, news values or news criteria are considered important for fast and effective news production (Ryan, 1991). However, there is a wide range of viewpoints on how an event becomes attractive, appealing or newsworthy to journalists. If an event involves conflict, is dramatic or comes from official sources, there is a high chance that it will be considered newsworthy (Weaver and Wilhoit,

1991). This in fact poses a challenge to the public sphere theory because unlike in the concept of the public sphere which upholds in democratic participation, emphasis remains here on selection that depends upon many people: reporters, editors, producers, corporate owners; there is a long filtration process.

Since the early twenties, many scholars have analysed news. One of the earliest accounts of news values can be found in the work of Walter Lippmann (1922). Thereafter, the lists of criteria which make news have continued to grow and the list continues. Indeed, news values themselves have vague definitional boundaries. As Bell (1991: 79) points out, the “journalist’s idea of news values is a slippery one”. Thus, although in practice journalists implicitly make an effort to meet news criteria, they themselves are at times not fully clear which events have news value. The following section examines the difficulties in reaching common agreement by different scholars in underpinning what makes news. Firstly, it explores the classical account in the early work of Walter Lippmann (1922), whose work on the “Nature of News” is still very relevant despite having been neglected by many in news analysis. This is followed by the exploration of news values by Galtung and Ruge (1965). As they are considered generally to be the first theorists to catalogue the criteria which makes news, their list will be treated as the basis for comparison with other scholars’ concepts. Hall (1973) is also notable for pointing out the ideological factor, missing from Galtung and Ruge’s list. Bell’s (1991) emphasis on news sources and McGregor’s (2002) list of criteria such as “visualness” provide some additions to Galtung and Ruge’s list; Niklas Luhmann’s examination of typical “selectors” of news provides a critical analysis of news values.

3.2.1 Classical Accounts of News Values

Lippmann’s analysis of news in *Public Opinion* provides a useful starting point for an understanding of the concept of news values. His seminal work, written in 1922, offers a valuable contribution to the notion of newsworthiness and is still relevant in the current media context as it addresses contemporary issues and provides insights into the nature of news in modern society. A further classical work was the publication of lists of news values by Galtung and Ruge (1965) which effectively attached these authors to the theory of news values as closely as the “Hoover with

the vacuum cleaner”, to put it in Watson’s (2008: 158) term. While Galtung and Ruge’s list of news values are referred to by many as a basis for the study of journalism, test factors for empirical research and quick reference for news selection, they are not beyond criticism. After the formulation of news values in 1965, within a decade Hall (1973) argued that lists as such fail to address what lies behind the news in terms of ideology. Indeed, scholars have different viewpoints on how news is evaluated, mediated and selected at different desks. Nevertheless, in considering their viewpoint, news is not simply the reporting of what has happened; rather, the final news product reaches the publics after several layers of processing.

3.2.1.1 The “Nature of news”

Lippmann (1922: 4) argues that people do not see the world but instead develop “pictures in their heads”. In addition, people usually respond to what is already set in their minds and heads. Lippmann terms this as the response to the “pseudo-environment”. He argues that opinions are formed within a “pseudo-environment” where “the triangular relationship between the scene of action, the human picture of that scene, and the human response to that picture” meet (Lippmann, 1922: 16-17). Lippmann (1922: 30) is therefore sceptical of the perception of the real world developed in the pseudo-environments as the real world is distorted by several factors such as “artificial censorships”, “the limitations of social contact”, lack of time for “public affairs” and “short messages” which are “compressed”. In Lippmann’s view the world perceived in pseudo-environments cannot be considered real as it is already changed. He considers the media as the creator of the “pseudo-environment” from which messages are received only after being processed in many ways. As Lippmann (1922: 46) states, the information which reaches the publics through the press is censored “at its source” and a “very much larger body of fact never reaches the whole public[s] at all” or does so “very slowly” if at all. Lippmann accounts for this as the nature of news.

Lippmann (1922: 341) argues that the “news is not a mirror of social conditions” as there are pre-conditions in newspapers about what will get covered. In this regard, to achieve coverage there must be a definite occurrence, and this coverage is possible only if someone elite comments about something, some new events occur

in society or something happens which the editor considers to have news value. Lippmann (1922: 344-345), however, points out that the reporting of these incidents is not the “simple recovery of obvious facts”; rather it depends upon the choices of a “publicity man”. Lippmann (1922: 345) considers the editor of a newspaper responsible for giving “shape to facts” as the editor is the one who decides what the publics see in the newspaper and holds the power to select or reject news. Thus, Lippmann’s notion of the pseudo-environment has a strong connection with public opinion as public opinion is a media construct. In other words, public opinion is a media selection depending on newsworthiness and agenda-setting. Although Lippmann refers to newspapers and not radio in his book, it still is relevant in this study in order to explore representations of the environment in *Batabaran Dabali* and access how environmental news and issues are mediated both by the host and the interviewees in the programme.

As Lippmann notes in his early account, publics receive a particular fact only after it has been processed in the newsroom. To put it in his words:

“Every newspaper when it reaches the reader is the result of a whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed, in what position they shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, what emphasis each shall have. There are no objective standards here. There are conventions.” (Lippmann, 1922: 354)

Lippmann (1922: 347) points out that the news is transformed during its selection process, and that “journalism is not a first hand report of the raw material. It is a report of that material after it has been stylized”. Indeed, the media are highly selective. They compete for newsworthiness of a story and go through several steps in selection processes. In this regard, news reporting in the media contributes to the construction of reality which is already ‘framed’.

Lippmann’s analysis of news in the early twentieth century is highly relevant even in the current context. His underpinnings, such as the selection of news with dramatic value, the role of “publicity man” as an internal gatekeeper, the influence of external gatekeepers such as the advertising business and the role of the publics towards the press are equally important today in developing an understanding of

how news is shaped. Above all, his analysis of how the public develops images in pseudo-environments i.e. through agenda-setting is relevant regarding how the media design news of viewers', listeners' or readers' choice (e.g. current reality TV shows) and how public opinion is formed by the press as in opinion polls. Lippmann has not formally termed these news characteristics but contemporary scholars use the terms "newsworthiness" and "gatekeepers". Nevertheless, Lippmann's earlier account has proved influential for a number of classical as well as contemporary theorists who argue that the media are constructors of reality.

3.2.1.2 Criteria of news values

Galtung and Ruge's classic list of news values was first published in *The Structure of Foreign News: The Presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crises in Four Norwegian Newspapers* in 1965. According to Bell (1991), the twelve-point criteria of news values they developed is considered to be the "foundation study of news values" (Bell, 1991: 155). Galtung and Ruge's influential list of twelve criteria can be summarised as:

1. *Frequency*: An event that occurs suddenly and easily has a better chance of being selected as news.
2. *Threshold*: An event has to cross the "threshold" so as to become news, i.e. "the more violent the murder the bigger the headlines it will make" (Galtung and Ruge, 1965: 66).
3. *Unambiguity*: An event having less ambiguity has propensity for being selected as news.
4. *Meaningfulness*: News which is relevant to the audience and which reflects their culture is more likely to be picked up. Galtung and Ruge term this "cultural proximity". They also find other dimensions of meaningfulness in terms of the relevancy of the news. As Galtung and Ruge note, an event happening in a culturally distant place can carry the same meaning to a reader who shares the similar culture. For example, the breaking news of Nepal may strike Nepalese in Britain in a similar way as the people residing in Nepal.
5. *Predictability*: According to Galtung and Ruge (1965: 67), "[a] person predicts that something will happen and this creates a mental matrix for easy reception

and registration of the event if it does finally take place”. In this case, an event predicted by the news maker has a higher chance of being selected as news.

6. *Unexpected*: the more unexpected the event, the higher the chance of it being selected as news. According to this hypothesis, an event needs to satisfy the criteria of cultural relevancy and predictability but also has to happen suddenly and unexpectedly.
7. *Continuity*: Once news is formed, further news based on this item finds it easier to get coverage, i.e. if an event has already hit the headline, “then it will *continue* to be defined as news” (Galtung and Ruge, 1965: 67).
8. *Composition*: News can also be chosen in order to balance the entire “composition” in a format. For example, if there is bad news all day, some good news may fit well.
9. *Elite Nations*: As Galtung and Ruge suggest, events in elite nations receive greater coverage than those in non-elite ones.
10. *Elite People*: Elite people also attract headlines. For example, royalty, presidents, prime ministers and celebrities are in the news because they are elite; the criteria of news hardly matters in this case because what they say and do is itself news.
11. *Personification*: If an event can be personalised, it is more newsworthy. Galtung and Ruge define “personification” as the involvement of a person with an event.
12. *Negativity*: If news carries “negativity”, it is more newsworthy in the media. However, Galtung and Ruge point out that negative events also tend to satisfy other criteria such as frequency and unexpectedness, which can quite easily give propensity of coverage (Galtung and Ruge, 1965).

The early, influential account of Galtung and Ruge notes that news passes through three main phases i.e. “selection”, “distortion” and “replication” before it finally reaches an audience. In other words, it undergoes a process of filtration and is replicated until it becomes news. Although Galtung and Ruge initially developed news criteria “to help explain why the news media in a given country” select particular international news items and not others (Braun, 2009: 5), these criteria have been applied in many empirical studies (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Bell, 1991; Braun, 2009; Schwarz, 2009). In this study, Galtung and Ruge’s list is fully

reproduced as the list is considered as the basis for studying news values. However, many scholars (Hall, 1973; Bell, 1991; McGregor, 2002) consider that the list designed by Galtung and Ruge does not seem sufficient for the analysis of news today. Indeed, Galtung and Ruge's list does not explain other internal or external factors influential to news which will be discussed below.

3.2.1.3 Ideology and the news

Hall (1973: 182) criticises the criteria of Galtung and Ruge saying that these long lists “identify the formal elements in news making, but they do not suggest what these ‘rules’ index or represent”. Hall notes that Galtung and Ruge consider formal news values as routine practice. He claims that such formal criteria of news selection “operated by professionals as a set of ‘rules of thumb’, are no less rooted in the ideological sphere” of news handlers (Hall, 1973: 184). He thus suggests that we need to see the basic ideological structure in the news combined with the news values. Hall distinguishes two levels of news values: formal and ideological. While the ideological level belongs to a “realm of moral political discourse in the society”, the formal levels of “news values belong to the world and discourse of the newspaper, to newsmen as a professional group” (Hall, 1973: 179). These two aspects are not distinguishable in practice; they operate in combination with each other. He explains this by the example of the selection of news photographs:

“The editor not only looks at and selects photo in terms of impact, dramatic meaning, unusualness, controversy, the resonance of the event signified, etc. (formal news values): he considers at the same time how these values will be treated or ‘angled’ - that is, interpretatively coded.” (Hall, 1973: 180)

As Hall explains, news first passes through formal news values. It then goes through editorial gates before it reaches receivers. In order to consider a piece of story, report or a photograph as part of news, it has to have three basic criteria i.e. a story must have a quality to be linked with an event; it must have happened recently or a person in a newsroom must rank it as newsworthy. Hall explains that the ideological aspect which the editor uses in the selection of photographs is not easily seen or transparent in the news formation. He terms this overlapping as “double articulation” and states that it is the one “which binds the inner discourse of the newspaper to the ideological universe of the society” (Hall, 1973: 180). Hall argues

that the news professionals cannot differentiate between these despite working with these two aspects. Hall convincingly argues that Galtung and Ruge fail to address the background of news values in terms of ideology. However, McGregor (2002) criticises that such claim has just dressed Galtung and Ruge's criteria into the "ideological trappings". She is of the opinion that the newsworthiness of a story is "confirmed in the newsroom by the acknowledgement of superiors and by peer envy and praise" (McGregor, 2002: 2). However, her formulation seems vague as she does not give clear idea about how such "acknowledgement", "peer envy" or "praise" works along with the formal criteria of news selection.

3.2.2 News Values Updated

Various scholars continue to suggest additional news criteria. As Ryan (1991: 31) puts it, "there is no end to the list of news criteria". Among them, while Bell (1991) has contributed by listing additional criteria to Galtung and Ruge's list, Luhmann (2000) in *Reality of Mass Media* has listed "selectors" typically found in the news. Moreover, McGregor (2002) has proposed four new news values in *Restating News Values: Contemporary Criteria for Selecting the News*. This section will further explore how the classical accounts of news values have been refashioned.

3.2.2.1 News and its sources

Bell's *The Language of News Media* emphasises the role sources play in forming news. As he points out, "[n]ews is what an authoritative source tells a journalist" (Bell, 1991: 191). In this regard, he finds two broad kinds of news sources i.e. the "suppliers of information" and the "news actors" (Bell, 1991: 191). As Bell states, journalists often want to identify the supplier of information. Similarly, the news actors are the ones "whose own utterances have news value - announcements, reactions, proposals, and the like" (Bell, 1991: 191). He also points out that journalists mostly seek evidence of sources' credentials while developing news. If the source is not strong enough, journalists have a tendency to discard the news. Nevertheless, external sources are not the sole voice in the media. Journalists themselves can act as the sources in many instances - as evidenced in *Batabaran*

Dabali where the interviewers and reporters play a strong role in the constructions of the environment.

According to Bell (1991) news value depends mainly on two cases in terms of its sources. Firstly, the source is considered valid when the person speaking is elite, as “[t]alk is news only if the right person is talking” (Bell, 1991: 193). Secondly, journalists look for the credibility of a source (Bell, 1991). Pointing out his own study of climate change news of 1989 in New Zealand, Bell (1991) says that he found 80 percent of sources to be from local or national government. He adds: these are the “part of institutional network where journalists expect to get information” (Bell, 1991: 191) and there is always the high possibility of journalists ignoring other alternative sources such as “individuals, opposition parties, unions, minorities, fringe groups, the disadvantaged” (Bell, 1991: 192). This proves to be true in other studies too (see Cox et al., 2008). Since influence of sources cannot be ignored in the constructions of the environment in the media, this needs particular attention in this study.

Bell (1991) highlights the role of the sources in news selection and claims that most of the news values listed by Galtung and Ruge relate to the properties of the events and actors except their “continuity” and “composition” factors which he finds to relate to news gathering and processing. Bell adds four news values, “competition”, “co-option”, “predictability” and “prefabrication”, to the list of Galtung and Ruge. Bell argues that Galtung and Ruge do not consider the flip side of their “continuity” criterion. He states that “competition” exists in newsrooms in such a way that there is always tendency to beat the rival newspapers. In this process, rather than continuing a news story, it may be discarded unless it has an exceptional news value attached. As Bell (1991: 159) points out, “[c]ontinuity and competition seem like incompatible values, but they exist side by side in news work”. According to Bell (1991), “co-option” means any simple story linked to one already gaining high news value i.e. associating an incident of aircraft turbulence with a high profile story about the greenhouse effect. Similarly, Bell says, adept newsmakers use “predictability” to schedule news. However, he admits that the predictable nature of news gathering contradicts the high value of unexpected news. Finally, Bell notes “prefabrication” as the use of ready made texts which journalists use with few

modifications. As Bell (1991: 160) says, “prefabrication” news value “greatly enhances the likelihood of something appearing in the news”. Bell claims that Galtung and Ruge have overlooked the significant role of pre-existing text in news selection. Indeed, the ease with which news can be modified in the current context, supported by digital technologies, has a significant impact on news selection.

Despite Bell’s additions of news values, some missing criteria remain. While he emphasises the importance of sources which make news, he does not mention the influence of other sources which mediate news. Hence, Bell’s additional news criteria do not seem to complete the list of news values. Bell (1991: 156) was right to say that his “list does not claim to be complete, but recognizes those factors which can be seen to have a direct impact on the structure of news discourse”. Certainly, as Bell acknowledges, his additions do not complete the criteria of news either. However, his formulation is important in understanding the role of sources in news selection. The concept of the role of sources will be incorporated in this study in order to address the research question: “what are the news sources and what are the source contexts in *Batabaran Dabali*?”

3.2.2.2 Typical “selectors” of news

As discussed above, even though news “convinces us that it replicates reality”, it is “highly constructed” as it produces “only a version of reality” (Watson, 2008: 174). In fact, the media construction itself is a “selection” in which news values play a role in determining newsworthiness of a story. Luhmann (2000) terms these news values as “selectors”. According to Luhmann (2000), selectors such as “surprise”, “conflict”, “quantities”, “local relevance”, “norm violations”, “topicality” and special cases such as “expression of opinion” are the typical constituents of news. Luhmann points out that information has to be new so that it comes as a “surprise” to the news makers. He explains that the surprise value of news comes with the newness of the event. The other criterion which Luhmann points out is “conflict” in stories which have a high potentiality of coverage in news media. Similarly, he includes increased value of “quantity”, such as comparative figures on which news are selected. Luhmann finds greater informational significance in large number quantities such as large numbers of deaths in an accident, huge losses in a fraud

case. He also stresses the fact that feeling of locality or “local relevance” in news aids in lending “weight to a piece of information” (Luhmann, 2000: 29). This is “presumably because people are so confident of knowing what is going on in their own locality that every additional piece of information is especially valued” (Luhmann, 2000: 29).

The other news selector Luhmann (2000: 29) lists is “norm violations” which “deserve particular attention”. He associates “norm violations” with the violations of law. These “norm violations” often enter the media in the form of scandals. In terms of scandals, he argues that “further scandals can be caused” as a result of how the scandals are reported earlier (Luhmann, 2000: 29). He further explains: “By reporting such norm violations and scandals, the mass media are able to generate a greater feeling of common concern and outrage than in other ways” (Luhmann, 2000: 29). In his view, the media develops common concern among the publics by working towards maintaining morality in society. However, he points out that expressing the media’s role in maintaining morality does not mean that media are able to “raise society’s moral standards towards good behaviour” (Luhmann, 2000: 31). In fact, news creates noise or redundancy as according to Luhmann the media transforms “information” to “non-information”. Luhmann (2000: 33) also refers to “topicality” as news items which “concentrate on individual cases - incidents, accidents, malfunctions, new ideas”. He points out that once these individual cases are covered in the news, the same events sometimes give opportunity to report similar events or series of such events. Luhmann (2000: 33) claims that such conditions do not remain constant as further reporting depends upon the “interest of the public[s]”. However, it does not seem practical in day-to-day news processing as the media can hardly track whether their news coverage is interesting to readers, listeners or viewers. Luhmann finds “expression of opinion” as a special case of news coverage. In this case, opinion has to come from a remarkably reputed source while news has to be interesting as well. Luhmann states that news content such as letter-to-the-editor is also pre-selected based partly on the reputation of the source. However, newspapers develop this section in a tactful manner without revealing it to be pre-selected. Rather, these are presented as if they reflect the opinions of ordinary people. This reminds of what Habermas (1989) says: the media refeudalise the public.

Luhmann (2000: 36) correctly points out that the selection of information, using different models or preset criteria, is not easy as “selection itself is a complex event - regardless of which criteria it follows”. He goes on to explain that the media holds the power to transform even non-news into news since when information is stylised “in the mode of news and reporting, people assume and believe that it is relevant” and “that it is true” (Luhmann, 2000: 26). Even in television, as Luhmann explains, there is a chance of increased possibility of manipulation such as “use of several cameras and overlays of recording”, preference in “perspective and film clips”, “events” and “broadcasting time” (Luhmann, 2000: 39). In this case, as Luhmann points out, viewers tend to believe in what they see on real-time television news as they think that there is less chance of contradiction of what they visualised. While Luhmann lists typical constituents of contemporary news, he is at the same time highly critical of what forms news. Luhmann correctly says that news today is not something which is reported only when an event takes place; rather it has been a compulsion for media enterprises to develop news to have their news sections covered. In this regard, news today is unlike news in the sixteenth century where news “in the form of broadsides, ballads or crime stories” was generated only when something new happened (Luhmann, 2000: 25). Luhmann therefore questions the format of today’s news where news is developed to fill a pre-allocated space in the media. As he puts it:

“If it is the idea of surprise, of something new, interesting and newsworthy which we associate with news, then it would seem much more sensible not to report it in the same format every day, but to wait for something to happen and then publicize it.” (Luhmann, 2000: 25)

Indeed, media carries a compulsion to create news as their allocated space has to be covered. However, simply focusing on the role of the media as information and knowledge providers overlooks the role that receivers play. This is because media do not just provide “knowledge”, “meanings” and “evaluations” but leave receivers to construct their own knowledge and meaning (Schmidt, 2010: 98). Media in this regard offers experience of virtual reality (Luhmann, 2000). In fact, the media contribute to the creation of pseudo-environments (Lippmann, 1922).

3.2.2.3 *Four new news values?*

As discussed earlier, different news values occur in the literature: some had distinct features while many had similarities with the existing ones. This section explores how McGregor (2002), while pointing out the shortcomings in Galtung and Ruge's list, proposed four new news values in order to analyse news in contemporary media environment.

McGregor (2002) emphasises the importance of visual capacities in modern news selection. She suggests that there is a need for some new "television-driven" news values to add into Galtung and Ruge's list. The four new news values she proposes include: "visualness", "emotion", "conflict" and the "*celebrification* of the journalists". McGregor (2002: 6) claims that although her four proposed news values have a "taken-for-granted flavour", these would ultimately boost the "theory development about news values into the twenty-first century". According to McGregor (2002: 6), news is "driven by pictures" which can have a long-lasting effect on an audience. She therefore emphasises the power of visuals, especially in television news. McGregor (2002: 6) puts it as: "the more the event satisfies the criteria of 'visualness' the more likely the event will be selected as news". Although McGregor's main focus has remained in television news, the news value she proposes (such as "emotion") is relevant in analysing *Batabaran Dabali* in terms of finding out how the voices of victims and survivors of environmental disasters are used in the programme.

The "conflict" criterion of McGregor can be regarded to some extent as a transformation of the "negativity" of Galtung and Ruge's model as selections are mainly driven by conflict formats (McGregor, 2002). She stresses the usefulness of the proposed news value and claims that her "conflict" criterion is mainly practical for locating news of a conflict format such as political debates and controversial issues. She claims that in such debates representatives having opposing views (such as one political party versus another) are used because the media are bound to "balance" such issues. However, McGregor does not clearly state how biased the media could be in terms of selection of issues and their choice of sources.

The other new news value McGregor (2002: 4) emphasises is the “emotion” attached to news contents involving “tragedy, human interest dilemmas, survivors, victims, children and animals”. She states that the evolution of reality television shows more clearly explains how audience emotion impacts on the story selection and presentation. As McGregor (2002: 4) puts it, “the more an event exhibits an emotional sub-text the more likely that it will be selected as news”. This seems to be true not only in the television news, coverage on the radio stations is also seen to use “emotion” in which voices of the victims and survivors are used. Similarly newspapers are also seen using quotations in several instances. McGregor also claims that the “*celebrification* of the journalist” factor she proposes “gives a new twist to Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) notion of personalisation”. Here, McGregor (2002: 5) mainly focuses on the live news produced by the reporter in an event where the “camera turns the reporter from an anonymous voice and conduit into a personality and central actor in the news”. She therefore argues that in an availability of live news media where news operates on “real time”, news functions rather differently than in Galtung and Ruge’s era. As McGregor (2002: 6) notes, “[n]egative events with vivid, graphic pictures and an emotional sub-text, often presented with journalistic self promotion, will be chosen to lead today’s news”. To put it in other words: news only sells if it carries negative criteria, backed up by visuals and often when it is linked with the emotions of the audience. This in fact seems to be true in television coverage of news.

McGregor therefore argues that an event has to satisfy “enlarged criteria” so that it will be registered as news or newsworthy. However, McGregor does not seem to consider news sources such as lobbyists, governments and commercially motivated actors which may operate within the “enlarged criteria” in determining newsworthiness. In addition, McGregor’s (2002: 3) claim that the “consequence of real times news is the collapse of reflective time required by audiences to acquire meaning” does not seem to match exactly with what happens in television news. Here, by giving more emphasis to the visual power of television, she seems to underestimate how live news in television also gets mediated by use of preferred clips, different cameras, and “choice of events selected for broadcasting and choice of broadcasting time” (Luhmann, 2000: 39). Ultimately this questions her claim to

boost theory development in the twenty-first century with the addition of her four news values.

In summary, an exploration into the conceptions of news values by different scholars reveals that news values are conceptually and empirically complex. Taken together, the news values listed by the different scholars above either repeat the same values in a different way or overlap. As a result of the ever-growing list of news values, it does not seem practical to follow or depend on any one set of criteria or list of news values. Consequently, the analysis of the *Batabaran Dabali* programme in this study is carried out using a selection of different relevant news values from various scholars. While some of the criteria listed by these scholars are relevant, some are not worth noting. A new list of 13 criteria is thus developed consolidating criteria from different scholars reviewed in this section so as to examine how environmental stories are mediated in *Batabaran Dabali* (see Chapter 6). Moreover, exploration of news values in this study provides further confirmation of how *Batabaran Dabali*, a predominantly non-news programme, responds to such news values in order to make its stories newsworthy.

In addition, since the newsworthiness of any event or news story is its ability “to attract readers or viewers” (Cox, 2006: 175), this study uses focus group discussions with eighty participants to validate how, as media users they understand the newsworthiness of environmental stories. The question arises of whether or not the news values applied in order to make the events or stories newsworthy in the media can actually attract audience attention. In other words, the question is whether the stories considered newsworthy by the media are also considered newsworthy by its audiences.

3.3 Agenda-setting

This section explores how the agenda-setting role of the media constructs social issues as important. It will also explore how news values and agenda-setting are interlinked. Furthermore, it examines how the corporate agenda play a role in influencing coverage in the media.

3.3.1 Agenda-setting Theory

As discussed above, editors or gatekeepers play an important role in formulating news presentation. Gatekeeping⁶, agenda-setting and news values are therefore interlinked. However, the function of gatekeeping and agenda-setting depends on the demand created by the news values, which in turn regulate how the news is presented (Watson, 2008). In relation to gatekeeping and agenda-setting with newsworthiness, Watson (2008: 143) writes:

“Strategies of news construction, of *framing* the news - gatekeeping and agenda-setting - are examined in relation to the underpinning criteria of news selection, which we call news values or newsworthiness.”

According to agenda-setting theory, first developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), mass media set the agenda for the publics by highlighting certain issues. In this regard, the relationship between how the media frame a story and the extent to which people consider the same story to be important is “agenda-setting”. McCombs and Shaw (1972: 1) put it as follows:

“Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. In reflecting what candidates are saying during a campaign, the mass media may well determine the important issues - that is, the media may set the ‘agenda’ of the campaign.”

McCombs and Shaw pointed out that the agenda-setting capacity of the media can be a very powerful generator of perceptions among the publics as it can intensify an issue and influence public opinion. In other words: if an important issue does not receive appropriate media attention, it may not acquire importance in people’s perceptions.

Anderson (1997) points out that agenda-setting theory does not consider other influences such as friends and family. Furthermore, Watson (2008: 152) argues that the agenda-setting model is oversimplified as it does not consider the publics to “have their own agendas, shaped by their own personal circumstances”. Watson (2008: 152) states that if the same agenda is repeated in a variety of the media, the

⁶ Gatekeeping is “[r]estricting access to people or information; in news terms, a process of selecting/rejecting information for onward transmission” (Watson, 2008: 427).

publics may consider it due to the amplification of information that may ultimately convert into perceptions of the publics. Schroder and Phillips (2007: 890) however, question the role of the publics as a mere recipient of information offered by the media:

“Do they only take up responsive and reactive roles in relation to the menus and diets set by the media, or by the politicians through the media, when it comes playing a part in the democratic, collective decision-making process?”

Schroder and Phillips point out that comparatively “little is known about this” as little research exists. Croteau and Hoynes (2003: 24) argue that people are not “passive sponges that soak up the many messages they come across in the media”. As receivers are “not completely immune to the impact of media content and media technology” (Croteau and Hoynes, 2003: 24), media can be influential in setting its agenda to some extent. However, there are always possibilities that receivers may overlook these agendas as they receive a large volume of information from diverse media sources. In this context, as Luhmann (2000) states, receivers develop uncertainty due to constant generation of information. He explains the uncertainty in the media as follows: “The more information, the greater the uncertainty and the greater too the temptation to assert an opinion of one’s own, to identify with it and leave it at that” (Luhmann, 2000: 68-69). Therefore, although the media plays a role to “organize public opinion[s]” to borrow Lippmann’s term, the opinions that the publics develop may not be that intended by the media. Lippmann convincingly asserts that public opinion sometimes comes into contact with several factors such as “economic interest”, “class feeling” and “racial prejudice” and may be influenced as well as distorted. Lippmann (1922: 75) hence puts it as:

“Obviously our public opinion is in intermittent contact with complexes of all sorts; with ambition and economic interest, personal animosity, racial prejudice, class feeling and what not. They distort our reading, our thinking, our talking and our behaviour in a great variety of ways.”

As Lippmann explains, the media will not have control over it as public opinions cannot be isolated from other influential factors. If agenda-setting theory is seen to agree with Lippmann on how public opinions distort, a question is raised: how far can media draw attention to any issue through news or any other form of media

coverage applying agenda-setting theory? In this context, Cox (2006: 186) rightly points out that although agenda-setting theory may be able to “explain the importance of an issue to the public[s], it does not claim to account for what people think about this issue”. Indeed, the study of media discourse is not sufficient to understand how the media set the agenda and how the same issue is considered important in local contexts. Therefore, an investigation of the interrelationship between media framing and local construction of the environment was essential in this study. The two sets of data in this study, from *Batabaran Dabali* and from the 8 focus groups, complement each other in investigating the interrelationship between media framing and local constructions of the environment.

3.3.2 The Corporate Agenda

As discussed earlier, news values are considered important in initial screenings of the news although the criteria may become influenced by various editorial desks that act as internal gatekeepers. In addition, besides being influenced by the internal gatekeepers, who can influence media houses and limit the news flows, in many instances news can be influenced by external controllers. Corporate powers such as corporate owners and advertisers can act as “lead gatekeepers” of media outlets in presenting the issue as they hold a prominent role in filtering the news stories (Dispensa and Brulle, 2003: 81). Unfortunately, the power of corporate owners has been insufficiently considered within most accounts of news values. Lippmann briefly accounted for how news values in the media may be affected by advertising. Indeed, in order to understand how the media develops its agenda, it is also essential to understand corporate agendas that tend to regulate media. This section thus explores how media coverage is influenced by the agendas of the corporate owners.

The later part of the twentieth century saw joint stock companies and corporations as the dominant form of mass media communications, and as a result how corporate agenda dominate and control media agenda has been a key question ever since (Murdock, 1994). Murdock distinguishes two levels of control in the corporate arena i.e. allocative and the operational. According to Murdock (1994: 122), “allocative control” is control by legal owners and shareholders of corporations and

thus these “determine the overall goals and direction of corporate activity”. He differentiates operational control as:

“Operational control [...] works at a lower level and is confined to decisions about the effective use of resources already allocated and the implementation of policies already decided upon at the allocative level.” (Murdock, 1994: 122)

As Murdock argues, actors of allocative control, such as corporate owners and shareholders, are powerful enough to determine and restrict resources at the operational level where editors and reporters work. Consequently, internal gatekeepers in editorial desks have very limited control over media content as they are more often directed by external gatekeepers. Similarly, Dispensa and Brulle (2003) state that the influence of external gatekeepers leads information packaging into real danger as journalists mostly tend to be shaped by the other two factors in the news world: advertisers and corporate owners, whereas journalists hold only a third position as news shapers. Indeed, although internal gatekeepers such as reporters and editors try to push certain agendas, there is a strong possibility that these are restrained due to the “agendas of ownership and control” (Watson, 2008: 151). Watson (2008: 153) points out that it is important to understand corporate agenda in order to “focus on the actual distribution of influence one would have”. However, other powers such as governments and lobbyists also play an influential role in controlling news formation. Watson (2008: 154) thus outlines a “Tripolar model of agendas” where “policy, corporate and media” agendas combine to design the agendas of the publics. Herman and Chomsky (1988: 2) also point out that “profit orientation” and “advertising as the primary income source of the mass media” are news filters used by “the government and dominant private interests” as the routes “to get their messages across to the public[s]”. An example of how corporate agenda, together with government and media shape news can also be seen in the empirical research conducted by Dispensa and Brulle (2003) in US media coverage on global warming.

The power of government and corporate sectors is also clearly evident in the Nepalese media. As discussed in Chapter 2, although the media suffered from the monopoly of the government for many decades, in its later period private media ownerships played a role in using media as a platform for promoting opinion for

different interest groups (Dahal, 2002a). Indeed, as Herman and Chomsky (1988: 1) point out:

“In countries where the levers of power are in the hands of a state bureaucracy, the monopolistic control over the media, often supplemented by official censorship, makes it clear that the media serve the ends of a dominant elite.”

Thus, this study is concerned to identify who sets the agendas and issues in *Batabaran Dabali* and how these agendas are organised. This is mainly because Radio Sagarmatha, operated by a non-government organisation, claims that it does not provide “crass commercialization” (Radio Sagarmatha brochure, n.d.). Moreover, the station not only advocates citizen participation in its “production” phase but also in its “broadcast” phase. The study tries to identify how Radio Sagarmatha’s claim in citizen participation in its programmes fails in one of its key programmes *Batabaran Dabali* since the programme operates with exclusion of ordinary people particularly women and marginalised groups.

Chapter 4

Media, Environment and Science Communication

This chapter starts with an exploration of the way environment is constructed as a social problem by the media, both historically and in current media coverage. As Hansen (2010: 7) suggests, the “notion that the environment is an ‘issue’ or a ‘problem’ is itself the product of active rhetorical ‘work’ and construction”. The chapter will thus examine how mass media remains an important arena in which social problems are “actively constructed, defended and contested” (Hansen, 2010: 35). But, as discussed in Chapter 3, environmental issues go through organisational rituals in the media (such as passing through fundamental criteria of news values) which constrain many pressing issues to appear or be established as problems. Moreover, sources also play a crucial role in making the story newsworthy, as the media prioritise elite and credible sources (Bell, 1991; Luhmann, 2000). In consideration of this context, this chapter examines how news values operate as a selection mechanism for environmental stories and also explores how these stories are influenced by the sources contributing to the multiple constructions of the environment in the media.

In addition, taking account of the agenda-setting role of the media (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) this chapter explores how the media develop the salience of environmental issues and contribute to environmental concern by repeated coverage (Shanahan, 1993). However, as Anderson (1997) suggests, when considering the role of the media in developing environmental concern among multiple publics, the impact of culture and local context cannot be ignored. Thus, media construction of the environment and concern towards environmental problems are interlinked, and this highlights the need for further investigation of the inter-relations of these. In this regard, the two sets of data i.e. from the *Batabaran Dabali* radio programme and focus group discussions with 80 participants compliment each other in this research so that constructions of the environment both on the air and on the ground can be identified.

This chapter also explores underlying difficulties of the communication of science to diverse publics. It illustrates that both environmental topics and science coverage in general suffer from lack of media attention (Allan, 2002). The chapter suggests that earlier studies of the “public understanding of science” considered the members of what was held to be the general public as deficient in scientific knowledge (Irwin and Michael, 2003). A different perspective, free from this stereotypical view of considering lay people as having less knowledge than experts (Wynne, 1989) is essential for an understanding of public environmental knowledge as a complex construction.

4.1 Media and the Environment

This section focuses on constructions of the environment in the media. Attention is paid to how environmental news is subject to news values, criteria with examination of how environmental topics struggle with other social issues to obtain coverage. It also examines the role of sources in influencing news framing and how they act as claim-makers, and explores the influence of the agenda-setting role of the media in developing environmental concern among the diverse publics.

4.1.1 Media and the Social Construction of the Environment

The environment is a significant social, political and economic issue which is gaining momentum in the media today. As Reis (1999) noted, Rubin and Sachs were probably first to trace the beginning of environmental coverage in the media in mid-1969. However, environmental coverage in the media was not initially the result of media interest towards environmental issues. Schoenfeld, Meier and Griffin (1979) in *Constructing a Social Problem: The Press and the Environment*, examined the role of the media in constructing the environment as a social problem. They noted that the issues of environment became an “agenda” in the media only after it had been raised and talked about in different forums, printed in different publications and had begun to gain government attention. Thus, Schoenfeld et al (1979) argue that “issue entrepreneurs” initially brought media attention to environmental problems. Anderson (1997) also points out that environment as a topic depends heavily on how the issue-entrepreneurs or claims-makers portray it in society. Nevertheless, the media plays a key role in the “development and

elaboration of environmental claims whether they are being made by scientific experts or environmental groups” (Burningham, 1996: 48). Hansen (1991: 448) also suggests that in developing any problem as a “social problem”, several interactions occur, although the “problem may start with attention in one particular forum” initially. He argues: “the growth and inflection of such a problem takes place through complex interaction, involving influence and feedback processes, between a number of key fora” (Hansen, 1991: 448). In this regard, the “*environment* particularly as portrayed by media is a social construction” (Einsiedel and Coughlan, 1993: 34).

Schoenfeld et al (1979) noted that the media responded to environmental issues gradually although environmental problems remained a low priority in the years from 1969-1979. A key development was the reservation of space for reporting on environmental topics, signalled by the creation of specific roles for environmental reporters:

“By 1969-70, the environment imperative in all its manifest interdependencies had become so compelling of attention that the press simply had to respond more comprehensively. Hence the appearance of environmental reporters, environmental columns, even environmental sections.” (Schoenfeld et al., 1979: 54)

As Schoenfeld et al point out, although the press was slow in reporting environmental claims initially, the situation changed as a result of “external events” and the rise of environmental concern among various publics (Burningham, 1996: 43). Cox (2006), however, points out that the representation of the environment in the media has been “hardly uniform”. Nevertheless, the role of the media in constructing environmental issues as social problems cannot be underestimated. As Hansen (2010: 18) writes:

“If we accept the constructionist argument that environmental problems and social problems generally - do not ‘objectively’ announce themselves, but only become recognised as such through the process of public claims-making, then it is also immediately clear that media, communication and discourse have a central role and should be a central focus of study.”

In this regard, *Batabaran Dabali* provides an important forum for understanding how different claims-makers make claims about environmental issues in a variety

of ways in the media. Indeed, in understanding the construction of the environment, it is essential to “think about human relations and communication, about discourse and power” (Lester, 2010: 18) and how the media have been and continue “to be inflected by such constructions” (Lester, 2010: 7).

Hansen (1991: 444) suggests that “we must turn to a constructivist framework” so as “to understand the role of mass media in the development and the elaboration of environmental issues”. He points out that such a constructivist framework helps “consider how the wider ‘cultural givens’ and ‘cultural resonances’ help privilege the advancement of some issues and not others” as it keeps attention away from the “immediate actors involved”, such as “scientists, politicians, pressure groups and journalists” (Hansen, 1991: 454). In fact, issues can receive wider media coverage if the issues are placed in such a way that they can echo existing cultural beliefs (Hansen, 1991: 453). Anderson (1997: 13) also shares Hansen’s view in making a stand on how social and cultural factors affect news construction and claims that the “news media representations of the environment are socially and culturally constructed”. Nevertheless, that the news is not just a pure “cultural product”, but “the product of a set of institutional definitions and meanings, which in professional shorthand, is commonly referred to as *news values*” (Hall, 1973: 87). In fact, an understanding of news values in understanding which news criteria are considered in *Batabaran Dabali* in this study will give further confirmation of how this predominantly non-news programme responds to such news values.

4.1.2 News Values and Environmental Reporting

It is more than half a century since environmental reporting gained momentum. However, there are still difficulties in gaining attention for environmental problems in the media. Cox (2006: 170) notes that topics such as environmental degradation, “the loss of biodiversity” or impact of chemicals gain little space in the media. The analysis of several scholars (Hansen, 1991; Anderson, 1997; Cox, 2006) underscores the difficulties for environmental issues to achieve wide media coverage. Anderson (1997: 32) notes that the environment is one among many competing issues such as “crime”, “economic affairs”, “poverty”, “unemployment”, “health”, “race” and “gender”. She argues:

“Just because an issue becomes less prominent it does not necessarily mean that the problem has been less severe, or that it has been solved. It may be that it is competing with other issues that are considered more ‘sexy’ or compelling.”
(Anderson, 1997: 25-26)

Indeed, the news formation procedure follows a step-by-step filtration process until it satisfies the criteria of newsworthiness (Cox, 2006). This limits the opportunity for many topics to achieve coverage since media coverage is a result of selection and processing. The prevalence of previously set news criteria in the media houses further limits news coverage on environmental issues. As Chapman et al (1997: 41) write:

“[...] the continuing predominance of these traditional news values, coverage of environmental issues tends to be erratic - if the story does not fall into a predetermined set of news criteria, then its chances of receiving media exposure are slim.”

As stated above, Chapman et al (1997) stress how news values followed by the media houses will impact on the news coverage of the environment. They also note that the environmental news or stories struggle in between an input and output operation system where the part of the members of the input operation (the reporters) tend to develop stories of interest to members of the output operation (editors). As a result, even if a reporter becomes interested in in-depth coverage of environmental stories, editors may not prioritise the issue. One of the reasons is that the mass media keeps a constant eye on sellable stories. This tendency influences not just reporting on environmental issues but also minimises the chance of getting these stories into the media (Chapman et al., 1997).

Anderson (1997: 56) observes that the production of environmental news is “influenced by various types of constraints” such as “advertising pressure, editorial policy and ownership, to stylistic conventions, news cultures and the limitations of time and space”. She views three essential factors in environmental issues which mitigate against their inclusion in news stories i.e. environmental problems are not usually “dramatic”, the coverage is not usually supported by visuals, and environmental problems do not fit into 24-hour news bulletins (Anderson, 1997: 121-123). Similarly, Cox (2006) argues:

“Most environmental problems do not naturally fit these requirements for newsworthiness, because they involve slower, more diffuse and drawn-out processes or because they lack visual quality.” (Cox, 2006: 176)

Thus, when reviewing television coverage of environmental stories, Cox states that environmental news (for example, global warming) does not come with visuals and it is not easy to satisfy the criteria of newsworthiness due to its less dramatic and slower processes. However, some environmental stories attract media attention much more than others. Cox gives the example of environmental accidents such as the oil spill from the Exxon Valdez supertanker in 1989 which resulted in deaths of sea otters, shore birds and salmon which could draw wider television coverage. According to Cox, environmental stories such as that of the Exxon Valdez get wider media coverage as these fulfil news criteria.

Boykoff (2010: 17) also notes that the year “2009 ended with soaring media coverage on climate change around the world⁷” despite considering environmental coverage as not having news values as compared to other topics. This suggests that the issues relating to climate change possess a special status in the media. According to Boykoff (2010: 18), the “much-hyped and highly anticipated United Nations climate talks on Copenhagen” as well as the “news about the hacked emails of scientists from the University of East Anglia” were the main reasons, among many others, for the heightened coverage on climate change. However, Cox (2006: 170) argues that due to the lower visibility of environmental problems such as “[c]hemical contamination, the loss of biodiversity, climate change, and other threats to human health and ecological systems”, they go unnoticed for many years and even decades. He claims that environmental problems are mostly “unobtrusive” and hence linking their relevance concretely to people’s lives is rather difficult. Cox (2006: 169) finds this unobtrusive quality of environmental problems to be the reason that “makes it difficult to fit these concerns into the media’s conventions for reporting and entertaining”. According to Cox (2006: 172), the factors that constrain the production of environmental news in particular include: the owner’s influence and their economic interests; “gate-keeping and the environmental beat”;

⁷ This analysis was based on the study of media coverage by Boykoff and Mansfield of climate change or global warming in 50 newspapers around the globe during the period 2004-2009.

“criteria for newsworthiness”; “media frames” and “norms of objectivity and balance”. In terms of the “norms of objectivity and balance”, Cox (2006: 181), however, argues that reporters struggle in maintaining “genuine objectivity” in environmental reporting. Indeed, the notion of “objectivity and balance” does not seem to constrain much in the production of environmental news because the media are selective and may convert “information” into “non-information” (Luhmann, 2000). Also, most of the time the media not only reinforce elite publics (Lippmann, 1922), its discourses operate with exclusions and prohibitions in order to operate as “news” (Foucault, 1984).

Therefore, in order to understand how the environment is represented in Nepal, it is essential to focus the first part of the analysis on how news values are established and environmental reporting takes place in the Nepalese media. It is also important to understand how an environment-focused programme such as *Batabaran Dabali* selects its stories and whether the programmes are confined to news values. Moreover, it is equally important to understand how other influential factors, such as the sources of news and the agenda-setting role of the media may influence environmental coverage.

4.1.3 Environmental News Sources

As discussed in Chapter 3, for its news coverage the media largely depend on how elite, credible and reputed the sources are (Bell, 1991; Luhmann, 2000). Cox (2006: 230) also points out that the way we understand “environmental dangers” not only depends simply upon information, “but also on who speaks or interprets information about risk”. These sources do not just play a role in making the media consider their view as newsworthy, but also play a crucial part in “defining problems” (Anderson, 1993: 5). Anderson (1997: 166) points out that only after the source characterises the problem, is it “taken up by the media”. Anderson (1997: 9) takes a “culturalist position”, explaining that the production of news is not merely the outcome of “ownership and control of the media, or journalistic routines and rituals, but also of the relationship between the news media, news sources and the wider institutional arena”. In this regard, Anderson’s view gives insight into the importance of identifying the influence of sources apart from considering the role

of media owners and the journalistic practice of de/selection mechanisms in the media. Identifying the role of sources in constructions of the environment in the media in the Nepalese socio-cultural context is particularly important in this study since the media in Nepal are “powerful means for state authorities, political parties and leaders to extort citizens to achieve their policies” (Dahal, 2002a: 30) in a linear form of putatively public communications.

As Cracknell (1993) notes, besides political authorities and powerful people, other sources, such as environmental organisations, play an important role in communicating about the environment. He points out that these environmental organisations use media extensively as communication staff in environmental organisations liaise easily with the media houses (Cracknell, 1993). Hesselink (1999), however, notes that environmental organisations at times liaise with politically-affiliated people to achieve extensive media coverage. Anderson (1997: 41) argues that these organisations’ initial phase would be to capture wider media attention, although after they accept that coverage has been wide enough they may immediately move onto the further step i.e. parliamentary activities. Relatively greater coverage recently on politically highlighted environmental issues does not therefore signify “a simple reflection of a sudden deterioration of the environment” (Hansen, 1991: 443) because newsworthiness is system-internal (Luhmann, 2000).

Journalists need reliable sources from which to collect information as they have limited time for story creation. As “source choices largely influence story frames” (Liebler and Bendix, 1996 cited in Reis 1999: 150), the relationship journalists build with sources over the years and the credibility of their sources are important factors. For example, Dunwoody and Griffin’s (1993) study of Superfund sites⁸ in the United States found that journalists were least sceptical of Superfund sources when these were allowed sufficient space to frame the story in the media. Similarly, a study conducted by Hansen (1993) in four national newspapers in UK over a five year period (1987-1991) found that Greenpeace had been successful in setting itself up as a credible source. Hansen (1993: 176) suggests that apart from “extraordinary agenda-setting power” and “increasing alliance with science”, Greenpeace could

⁸ Superfund sites are “extremely contaminated sites that constitute risks to health but are difficult to clean up” (Dunwoody and Griffin, 1993: 22).

also credibly act as a trusted source for the same media. He argues however that public claims-making does not always lead to an open forum where these claims are legitimatised in the media. Hansen (2000: 55) puts it as follows:

“If the construction of social problems depends on successful public claims-making, then the mass media constitute a key public arena, in which the voices, definitions and claims of claims-makers [...] are put on public display and compete with each other for legitimacy.”

Hansen (2000: 55) rightly points out that during the news-making process, the media “play an active role in the construction, inflection and framing of both issues and claims-makers”. This ultimately gives rise to a result which is a product of both the influence of claims-makers and the ideology of the newsroom. However, claims-makers such as environmental activists are not usually favourite sources for journalists. In his analysis of coverage of environmental news, Reis (1999) observed that environmentalists and scientists were of least interest to journalists. Reis (1999: 149) found that the most cited sources were “politicians and officials/delegates”. In this regard, media coverage had a greater inclination towards “official” views and thus led to the prevalence of overtly political framings of the environment. As Anderson says, although non official sources such as environmental pressure groups “play a key role in constructing the environmental agenda” (Anderson, 1993: 51), state agencies tend to “enjoy the most privileged access to the media” (Anderson, 1993: 53). Chapman et al (1997: 42) argue that such sources of environmental news (i.e. environmental pressure groups), while having an important part to play, are “only a sub-set of the” agendas of the publics as they “are not active participants in either the politicians’ or the media’s internal spheres of activity”. In this view, their influence can be termed as minimal compared to that of the media or politicians.

4.1.4 Environmental Coverage and Agenda-Setting

According to Yin (1999: 70), agenda-setting is “one of the most prominent effects that the media have on public opinion” and, the agenda-setting role of media can be considered influential in determining the knowledge or concern of the publics regarding environmental problems (see Chapter 3.3). As Cox (2006: 184) points out, agenda-setting is the “single most influential theory of media effects that

applies to environmental news”. However, Chapman et al (1997) argue that the agenda-setting theory is “multi-layered” where three “intertwined” agendas i.e. the agendas of the media, the publics and politicians compete to form a single agenda which ultimately becomes a “national” agenda. Referring to the experience of one of the broadcast news editors in Westminster, Chapman et al (1997: 43) write,

“[...] it is clear that politicians, or rather the political class (which includes senior civil servants, lobbyists, media advisers, etc.), play a role in determining the media’s agenda, the public’s agenda and hence the national agenda.”

As stated above, Chapman et al note that out of three agendas, the political agenda is the most powerful and can dominate environmental coverage in the media. Moreover, Chapman et al also observe that media agendas not only differ among sources such as radio, television and newspapers, but within the agenda itself; there is great variation among the programmes, broadcasts or air-time given to environmental issues. Anderson (1997: 142) suggests that in certain instances the media play a role in shaping the “political agenda” although “there is no simple correlation between the political agenda and the media agenda”. Anderson (1997: 12) finds “complex interactions” among the agendas of “political, public, scientific and media” concerns.

The agenda-setting theory of environmental concern has been supported by studies such as that done by Iyengar and Kinder (1987) on the agenda-setting effect of television news on the American public. Iyengar and Kinder (1987: 20) found that “pollution as a national problem moved up from fifth to second most important among participants shown news about pollution”. Iyengar and Kinder analysed questionnaires distributed before and after the experiment so as to test the agenda-setting effect on the news viewers. In this study conducted in 1981, the participants daily watched one half-hour newscast “over the course of one week” in Yale University and they were instructed not to watch evening national news at home during the experimental period (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987: 8). Iyengar and Kinder (1987: 19) found “striking evidence of agenda-setting” in their experiment. They point out that the “problems given steady news coverage grow more important, at least in the minds of the viewers” while those given less priority will lose credibility (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987: 21).

Similarly, as Yin (1999) suggests, it is more likely that people consider environmental problems as important if they have been highlighted by the media. Yin (1999: 71) further claims that “[w]ithout the information from media coverage” most of the people “would neither be aware nor be concerned about these problems”. Anderson (1997: 25) however highlights how by focussing mainly on media agendas agenda-setting studies “tended to ignore the whole process through which social issues are taken up by the media”. Similarly, Cox (2006: 185) rightly says that the agenda-setting research should consider other influential factors in understanding complex public perceptions. Indeed, as the salience of the issue is more often associated with coverage in the media, the media can act as an influential source of environmental knowledge to various media audiences and further nurture environmental concerns.

4.1.5 Role of the Media and Environmental Concern

The role of the media in constructing environmental concerns is highlighted by e.g. Anderson (1997), Hansen (1993), Cox (2006) and Shanahan (1993). Nevertheless, the media are clearly not alone in developing meaning. Shanahan’s (1993) study, conducted in the period 1998 to 2001, examined “the notion of environmental ‘concern’ ” among students⁹ at two large north-eastern Universities in United States. However, his study, based on samples of four undergraduate communication classes on the impact of television viewers’ environmental opinions surprisingly found that heavy television viewers were less concerned with the environment than those who spent less time watching television. The result of the study contradicts the “common sense notion that media are the main forces by which environmental concern will be increased” (Shanahan, 1993: 195). As Shanahan (1993: 195) points out, the reason behind such results could be that “heavy television viewers are probably simply less likely to go outside” and thus there remains “less personal investment in and understanding of environmental problems”. Shanahan is of the opinion that it is not the television that has caused the lack of environmental concern, rather it contributed to reinforcing less environmental concern among the participants. In fact, cultivation theorists explain this in terms of “media’s eraser of

⁹ “One sample was gathered in 1998 (N=105), one in early 1990 (N=165), one in late 1990 (N=523), and one in 1992 (N=230)” (Shanahan, 1993: 188).

the importance of a theme by the indirect or passive de-emphasizing of the theme” (Cox, 2006: 190).

Anderson (1997: 29) criticises Shanahan’s findings, arguing that Shanahan’s analysis reflects “only a weak relationship between heavy exposure and levels of environmental concern”. In other words, Shanahan’s study itself was not sufficient to explain the relationship between media coverage and television viewers’ concerns towards environmental issues as “non-media factors” had not been considered in his analysis. Moreover, as the study was conducted with a limited and a very specific sample, his findings cannot be generalised and therefore the question arises as to its usefulness in an analysis of a variety of publics in multi-mediated society.

Although Shanahan’s study found contradictory results of heavy exposure to the media developing less environmental concern, many scholars (Schoenfeld et al., 1979; Lester, 2010) highlight the role of the media in developing environmental concern. According to Lester (2010: 165), the media may generate three possibilities: “interest in an issue, affect for an issue and participation in activities connected to an issue”. Lester (2010: 165) points out:

“Interest is more than fleeting attention but could also imply concern, one that is shared with others. Affect suggests an emotional involvement, a stronger reaction, even commitment, to the concerns. Participation is an active response to these other forms of engagement [...]”

In fact, Lester (2010: 164) emphasises how the “media invite their audiences, their readers and viewers, to respond” in a variety of degrees and in differing ways. Lippmann’s (1922) early study already explained that the media struggle for the attention of citizens with limited attention spans. Nevertheless, Lester (2010: 170) highlights the role of the visual media which invites “viewers in their homes” to care about environmental issues such as climate change. Lester (2010: 170) gives an example of a story on disappearing glaciers in Nepal in which “connection is visually reinforced” with an identification of “the source of the threat” i.e. the developed nations.

Schoenfeld et al (1979) note that the media played a significant role in setting up the environment as a social problem and thus played a role in raising environmental concerns among the publics. As they point out, while some sociologists considered “big coverage of the Santa Barbara oil spill¹⁰ in 1969 as triggering massive environmental concern”, others considered extensive media attention on Earth Day¹¹ as a contributing factor in the rise of environmental awareness (Schoenfeld et al., 1979: 43). However, environmental issues are seen to catch media attention differently at various times (Hansen, 1991). Anderson also emphasises that different sorts of environmental stories receive different treatment in the media, some issues getting more prominent coverage than others. However, along with other influential social factors such as local context and culture, the media play a role in developing opinions on particular issues (Anderson, 1997).

Indeed, information is contextualised and perceived differently by user and perceiver (Grant, 2007). Therefore, a question arises on the contribution made by the media in communicating environmental issues. As Grant (2007: 182) puts it: “The free circulation of communications is ensured by universal connections with all communicating agents but their forms are constantly displaced by context, user and receiver”. Certainly, in Grant’s view, it cannot be generalised that what is covered by the media will be understood by the audiences, readers or viewers in the sense intended since communication is an uncertain process. In this view, construction of the environment relies on how the varieties of the publics perceive messages in their own contexts. Hence, the construction of the environment in the media needs to take into account not just how environmental issues are taken up by the media and how they pass through the criteria of newsworthiness, but also other influences such as sources, local and cultural contexts and interpretations. Indeed, this view is necessary to note how the focus groups in this study construct the environment covered in the media.

¹⁰ The Santa Barbara oil spill occurred on 28 January 1969 in California. The industrial accident released approximately three million gallons of oil which impacted eight hundred square miles of ocean. Almost six inches of thickness of oil coated 35 miles of coastline, which killed innumerable marine animals and also had an impact on kelp forests. Many populations of endangered birds were also displaced due to this (Clarke and Hemphill, 2002).

¹¹ Founded by Gaylord Nelson, then a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, the first ‘Earth Day’ was held on 22 April 1970 to protest against the deterioration of the environment in the United States. More than 20 million demonstrators, several thousands of schools and also local communities were part of the event (Earthday Network, n.d.).

4.2 Science Communication

In order to understand how environmental stories gain coverage in the media, it is important to understand how science is generally communicated in the media and how science communication as a whole is constructed and renegotiated among the variety of publics. This section therefore explores how science struggles to gain coverage in the media and also explicates underlying difficulties in communicating science to heterogeneous publics.

4.2.1 Science Communication and the Media

According to Lewenstein (1995: 343), science journalism includes “non fiction portrayals of science” in different genres such as newspapers, books, magazines and television. Lewenstein points out that the scientists, journalists, writers and academic researchers may have significance in fiction and non-fiction or the print and broadcast forms of the media. However, it is not easy to understand how the different groups of people differentiate the media and their formats. Lewenstein therefore stresses that the main purpose of studies in media and science has often focused on perceptions about science among the publics.

Gregory and Miller (2000) see a gap between the notions of science experts and the lay people which they suggest can be bridged by the media. The mass media is in this sense a forum or meeting place for the scientists and lay people and plays an important role in establishing a relationship between both. However, they also explain the difficulty of communicating science in the mass media, suggesting that the media communicators often have little knowledge about their mass audiences across several contexts. In this regard they ask: “what can we infer about the public[s] when our only knowledge of them is, for example, that they own a television?” (Gregory and Miller, 2000: 100). This is one of the main reasons that science communication too often relies on mass media techniques such as sensationalising information (Gregory and Miller, 2000). As Gregory and Miller (2000: 100) put it,

“The media can know very little about the cognitive or intellectual resources of the audiences, and so they use strategies that reach everyone: they get attention, arouse interest, and stir emotions - strategies which often require extreme tactics

of sensationalism, or what tends to be called, in highbrow circles, ‘aiming for the lowest common denominator’.”

This notion of “sensationalism” in the media aligns with what Luhmann (2000: 29) had said (see Chapter 3) about the reporting of “norm violations and scandals” so as to “generate a greater feeling of common concern” among news receivers. Indeed, mass media contents are standardised in a generalised way rather than with a specific population in mind (Gregory and Miller, 2000). Nevertheless, mass media have become more important in an “understanding of science because, for most individuals, it is the media that inform and educate science-related issues of the day” (Einsiedel, 1992: 89).

It is often said that science is not good in marking its presence in the media (Allan, 2002). Moreover, science writing faces a challenge in “balancing as many authoritative sources as possible” (Allan, 2002: 84). Pearce, Romero, and Zibluk (2010), in *Communicating Science: New Agendas in Communication*, highlight the paradigm problem science communication faces when highly technical scientific information is transformed into simplified information which dispersed publics can understand. Indeed, science journalists have a significant role in connecting science and the media and as a result journalistic characteristics have also been the subject of interest for many studies (Lewenstein, 1995). However, Pearce et al (2010) stress the challenge that journalists face turning science into newsworthy stories as journalistic practice. Allan (2002), on the other hand, taking account of some journalists’ viewpoint, points out that science does not present well in the media. Allan (2002: 69) states that the main reason for this is that “most types of science fail the test of newsworthiness”.

Gregory and Miller (2000: 110) state that news values apply in all the media and all types of news whether “singly or in combination” while communicating about science. However, Gregory and Miller (2000: 114) state that although science stories have news values backed up by facts, “broader forces at work in the selection of stories for news” should not be ignored. Luhmann (2000: 38) terms this selection process as a “complex event”. Hence, it is not easy to understand how the media “construct reality” (Luhmann, 2000: 36). In fact, the concept of the

construction of the reality in the media poses a challenge to Habermas' earlier conception of the public sphere in which democratic participation of the members in rational critical debate takes place. While the media in Habermas' idealised public sphere played role in opinion formation, the media can be said to construct public opinion in Luhmann's understanding since the media operate by selection.

The media indeed are selective. Einsiedel's (1992) study of science coverage in seven major Canadian daily newspapers shows that science stories struggled "in terms of their frequency and placement". Einsiedel found that among the science stories, environmental stories mainly tended "to highlight negative consequences"¹² while other science stories had a predominantly "positive tone"¹³. While science stories struggle to get coverage, Gregory and Miller (2000) point out the challenges faced by research into media communication of science. According to Gregory and Miller, there is a long running battle in science communication and desire for more coverage of science in the media. However, no-one has sufficient knowledge about the "impact of mass media science" on readers and listeners or understand whether the media is making changes in any sense (Gregory and Miller, 2000: 127). This makes science communication research even more challenging (Gregory and Miller, 2000).

While there has been growing concern about public understandings of science through the media, Lewenstein (1995: 345) highlights the inability of science writers to "conform to scientific values" even though they claim to work with "journalistic independence". He further states that reporting by these journalists "tends to reflect the concerns of the scientific community rather than those of the 'public[s]' that they often claim to represent" (Lewenstein, 1995: 345). Lewenstein (1995: 359) therefore suggests that future research into science and the media should target not only the "broader understanding of the contexts of science communication" but also investigate "the role of science communication in the relationships between science and the societies in which it is embedded". Indeed, as

¹² "The negative environmental stories were predominantly about pollution problems" (Einsiedel, 1992: 96).

¹³ "Most of the positive stories tended to describe advances in science, innovations, or progress in the study of some problem" (Einsiedel, 1992: 96).

stated above by Lewenstein, understanding science communication is essential, together with the context in which the science stories are developed. Furthermore, the society where the stories are communicated should also be taken into account.

4.2.2 Communicating Science: Multiple Publics and the Media

Although science communication researchers have long been concerned with how people use the “knowledge they gain from the media” (Weigold, 2001: 185), communicating about science and the environment is complex as members of the publics belong to “heterogeneous” groups (Burns, O’Connor and Stocklmayer, 2003: 184). At least six overlapping groups of the publics are identified in science communication activities and research (Lewenstein, 1998 cited in Burns et al., 2003). These include “scientists”, “mediators”, “decision makers”, the “general public”, “attentive public” and “interested public” (Burns et al., 2003). Burns et al define “scientists” as scientists working in industry, the academic field as well as the government sector and “mediators” as those working as science communicators, journalists and other media professionals. Likewise, Burns et al refer to those at policy level (working both in government and non-government institutions such as in scientific institutions) as “decision-makers”. According to Burns et al, the “general public” denotes groups of scientists, mediators and decision makers as well as groups from other sectors (e.g. charity workers). Those members who are interested as well as well-informed about activities around science are considered as “attentive public”. Moreover, the “interested public” are those members who are interested in science and technology but are not necessarily very knowledgeable about scientific matters (Almond, 1950 cited in Miller, 1992).

Burns et al not only mention six heterogeneous groups of people but also discuss commonly-used terms in science communication such as “lay public” and “science community”. The term “lay public” is used to refer to “non-scientists” (Levy-Leblond, 1992) and includes people who are not the experts in a particular field (Burns et al., 2003). Similarly, “science community” or “science practitioners” are those “who are directly involved in some aspect of the practice of science” (Burns et al., 2003: 184). As there is such a diversity of people involved in communication about science, it is not easy for communicators such as media professionals to

relay messages. As Michael (1998: 317) states, “science as it enters the public realm signifies many things”. In this regard, Gregory and Miller (2000: ix) point out:

“What the public[s] think of science and what scientists think of the public[s], and how the media bring the two together, have been matters of some research and considerably more opinion.”

There are many studies which seek to understand the relationship between science and diverse publics in different contexts (Wynne, 1989, 1992, 1993; Irwin and Michael, 2003; Ereaut and Segnit, 2006). In order to explore public understanding of science, social scientists have been using methods such as questionnaire surveys, focus group discussions and ethnographic analysis. However, the earlier quantitative methods such as questionnaire surveys mainly supported the “deficit model” of the public understanding of science, claiming the publics to be deficit in scientific knowledge and scientific literacy (Irwin and Michael, 2003). Studies have challenged the “deficit model” in several ways (Irwin and Michael, 2003).

According to Gregory and Miller (2000: 97), the main criticism of the top-down deficit model of public understanding of science is that it views the publics as “passive recipients of information”. The model does not consider the “pre-existing knowledge” of the publics and their individual situations. This includes local knowledge, for example that of farmers in their local settings. Gregory and Miller (2000: 97) emphasise the need for scientists to see the publics as “specific groups of active and thoughtful citizens” rather than a “lumpen mass”. Irwin and Michael (2003) argue that the nature of the connection between the lay and expert groups however is under-theorised, although some effort has been made to seek to understand the media’s role in this context. Indeed, more studies are needed in analysing the relationship between lay persons and experts with regard to the media’s role. This research also explicates how the experts in *Batabaran Dabali* and non-elite actors are inter-linked and explore the role of the media in constructing the environment. The finding of this study aligns with the view of Gregory and Miller (2000: 97) as rural focus groups were active and attentive citizens. It challenges the way the top-down deficit model of the “public understanding of science” views about lay publics (see Chapter 10).

4.2.3 Lay people and Experts in Science Communication

Michael (1998: 321) argues that the representation of members of the publics and their relation to science in the media “is not innocent”. He thus gives stress on the need for sensitivity, down-playing the general stereotype of “lay local” in order to understand such relationship. Similarly, Gregory and Miller (2000: 98) are of the opinion that local people (also referred to as lay experts) retain “specific” knowledge in contrast to what the experts view them as having “general or abstract” knowledge. This understanding is reflected strongly, for example, in Wynne’s classic study *Sheep Farming after Chernobyl: A Case Study in Community Scientific Information* (1989), which explains how environmental scientists underestimated the local knowledge of Cumbrian farmers. As Wynne (1989: 37) writes, the environmental experts could not recognise that these farmers had “extensive informal knowledge about sheep habits, the local practical environment, and farming practices and decision making”. Moreover, Wynne (1989: 37) claims that the environmental experts could not reconcile the “cultural and practical incompatibility of hill farming with a bureaucratic model” and that the bureaucratic model operates with “standard rules, control, deterministic planning, and formal evidence” (Wynne, 1989: 37). Wynne is of the opinion that a general stereotype of the lay people having less knowledge than the experts may lead to a conflicting situation. Wynne (1993: 321) therefore urges experts to interact with lay people “on a more constructive footing”, as ignoring the knowledge of the lay people will worsen the problem in science communication.

Wynne’s study highlights Cumbrian sheep farmers’ familiarity with local geography, marked knowledge and sheep farming skills (Burningham et al., 2007). Irwin and Michael (2003) believe that Wynne’s findings reflect how the farmers’ local knowledge challenges environmental scientists’ declarations about hill farming after Chernobyl. Furthermore, it highlights the possibility and need for mutual learning from each other with due consideration to lay knowledge. Irwin and Michael (2003: 94) believe that “within lay groups there may be identifiable experts operating (and vice versa)” although they see a conceptual gap between experts and lay people.

In *Science, Social Theory and Public Knowledge* (2003), Irwin and Michael highlight the important role of pressure groups such as NGOs and “intermediaries” i.e. skilled science communicators, in bringing “expert” and “lay” people together. While the media play a bridging role (Gregory and Miller, 2000), the role of pressure groups and communicators is equally significant (Irwin and Michael, 2003). This implies that more mediation takes place in environmental media communication due to the involvement of multiple interests. It is therefore equally important to understand the role of such NGOs and “intermediaries”. This study brings two sets of data i.e. from the media and focus group discussions in order to investigate the differences and commonalities between lay and experts in constructing the environment in local contexts. The focus groups consist of lay persons (city professionals and rural people) and experts (from government and non government organisations in Nepal) in environmental knowledge. The study also seeks to understand the media’s role in the democratic participation of lay and experts in environmental media communication.

In summary, this chapter has explored how the media cover environmental stories and the factors which mediate the coverage. It also explored the relationship between media coverage and environmental concern. In addition, this chapter examined how science communication in the media takes place and explored its relevance in environmental communication. The insights gained from the literature review chapters (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) will be useful in understanding how the media and different groups of people construct the environment in the Nepalese socio-cultural context. The next chapter discusses the methodology adopted in this research and details the data collection, management and analysis procedure.

Chapter 5

Methodology

This study analyses constructions of the environment in the media in Nepal. It also investigates local construction of the environment and environmental problems and the role of the media in environmental communication. In this regard, the research has two distinct but related strands: analysis of media texts and contexts and analysis of data generated in focus group discussions with different groups of people (rural, city and expert) so as to compare the constructions of the environment both in the media as well as in the local contexts. This comparative analysis is informed by the following questions:

1. Which agendas/issues are given significance in the media?
2. What are the news sources and what are the source contexts?
3. How do the media represent environmental stories?
4. How are environmental stories mediated?
5. How do the different groups of people frame the environment in a local context?
6. What role do the media play in environmental communication in Nepal?

Since this research project aims at exploring both mass mediated and local constructions of the environment in Nepal, it was necessary to collect data from the Nepalese media and from Nepalese people. This chapter details the process of data collection both for media analysis and focus groups. In addition, ethical considerations applied in this research are outlined as are reflections on how the research proceeded. I also discuss data management, coding and translation procedures. Moreover, the methods employed (discourse and content analysis) are introduced and a reflection on the reason behind the selection of the combined methods (qualitative and quantitative) and its suitability for the study of the media discourse and communication is outlined. In addition, this chapter illustrates how methods are used to analyse the media data as well as the data generated from the focus group discussions.

5.1 Media Discourse

Studying media discourse is “crucial to understanding the messages that the media construct” (Lee, 2007: 17). According to van Dijk (1998), studying media discourse is important in identifying opinions and ideologies connected with agenda-setting, dominant representations and also selections in the press. These opinions and ideologies include “beliefs or mental representations” of the people involved in the discourse (van Dijk, 1998: 21). As van Dijk (1998: 22) suggests, the opinions and ideologies in the press are “*social, institutional or political*” rather than “personal” and hence the study of media discourse provides “shared social representations” in societal contexts. The discourse concept of Foucault (1984) is important here as he believes that the discourse is produced through the mechanism of control, selection, organisation and redistribution. In this regard, analysing media discourse in my research is useful in analysing media as sites of negotiation and competing constructions. According to Foucault (1984: 110), discourse not only means something that merely “translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle”. In fact, Foucault’s concept is useful in finding out the way “society operates” and also “the workings of power” (Cooper, 2001: 7). Hence, studying media discourse in this research is important not only in understanding power and domination in the media but is also useful in translating how the system of struggle operates within the discourse itself.

In *Media Discourse*, Fairclough explains that by analysing the language of media texts, whether broadcast or in the press, one can illuminate questions such as the following:

“How is the world (events, relationships, etc.) represented?; What identities are set up for those involved in the programme or story (reporters, audiences, ‘third parties’ referred to or interviewed)?; What relationships are set up between those involved (e.g. reporter-audience, expert-audience or politicians-audience relationships)?” (Fairclough, 1995: 5)

Fairclough describes these questions as linked with the representations, identities and relations apparent in the text. In this view, analysing media texts can represent how a social problem takes its place in the media, how the people involved have

been portrayed and can also identify the relations between the people talking in the media and the media receivers.

In order to analyse media discourse for this study, the recorded programmes of *Batabaran Dabali*, aired on Radio Sagarmatha, were collected for a period of a year (May 2009 to April 2010). The following sections give a brief profile of Radio Sagarmatha and describe the significance of selecting *Batabaran Dabali* for this study.

5.1.1 Radio Sagarmatha

Radio Sagarmatha is the first community radio in South Asia. The station was founded by the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ) in 1997. Radio Sagarmatha, which obtained a licence to air programmes after almost half a decade of battle with the government, initially received permission to broadcast limited programmes. Although the station was restricted to airing news, current affairs and economic agendas in its initial phase, by breaking the government's monopoly in the media Radio Sagarmatha provided a platform for the citizens to voice issues of public concerns. In this sense, Radio Sagarmatha advocated freedom of speech in the media and as such became a popular radio station (Radio Sagarmatha brochure, n.d.).

Radio Sagarmatha is credited with changing the media landscape in Nepal by allowing more pluralism and giving voice to the people whose voices were unheard by other radio stations (Pringle, 2008). The station claims to be non-commercial since it is not only operated by a non-government organisation (i.e. NEFEJ) but also does not entertain "crass commercialization" (Radio Sagarmatha brochure, n.d.). The station received awards from many international bodies (such as ONE WORLD Special Award from One World 2007 of UK, AMARC International Solidarity Prize 2006) for its contribution as a responsible radio station. Similarly, Radio Sagarmatha has received several awards from many national organisations for advocating social issues related to development, environment, public health and sanitation (Radio Sagarmatha brochure, n.d.). Radio Sagarmatha was also awarded

the “Environment Journalism Award 2011” by the government of Nepal for raising awareness on environmental issues (NEFEJ, 2011).

The station is available to residents of the whole of Kathmandu valley. Its frequency is also available to many neighbouring districts of the valley such as Makwanpur, parts of Chitwan, Dhading, Sindhuli, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha, Ramechhap, Solukhumbu, Okhaldhunga, Bara, Rautahat and Gorkha (see Figure 5.1). It is important to understand that the programmes are “relayed” and “re-broadcast” by various locally situated community radio stations in Nepal. In this way, Radio Sagarmatha is available to up to 10 million listeners (Radio Sagarmatha brochure, n.d.).

5.1.2 Batabaran Dabali Radio Programme

Radio Sagarmatha has several environment-related programmes such as *Batabaran Dabali* (Environment Discussion), *Chittikka* (Magazine on environment), *Aankhijhyal* (Magazine on Environment and sustainable development), *Bhukampiya Surakshya* (Protection from Earthquake) and *Pani Ra Sarsaphai* (Water and Sanitation). Programmes such as *Krishi* (Agriculture) and *Hamro Sarokar* (Our Concern) also cover environmental issues. Among these programmes, *Batabaran Dabali*, literally meaning environmental discussion forum, is a discussion programme based on various environmental issues. Initiated by NEFEJ, *Batabaran Dabali* is a half-hour weekly programme aired every Sunday¹⁴ at 7:30 am. The programme is also aired from Saptakoshi FM, Itahari in eastern Nepal and Radio Swargadwari, Dang in western Nepal. Furthermore, several of these programmes are replayed by other FM stations in the country.

Batabaran Dabali was selected over other programmes for several reasons. Firstly, *Batabaran Dabali* was developed by environmental journalists of NEFEJ, a pioneer organisation which instigated environmental communication in Nepal in 1990s. Secondly, the programme, which is supported by Department for International Development (DFID) and The World Conservation Union (IUCN), has been aired

¹⁴ In Nepal, Sundays are not government holidays. In rural areas, people generally get up at 5 am. In urban areas too it is normal to get up by 6 am. The programme aired at 7: 30 am is thus considered as a prime time programme.

from Radio Sagarmatha for more than a decade. Although *Batabaran Dabali* is the longest running environment programme in Radio Sagarmatha, to date no research has been conducted on this programme.

Moreover, the programme includes interviews with environment experts and ordinary people¹⁵, environmental news coverage, field reporting etc and so represents itself as the platform for the discussions on various environmental issues. Thus, studying the discourse of *Batabaran Dabali* provides insights into the construction of the environment and environmental media narratives in a major opinion-forming outlet.

5.1.3 Data Collection from Radio Sagarmatha

In order to analyse media texts in this study, a total of 52 *Batabaran Dabali* programmes aired in one year (May 2009 to April 2010) were collected in order to ensure representativeness. A field visit was planned in April 2010 for focus group discussions and hence it was expected that talking about the programmes aired in the recent time would be fresh for the participants rather than selecting programmes aired some time back. Therefore, as per my plan, I started recording *Batabaran Dabali* programme online one year ahead of my field visit for focus group discussions. Out of the 52 programmes in the selected period, 50 programmes were available for the study since one of the programmes was missing from the database and the other one was omitted as it was a repeat broadcast. The data collection of *Batabaran Dabali* programmes began by recording live online programmes from ‘www.radiosagarmatha.org’. These weekly programmes which broadcast at 7:30 am in Nepal on Sundays were collected at 2:45 am on Saturdays every week as the time difference in Nepal and UK was +4:45 hours. Although many of the programmes were recorded online every week, some of the programmes could not be recorded live due to technical problems connecting to the Radio Sagarmatha website. As an alternative, the Station Manager of Radio Sagarmatha, Mr. Ghamaraj Liuntel, was asked to provide archived copies of the programmes, and

¹⁵ In this thesis, ‘ordinary people’ and ‘ordinary citizens’ are used interchangeably. Both of these represent members of the publics not having expert knowledge of the environment, who are not rich and have less access to power and policy in the country. This also represents ‘ordinary voices’ meaning “the voices of the institutionally, organisationally and professionally non-aligned” (Cottle, 2000: 33).

was kind enough to keep the archives for the study. *Batabaran Dabali* programmes aired from May 2009 to April 2010 were collected in two parts. A CD, containing eight months of data (from May 2009 - Dec 2009), was received from Radio Sagarmatha in January 2010. The copies of the programmes for the last four months were collected on 28 April 2010 from the Radio Sagarmatha office during my field visit to Nepal (5 April - 1 May 2010).

5.2 Focus Group Discussions

In media and communication studies, focus group discussions are mainly used “to explore issues of audience reception” (Tonkiss, 2004b: 194). Hansen et al (1998) point out that one has to turn to qualitative methods in studying audience interpretations:

“For examining the dynamics of what experiential knowledge and frames of interpretation audiences bring to bear in their use of media content, what role media use has in the everyday life of audiences, or how audiences use the media as a resource in their everyday lives, it is necessary to turn to more qualitative methods.” (Hansen et al., 1998: 257)

While focus groups are sometimes seen as a stand-alone method of data collection, they are frequently used in combination with other approaches. This complementary method prevents a focus on either linear transmission of “media messages” or decontextualised consumption by “passive recipients”. In media research, they are often used alongside the analysis of media content (Hansen et al., 1998). There are two main reasons:

“[...] the generation of meanings and interpretations of media content is ‘naturally’ a social activity, that is, audience form their interpretations of media content and their opinions about such content through conversations and social interaction.” (Hansen et al., 1998: 261)

As suggested above, the most important reason for use of the complementary method is that the interpretation of media content by the audiences is an inherently social activity. Secondly, focus group discussion is useful in “eliciting, stimulating, and elaborating audience interpretations” (Hansen et al., 1998: 262). In this regard, focus group discussion provides an opportunity to have discussions on a topic of

common interest (Tonkiss, 2004b). Thus, focus group method not only looks for “individual opinions or even individual accounts, but is concerned with accounts that emerge through interaction” (Tonkiss, 2004b: 197). Tonkiss (2004b: 194) explains that the focus group interaction is not only a way of interviewing a number of “people at the same time, rather they are concerned to explore the formation and negotiation of accounts within a group context, how people define, discuss and contest issues through social interaction”. As Tonkiss says, focus group discussion is focused on a certain topic which a group of people discuss.

Macnaghten and Myers (2004: 68) state that in focus group discussion it is unlikely that the researchers “aim for a representative sample of a population”. Rather, participants are recruited “in relation to the particular conceptual framework of the study” (Macnaghten and Myers, 2004: 68). Tonkiss (2004b: 199) has a similar view and states that focus group discussions are the ways of “generating qualitative data” that look for “different perspectives on a topic, rather than to access representative or generalizable views about it”. The following sections provide details of the focus groups used in this study outlining participants’ characteristics, the recruitment process, details of the moderator, nature of discussion, recording process and also analysis (Hansen et al., 1998).

5.2.1 Focus Group Locations: Districts Profile

This thesis seeks to find an answer to the question of how urban and rural groups of people construct the environment and at the same time to investigate the way in which media communicate environmental stories among different groups of people (rural, city and expert groups). In this regard, the selection of the locations was carefully planned by checking the reception profile of Radio Sagarmatha. Since Radio Sagarmatha is aired from Kathmandu valley and its transmission capacity is limited to the nearby areas of the valley, the neighbouring districts (Kavrepalanchowk and Sindhupalchowk) were selected for the study. The selection of the valley and the neighbouring two districts was also suitable for selecting a range of participants from both rural and urban areas as well as participants having lay and expert knowledge on the environment. While the selection of the valley was useful in recruiting participants from expert and professional groups, the selection

of neighbouring districts was useful in recruiting rural participants. While *Batabaran Dabali* is aired in other FMs and relayed by locals FMs in various areas, other locations were not considered for the study since there was a difference in broadcast time and the local stations do not cover entire programmes in exactly the same way as Radio Sagarmatha.

Table 5.1 VDC (Village Development Committee) Level Data of the Districts

	Kathmandu Valley				Kavrepalan	Sindhupal-
	Kathmandu	Lalitpur	Bhaktapur	Valley total	-chowk	chowk
Area	395 sq. km	385 sq. km	119 sq. km	899 sq. km	1396 sq. km	2542 sq. km
Total households	234595	68870	41249	344714	70,466	60452
Population	1063821	336627	224503	1624951	383479	305857
Literacy rate	73(f), 90(m)	66 (f), 87(m)	62 (f), 86 (m)	67 (f), 88(m)	47 (f), 72(m)	35 (f), 60 (m)
Schools	1552	591	432	2575	677	483
Colleges/high schools	143/149	32/50	15/13	190/212	6/16	3/8
Household without toilets	15879	12501	3488	31868	25307	31322
Tap water facility	197851	57237	30755	285843	56384	46951

Source: Oxfam Nepal and National Labour Academy Nepal, 2004¹⁶

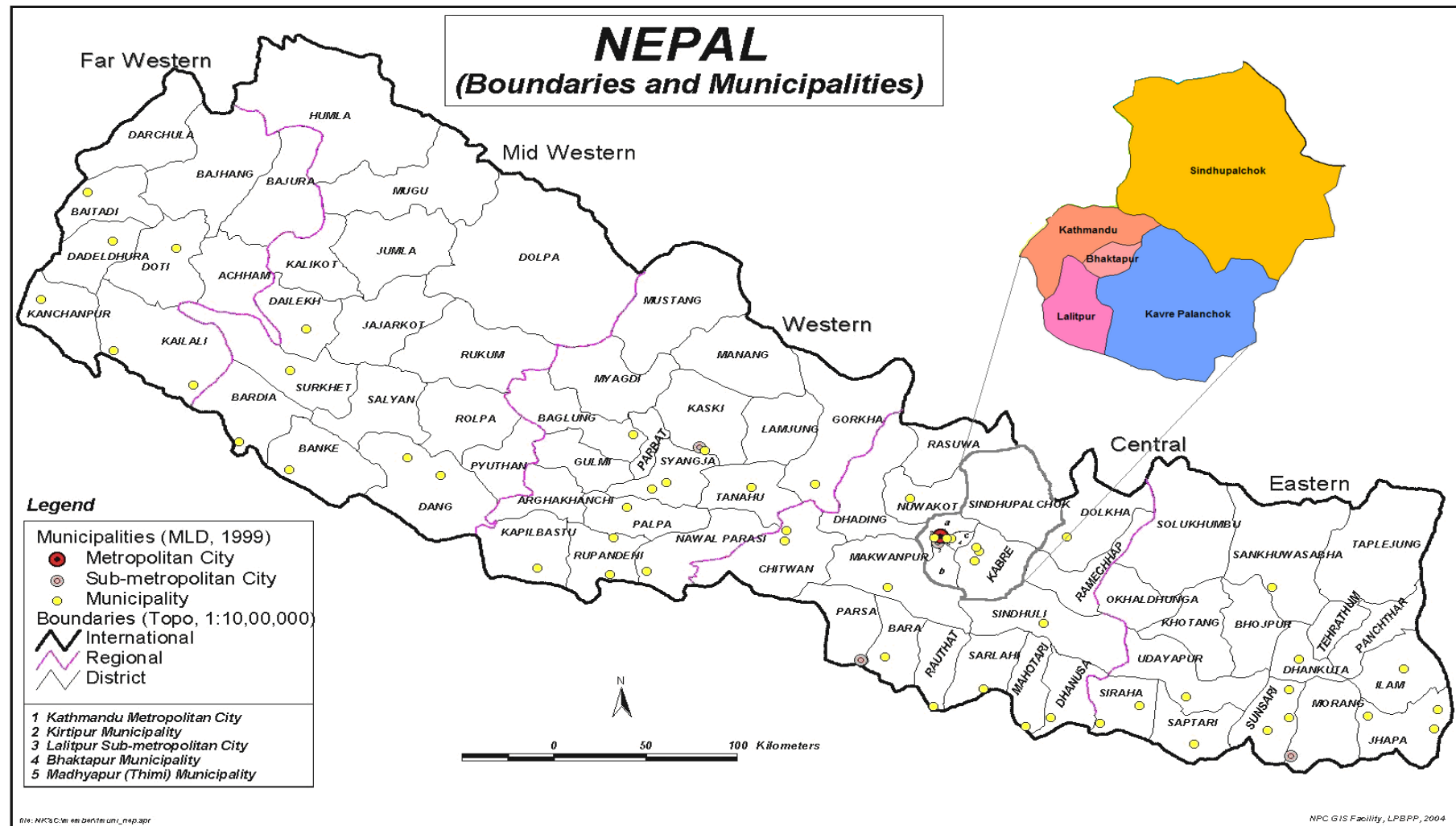
In this study, the entire Kathmandu valley, consisting of 3 districts (Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur districts) has been considered as one location. The other two adjoining districts of Kathmandu valley i.e. Kavrepalanchowk and Sindhupalchowk districts were regarded as two separate locations. Out of the 8 focus groups, 5 focus group discussions were held in Kathmandu valley, 2 in Kavrepalanchowk district and 1 in Sindhupalchowk district.

Kathmandu Valley (Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts)

Kathmandu valley (including Kathmandu and two other districts/sister cities, namely Lalitpur in the south east and Bhaktapur in the east) covers a total area of 899 sq. km. The valley consists of a total of 344,714 households with more than half of the total households located in Kathmandu city alone. Kathmandu, the capital city, is the largest city in Nepal.

¹⁶ The data were tabulated from individual district profiles produced by Oxfam Nepal and National Labour Academy Nepal (2004).

Figure 5.1 Nepal Boundaries and Municipalities¹⁷



¹⁷ Source: NPC GIS Facility, 2004. Note: The map has been modified to show the study area in this research, which is indicated by the highlighted area.

The city, which is at the heart of Kathmandu valley, is 395 sq. km in size. It is densely populated and had a population of more than 1.7 million in 2011 (Central Bureau of Statistics Nepal, 2011b). There are 1552 schools in Kathmandu district which is more than 2.6 times higher than in Lalitpur district and 3.5 times higher than Bhaktapur district. In total, there are 2575 schools in Kathmandu valley (which consists of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts) (see Table 5.1). While the average literacy rate of males is 88%, the female literacy rate is only 67%. There are 190 colleges and 212 high schools in the valley which is considered the highest concentration of education in the country. Although much more developed than the rest of the country, Kathmandu valley still has 31, 868 houses which do not have toilets in their premises. Moreover, a total of 58, 871 households still lack tap water facility.

Kavrepalanchowk District

Kavrepalanchowk, an adjoining district of Kathmandu valley, covers an area of 1396 sq. km and consists of 70,466 households. While it is bigger than the total size of Kathmandu valley (899 sq. km), it has a population of just 383,479 which is less than a quarter of valley's population. There are 677 schools in this district while there are just 6 colleges and 16 high schools. The literacy rate of females in Kavrepalanchowk is 47% and for males 72%. A total of 25,307 households in this district do not have sanitation while tap water facilities reach 56, 384 households.

Sindhupalchowk District

Sindhupalchowk district has an area of 2542 sq. km and is almost three times bigger than the size of the entire valley. However, it does not have as many facilities as in the capital city, and although very close to the valley, is one of the least developed districts in Nepal. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people in Sindhupalchowk, which has a population of 305,857. There are 483 schools in this district but just 3 colleges and 8 high schools in the area. A total of 35% of females and 60% of males are literate in Sindhupalchowk. There are still 31,322 households which are deprived of toilet facilities although tap water facility has reached 46,951 households. This poverty-stricken district is best known for the high rate of human trafficking in the area.

5.2.2 Recruiting the Participants and the Role of Gatekeepers

The role of gatekeepers is significant in focus group discussions (Bulmer, 2001). Without the support of gatekeepers, recruitment of various groups of people in different settings would not have been possible in this research. Initially, I used my personal contacts to gain access to various environmental organisations and received help from relatives and friends in establishing contact with the other groups selected. This section outlines the recruitment process in detail.

5.2.2.1 Groups of environmental experts

Two groups of environmental experts were selected for the study. This selection was mainly to subsequently compare and contrast expert construction of the environment with the lay construction of the environment. In order to gain access to the expert participants from high level government and non-government organisations, heads of these organisations were approached by email some months prior to the fieldwork. The emails were responded to in a very positive way and forwarded to the communication staff in these organisations with a request to cooperate in my research. Since the emails were copied to me as well, it was easier for me to follow up directly with the communication staff who recruited other staff in these organisations. Having worked in different environmental organisations earlier in my career, a request with my identification helped me gain permission from these organisations with relative ease. After getting the permission from the organisation heads, informal emails were sent giving the officials tentative times for the focus group discussions in Nepal. This correspondence helped not only in establishing contact with some key officials but also helped develop rapport with some of the new officials in these organisations. During the focus group discussions, I found that many of the participants postponed their field trips to be able to participate in and support my research. Since most officers in these environmental organisations would have been out in the field or abroad, it was a challenge to have so many officials together for the focus group discussions. It would not have been possible without their sincere commitment. Both the focus group discussions with the experts were held in Kathmandu in the office premises of environmental organisations.

5.2.2.2 Groups of city professionals

The groups of city professionals included three groups: a group of IT professionals from an IT company; a group of business professionals from an advertising company; and a group of development professionals working in various national and international development organisations in Nepal. These groups were selected so as to understand how the city groups construct the environment in a local context and to compare the constructions of the environment of these city professionals with the rural and expert groups.

Groups of IT and business professionals

The groups of IT and Business professionals were recruited by a close relative of mine who was working in the IT sector. The two focus group discussions with the groups of IT and Business professionals were held in their respective offices. The list of participants was received from one of the main contacts in each group and emails sent to those who had initially verbally agreed to participate. Some of these people rejected the request upon receipt of the invitation and some did not respond at all even after several attempts to follow up. However, despite failing to formally agree to participate, some of these contacts subsequently appeared in the discussion groups after further discussion with the key contacts.

A Group of development professionals

One of my friends working in an international development organisation helped coordinate one focus group (with development professionals) in her office. Due to her strong network with different organisations, it was possible to recruit participants from a range of relevant national and international development organisations in Kathmandu. She also helped establish contact with their local partner organisation working in Kavrepalanchowk district where two of the focus group discussions with community forest user groups were held.

5.2.2.3 Rural groups

The rural groups included two groups of community forest user groups from Nala and Hokse villages in Kavrepalanchowk district and a group of farmers from Pangretar village in Sindhupalchowk district. This selection was mainly to compare

and contrast rural and lay constructions of the environment with the urban as well as expert construction of the environment.

Groups of Community Forest User Groups

Two focus groups in Kavrepalanchowk district were organised by a member of staff working for an NGO in Kavrepalanchowk. He was very familiar with forest user groups at the local level. On the discussion day, no one arrived at the scheduled time in Nala village so the recruiter, along with the local contact person, went to the homes of those invited to remind them about the focus group discussions. The villagers turned up later, saying with warm smiles “it is Nepali time”¹⁸ and they knew that we would wait for them. Being Nepali myself and having prior experience of working in such circumstances, it was not unexpected to have to wait for the participants. Some female participants brought their children. Although occasionally the talks were interrupted, children were not too much of disturbance as they enjoyed chocolates I distributed.

While the discussion in Nala village was conducted in an open space in a temple, the focus group discussion in Hokse village took place in the office of the community forest user group. In both of these groups, the discussion started with introductions from the participants and a general briefing of my research. Although the participants had a general idea about the research (as they were informed through the briefing by the recruiter), they were curious to know what benefit my research would bring to their community.

In the Hokse village, when I reached the focus group location with the recruiter, it was surprising to see the room full of participants. While a total of twelve people were expected, there were twenty-four participants present. The recruiter had over-recruited in case participants failed to turn up. Six participants had voluntarily turned up out of curiosity just to watch the proceedings of the discussion. For the first five minutes a brisk argument started as they could not decide who should leave and who should remain in the discussions. Eventually the six who had appeared voluntarily decided to leave the group and the further six were requested not to be the part of the discussion. Since all the participants had prior knowledge

¹⁸ ‘Nepali time’ in Nepal indicates that it is at least one hour late than the scheduled time.

that there may be too many people to participate in the discussion and that they might not all be able to participate actively, it was not difficult requesting the other six to stay as listeners. Thus twelve people took part in the discussion and a further twelve remained present as listeners.

A Group of farmers

My aunt, who was working in an international non-government organisation, helped me to gain access to their local partner organisation in Sindhupalchowk. Farmers were recruited by a contact who was working in this local organisation. While most of the participants (farmers) were affiliated to this organisation as members, some were involved as volunteers. The participants were mainly farmers and several of them were also the members of a community forest. They were enthusiastic to take part in the discussion focused on the environment as this was one of their prime concerns. As in Kavrepalanchowk, participants arrived at the venue in Pangretar village at different times, some arriving almost 2 hours late. Those participants who came on time had to remain in the location for almost four hours. Some of the participants had walked for an hour to the discussion group as there were no transportation facilities in many parts of the village. Since most of the participants had no telephone facilities in their houses in the village, reconfirmation of the participations had been difficult. However, due to the good relations the recruiter had with the local people, the turnout of participants in the discussion in the rural Pangretar village was very encouraging. As in Hokse village, more participants turned up than were needed. Twelve people were requested to be part of the discussion while the four extra participants who came late left the venue upon request.

5.2.3 The Composition of Focus Groups

A total of 80 “economically active”¹⁹ Nepalese people aged between 20 to 64 participated in the focus group discussions. Among the eight groups, two groups were environment expert groups comprising mostly people working in national/international environmental organisations. Of the remaining six groups:

¹⁹ According to a report of Central Bureau of Statistics Nepal (2002) report, the 20-64 age group represent the most economically active population in the country.

three groups were with city professionals such as development professionals, IT professionals and business professionals from Kathmandu valley. One rural group was with farmers of Pangretar village in Sindhupalchowk district. The other two groups were in rural areas with community forest user groups from Nala and Hokse villages in Kavrepalanchowk district. These community forest user groups (CFUGs) were groups of people responsible for managing the community forests.

Table 5.2 Details of the Focus Groups

No.	Professions	Code	Location (District)	Area	Group Type	No. of participants
1	IT professionals	ITP	Lalitpur	Urban	City	13
2	Development professionals	DP	Kathmandu	Urban	City	8
3	Business professionals	BP	Kathmandu	Urban	City	7
4	Local Farmers	LF	Pangretar village Sindhupalchowk	Rural	Rural	11
5	Community Forest User Group - 1	CFUG-1	Nala village Kavrepalanchowk	Rural	Rural	12
6	Community Forest User Group - 2	CFUG-2	Hokse village Kavrepalanchowk	Rural	Rural	12
7	Environment Experts -1	EE-1	Kathmandu	Urban	Expert	9
8	Environment Experts -2	EE-2	Kathmandu	Urban	Expert	8
Total Groups 8						80

Generally, CFUG members come from households living close to the forests and are led by the executive committee, comprising community representatives. Although the communities cannot own the forests outright, they maintain the right to use the forest resources. The management of forests by community members started in 1970s and Nepal is considered as a pioneer country in promoting community based forest management. There are over 1400 community forest user groups having more than 1 million members throughout the country (Bushley and Louis, 2007). All the participants from the three rural groups were economically active farmers.

Among the 80 participants, 44 were female and 36 male. Although a balance of gender composition in each group was sought, there were more male participants in the city groups (28) than female participants (17). This can be explained by the fact that there are more men than women working in IT, business, development and

environmental organisations. Conversely, the rural groups had a larger proportion of female participants (27) while the total of male participants was 8. Male members of rural households often work far-away from home and consequently they were less available for participation in focus group discussions. In addition, women are the major stakeholders in community forest management in Nala and Hokse villages, and as such were more enthusiastic than men to participate in the focus group discussions.

A total of 34% participants were aged between 30-40 years while the same percentage (34%) of participants were aged between 40-50 years. 28% of participants were aged between 20-30 years and only 4% of participants were between 50-60 years. Since the size of the group in the focus group discussions should be “small enough to allow all the members to participate, but large enough to capture a variety of perspectives” (Tonkiss, 2004b: 194), the focus groups consisted of 10 members on average, the largest having 13 and the smallest 7. While 56% of these participants were from the city, 44% of participants were from remote villages. The educational composition of these groups shows that the groups of environment experts as well as city professionals (working in IT, development and business sector) were educated to degree level. Many of these professionals had higher qualifications from international universities. However, all the three rural groups consisted of participants many of whom could hardly write their names. Some had primary education but very few had secondary level education.

5.2.4 Conducting the Focus Group Discussions

Eight focus groups were held in Nepal in April 2010: five in Kathmandu valley and three in the remote villages of adjoining districts of Kavrepalanchowk and Sindhupalchowk with an explicit aim to understand different rural, urban and expert constructions of the environment in Nepal. This selection was to understand and also to contrast how rural and urban as well as lay and expert people frame the environment in distinct ways. The focus group discussions in Nepal lasted around

two hours and were facilitated using an “Interview Guide”²⁰. Since I had some earlier experience in handling group discussions on the media’s role in environmental communication in the Nepalese context, moderating the discussions was not a difficult task. Questionnaires distributed during the focus group discussions were useful in collecting some personal information about the participants. While the urban groups easily handled the questionnaires, I completed the questionnaires for most of the participants in the rural groups as many of them could not write more than their names. Some of the members of the rural groups who had basic literacy also helped others to complete their questionnaires. As the study included participants from diverse educational backgrounds, the questionnaire was developed both in English and Nepali (see Appendix 2 for an English version of questionnaire). Similarly, the interview guide was also translated into Nepali to use in the villages.

As Macnaghten and Myers (2004: 65) point out, focus groups are suitable for topics which “people could talk about to each other in their everyday lives - but don’t”. In this study, the groups provided a platform for people to talk about environmental topics. Moreover, the method was helpful in revealing “complex, contradictory and shifting definitions” of the environment (Macnaghten and Myers, 2004: 65) as an interactional construction of the environment. Cronin (2008) points out that one of the uses of focus group discussion is to identify the background of people’s knowledge as well as their sources and resources of knowledge. Hansen et al (1998) view that focus group discussion generally follows a “*funnel approach*” where the discussion starts with general questions which later focus into more specific topics. The focus group discussions started with general questions which later focused on exploring how these participants frame the environment and environmental issues in mass mediated contexts. Moreover, it also investigated how the framing of the environment varied between groups of lay people and of experts.

²⁰ According to Hansen et al (1998: 274), the focus group interview guide is the “menu” which sequentially lists the “topics/issues to be covered”. It is mainly useful to have the discussions to stay focused on the topics “relevant to the research” (Hansen et al., 1998: 274). As there were three different categories of the groups (environment experts, city professionals, rural people), a little modifications were made in the *Interview Guide* to use among three different groups although the majority of the questions were the same for all.

In this study, apart from two expert groups, all the other six groups (rural and city groups) have been considered as “lay publics”. According to Burns et al (2003), “lay public” is the commonly used term in science communication (see Chapter 4.2) to refer to the people who are not expert in the field of science and technology. Therefore, in this study the term was used to refer to people not expert in the field of the environment. The selection of the lay groups from both rural and city areas was aimed at collecting views of lay people residing in differing environments driven by the hypothesis that constructions are multiple.

5.3 Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent

Ethical consideration is important in social science research. Some of the key ethical considerations include “informed consent”, “respect for privacy” as well as “safeguarding the confidentiality of data” (Bulmer, 2001: 49-51). In this regard, while collecting data in focus group discussions in Nepal, participants were well informed about the research prior to their participation and ensured anonymity. According to Bulmer (2001), studies conducted without the prior knowledge of participants are considered unethical. Bulmer states that participants should be given sufficient information so that they can make an informed decision about whether to get involved in the research or refuse. Informed consent also includes informing the participants about the “nature and purpose of the research” as well as “the arrangements for maintaining the confidentiality of the data” (Bulmer, 2001: 49). In this research, while sending invitations to potential participants, the purpose of the research was clearly explained so that they had the chance to decide whether or not to be part of the discussions. Moreover, an information sheet was attached along with the invitation to provide a clear idea of the purpose of the research as well as the research field and background to the study.

While the city participants were sent the information sheet directly by email, for the village groups the recruiters were emailed an information sheet developed in Nepali before the recruitment process started. As requested, these recruiters not only briefed the participants about the nature of the research and the topics going to be discussed, they also read aloud the information sheet to the villagers before the selection process took place. In this regard, rural participants did not have much

effect of gatekeepers in their decision to be in the focus group discussions. Moreover, I also briefed about the topic and the nature of the research once again before starting the discussions and sought the approval of all the groups. The participants were also once again informed that the discussions would be audio-taped and their identity would be protected. They were also informed that careful consideration would be taken while analysing the data and in publications where anonymity would be required.

In this thesis, complete anonymity is maintained for the focus group participants as all of their names have been altered. This is mainly “to prevent people deducing facts about individual respondents” (Bulmer, 2001: 54). However, the names of the interviewees as well as hosts in *Batabaran Dabali* have not been anonymised as the data was collected from publicly available aired programmes; considerations about informed consent and potential harm to interviewees in the programme have little relevance here.

5.4 Data Management, Coding and Translation

This section outlines how the data collected have been recorded, transcribed and coded. It will also explain how the data were translated from Nepali to English.

5.4.1 Recording and Transcribing

During the research process, the research skills include developing quality recordings, transcribing and managing the data (Branley, 2004). Without appropriate data management tools it would not have been possible to manage the large bulk of data generated from focus group discussions as well as the year long data from the radio programme. In this research, a digital tape recorder was used in the field for recording focus group discussions. As backup, discussions were also recorded on mobile and laptop recorders. Once fieldwork was over the files were transferred into the computer for easy access while transcribing. The entire year-long data of *Batabaran Dabali* programmes, collected in CDs, were also transferred into the computer. The data were then transcribed in full by using the

“Transcription Buddy”²¹ software. These data from both the *Batabaran Dabali* and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim in Nepali language. After the transcription *Batabaran Dabali* produced an average of 11-14 pages for each of the programme resulting in more than 500 pages of data. Similarly, the eight focus group discussions resulted in more than 600 pages of transcripts.

According to Silverman (1993), preparation of transcripts before the actual analysis is not just a process of detailing the technical side of the recordings, it plays an important role in making the researcher closer to the data. As familiarity with the data was essential, I transcribed all of the focus groups myself without any professional help. Transcribing focus group data is more complex than transcribing one-to-one interviews due to the number of speakers (Bloor et al., 2001). In this process, I did not adopt transcription techniques such as that of using detailed transcription symbols, as my intention was to find out how the participants frame the environment in group contexts (in focus group discussions) and how the interviewees construct the environment in *Batabaran Dabali* rather than detailed analysis of their conversation. As suggested by Bloor et al (2001), what the participants said was transcribed verbatim as it occurred in the focus group discussions and not corrected or ‘tidied up’. In addition, I noted oral communication like laughter and tried to maintain the identification of the speakers as far as possible.

The process of transcription helped me become familiar with the data, whether these were from the radio programme or the focus group discussions. The transcription of *Batabaran Dabali* was less complicated as these were mostly one-to-one interviews. Even though there were multiple and group interviews, there were few incidents where more than one interviewee talked at the same time. On the other hand, for the transcription of focus group discussions, the process required listening to the discussions many times. At times I was able to use my own

²¹ ‘Transcription Buddy’ software plays recorded audio files which allows control while playing the audio by automatically slowing down the pace as per the time set up by the user. It also has auto rewind facility (as per user’s time setting) which was useful when the audio was not clear and several repetitions of the audio were required (especially while transcribing focus group discussions). Since it was possible to type at the same time while listening to the audio, use of Transcription Buddy saved a considerable amount of time.

understanding and knowledge of the scene and the context to understand the overlapping voices. While the mechanical process of transcribing the data was labour-intensive and time-consuming, the transcription of the data on my own brought me closer to the data and helped my understanding of it.

5.4.2 Coding

Two different software packages, Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets and Nvivo8, were used for coding the data. The Spreadsheets was used to code the categorised data for content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* programme. The entire data of *Batabaran Dabali* as well as the data generated from focus group discussions were coded in Nvivo8.

5.4.2.1 Coding in Spreadsheets

Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets package was used for doing content analysis of the data from *Batabaran Dabali*. However, it was essential at the beginning to develop manual coding sheets for the data entry. Firstly, in a content analysis it is important to define the categories of the data to be analysed. In addition, it is equally essential to develop a codebook that “sets out clear guidelines and definitions for the coding practices” before proceeding (Hansen et al., 1998: 116). In this research, while developing the Coding Schedule, a code book was developed simultaneously so as to have clarity in the categories of the data defined. The code book was helpful in entering the data as there was a preset guideline for each category of data to be entered. According to Hansen et al (1998), it is also essential to pilot and fine-tune the coding schedule in a small sample. In order to have clarity in the data as well as to understand whether the coding schedule works properly, a coding schedule was tested with a few samples of the radio programmes. The classifications or categories of the schedule were refined in this stage. Once the coding schedule was finalised, all the 50 radio programmes were coded manually in fifty different coding schedules. The same categories were developed in Spreadsheets as well. For easy entry and analysis, the coding was conducted in 8 sheets having various categories such as *main page*, *dominant theme*, *organisational affiliation*, *quoted actors*, *newsworthy topics*, *illustrations*, *risk types*, and *local details* (details of

ordinary people interviewed). The analysis also included the use of “Pivot tables”²² in the spreadsheets. The coding in the spreadsheets not only made analysis easier but also helped in the fast retrieval of the data.

5.4.2.2 Coding in Nvivo8

The transcripts of focus group discussions and *Batabaran Dabali* radio programmes were imported into Nvivo8, the qualitative data analysis software. Nvivo8 has a broad application in qualitative data analysis as it can be used to analyse “multimedia linguistic data” and conduct “in-depth analysis of the text” (Rath, 2011: 60). In this study, the use of Nvivo8 was useful as the programme “supports functions such as sorting text into tree structures” (Rath, 2011: 60). As the amount of material collected during the research generated a large volume of data, these data were refined “excluding irrelevant material and grouping together things that are similar” (Seale, 2004: 313). As the “pattern demands that things that are similar are identified” (Seale, 2004: 306), the data from both the focus group discussions and *Batabaran Dabali* radio programme were analysed to see the patterns first. Once the analysis of the data began, these generated patterns and themes were coded into nodes²³. The coded data in the free nodes (without hierarchies) were moved into tree nodes (with hierarchies) to fit as the analysis proceeded. After the data have been coded in Nvivo8, retrieving the data was much faster. Moreover, it also aided in setting and making necessary changes in the coded data as I went along the analysis phase. According to Seale (2004), qualitative research can reveal issues which were not identified before the research started. Indeed, in this research too there were several issues explored in analysis which were not expected before the data was collected.

5.4.3 Translating the Data

Collecting data in one language and presenting in another language is not an easy task as there is a high chance of distortion of the original meaning while translating

²² Pivot table is useful in summarising and analysing database records not only from different sources but also from sources external to Excel (Microsoft Office, 2012). It is considered as one of the most powerful features in Excel. It is ‘an interactive table’ that not only ‘quickly combines’ but also ‘compares’ data (see Microsoft Excel 2002 Help).

²³ “Nodes are positions in the NVivo8 database which can act as holders for conceptual codes” (Lewins et al., 2008: 19).

(Birbili, 2000). According to Birbili (2000), a number of things need to be considered while translation takes place as the literal translation of the language may not make sense because words which exist in one language may not exist in another and idiomatic expressions will differ from one language to another. Thus, researchers have to make careful decisions about translation-related issues (Birbili, 2000). Birbili states that the quality of translation also depends upon the translator's linguistic competence. In a translation process, it is essential to achieve "conceptual equivalence" in the translated texts (Birbili, 2000).

In this research, all of the translations were done simultaneously while analysing the data. Since all the focus group discussions and radio programmes were in Nepali, there was no need for me to seek any professional translator's help as Nepali is my mother-tongue. My experience of writing in both Nepali and English made me confident in switching between two languages and my knowledge and experience of Nepali culture gave me even more assurance in understanding the talk not only at the linguistic level but also in a socio-cultural context. The process of translation further gave in-depth insight of the data as translation required giving more time to the data than the usual reading. As suggested by Birbili, while translating the data, rather than literal translation, an emphasis was given to have "free"²⁴ translation so as to achieve contextual equivalence of the data. Moreover, I tried to have grammatical and syntactical equivalence with repeated corrections and checking the meaning from one language to another and vice versa. In this research, the data was first translated from Nepali to English and then again verified from English to Nepali (although a complete back translation was not adopted), to understand the equivalency of the data and the meaning it generated.

5.5 Analysing the Data: Discourse and Content Analysis

This study was carried out using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. As Anderson (1997: 137) states, a combined method can be advantageous as "it can allow a particular topic to be approached from different angles thus enhancing the validity of the overall analysis". Although I adopted a mix of methods, qualitative methods had precedence as the study is mainly focused on

²⁴ According to Birbili (2000), while literal translation means "word-by-word" translation, "free" translation considers the overall meaning rather than word-by-word translation.

exploring contested constructions of the environment in the media and in the mediated local contexts. As Spicer (2004: 301) states, one use of quantitative methods is to “facilitate qualitative research” in “revealing patterns that are subsequently investigated through the use of in-depth qualitative methods”. In this regard, while the quantitative content analysis (as a supporting method) was used to examine “*manifest* or more readily apparent meanings” in the texts²⁵, discourse analysis was used to investigate underlying meaning in the texts in framings and representations (Hesmondhalgh, 2006: 121). Discourse analysis is multi-faceted and covers pragmatics, semantics and semiotic dimensions. Therefore, the application of discourse analysis was helpful in answering the key research questions based on constructions of the environment by analysing the attitudinal and evaluative stances as well as ideological frames in the texts.

Texts can be researched in terms of “content and meaning” as well as “structure and discourse” (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005: 197). As Bertrand and Hughes (2005: 197) point out, within each of these studies of texts, “there are both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and considerable interactions between two”. Content analysis was conducted initially to provide a general overview of the environmental media in Nepal providing supporting quantification of qualitative data. As Spicer (2004: 300) states, limited quantification gives a sense of the “generality of phenomena being discussed in a research account”. Moreover, quantitative analysis such as content analysis can be helpful in examining whether the cases studied were representative of the larger textual data (Spicer, 2004). As Spicer (2004: 300-301) puts it:

“An in-depth discourse or semiotic analysis of selected documents or visual images, for example, could be combined with a quantitative content analysis of a wider cross-section of documents or images in order to judge the extent to which the cases examined in depth are representative.”

As content analysis is considered best when it is “supplemented by other methods or a researcher’s own qualitative insights” (Bell, 1991: 213), discourse analysis has

²⁵ According to Fairclough (2003: 3), “texts” can refer to the “transcripts of (spoken) conversations and interviews” as well as radio or “television programmes”. Analysing text is an important part of discourse analysis because “social effects of discourse” cannot be identified if one does not analyse written or spoken language (Fairclough, 2003: 3).

been a powerful method used in understanding discourses in the media. Tonkiss (2004a: 368) suggests that one of the major problems with content analysis is its main concern with “crass” content. As it is mainly linked with the question of “*what* is said” rather than “*how* it is said”, it is not easy to identify the “interpretation, meanings or effects” of the texts while doing content analysis. However, it is primarily used in media research for studying larger “textual data” (Tonkiss, 2004a: 368). Jensen (1991: 8-9) rightly puts it as: “One important methodological contribution of the humanities has been the development of discourse analysis, which offers a systematic, qualitative alternative to formal content analysis”. In this regard, applying discourse analysis in this research gave not only the understanding of how the media (i.e. the host and the interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali*) frame the environment but also understanding of how focus group participants constructed the environment interplaying with their own local settings.

5.5.1 Discourse Analysis

The term “discourse” has been “used in a variety of ways in linguistics and other social sciences” (Hesmondhalgh, 2006: 122). The one which mainly focuses on language considers discourse as a “social action and interaction, people interacting together in real social situations” (Fairclough, 1995: 18). The other is influenced by social theorist Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and pays less attention to linguistic features in language (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). Discourse as viewed by Foucault is “a social construction of reality, a form of knowledge” (Fairclough, 1995: 18). Foucault’s view is based on the “mechanism of epistemic order, dichotomisation, opposition and exclusion” (Sangsingkeo, 2011: 76). Fairclough (1995) in *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* uses the term “discourse” by bringing both viewpoints together i.e. both the discourse as “social action” and as “social construction”. Similar to this, my use of the term “discourse” in this study oscillates between these two concepts.

In this study, I adopt concepts from Foucault (1984) to see how exclusions and prohibition take place in discourse. Foucault (1984: 109) suggests that discourse not only operates with exclusion, but the “production of discourse” in every society

is “controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures”. For example, the agenda-setting role of the media that constructs particular social issues as important by emphasising some issues and downplaying or excluding others (see Chapter 3.3). According to Foucault, discourse analysis is not only an analysis of textual structure in language but also a study of language to know how and where it is produced and distributed within the broader social context. In fact, the discourse itself is an epistemic construction (Foucault, 1971). Mautner (2008: 33) also suggests that discourse analysis aims “to show how language is instrumental in constructing this view” and hence challenges it in the course of “deconstruction”.

I also use approaches developed by Fairclough (1995) to analyse ‘representations’, ‘identities’ and ‘relations’ and van Dijk (1998) to analyse opinions and ideologies in the texts and talks. The work of Fairclough and van Dijk are important in this study because they both “attempt to draw connections between the use of language and the exercise of social power” (Hesmondhalgh, 2006: 122). Fairclough’s (2003: 2) approach to discourse analysis is mainly “based upon the assumption that language is an irreducible part of social life” and as such social research should take account of how language is used in a particular context. While his focus remains on how the world is represented in the texts, Fairclough (2003: 26) writes, “[r]epresentation is clearly a discursive matter, and we can distinguish different discourses, which may represent the same area of the world from different perspectives or positions”.

In addition to finding out how the world is represented in the texts, discourse analysis is also helpful in seeing how the identities and the relations of the people involved are dynamically established in the language used (Fairclough, 1995). The concept drawn from van Dijk (1998) is based on analysing opinions and ideologies in the press. Although there is no standard way to conduct ideological analysis of the texts and the talk (van Dijk, 1998), as suggested by van Dijk (1998: 61), this study tries to focus on examining “context of the discourse”, analysing “power relations”, finding out “positive and negative opinions” and tracing the “the formal structures that de(emphasize) polarized opinions”.

“Discourse analysis emphasizes the obvious, but as yet not fully explored fact that media ‘messages’ are specific types of text and talk” (van Dijk, 1991: 108). In discourse analysis, “language is not simply a neutral medium for communicating information or reporting on events, but a domain in which people’s knowledge of the social world is actively shaped” (Tonkiss, 2004a: 373). In this regard, discourse analysis can provide further understanding of how the textual structure has been formed in social, cultural and historical contexts (van Dijk, 1991). An important contribution of discourse analysis is the approach it adopts to uncover the ways texts are produced (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). As Phillips and Hardy (2002: 6) put it, discourse analysis

“[...] tries to explore how the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world were created in the first place and how they are maintained and held in place over time. Whereas other qualitative methodologies work to understand or interpret social reality as it exists, discourse analysis endeavours to uncover the way in which it is produced.”

Indeed, as Phillips and Hardy point out, discourse analysis tries to identify the linkages of particular texts in terms of their origination as well as reasons for their design. As an example of this, Bell’s (1991) study of climate change reporting in New Zealand conducted in 1989 applied discourse analysis to environmental news and focused on both media reporting of climate change and public understanding of the issue. Bell explored how news production and language are interlinked in reporting environmental affairs (Anderson, 1997). In this sense, discourse analysis is a powerful methodology in examining how the language in environmental reporting can frame a particular issue. Discourse analysis views language not as a transparent reflection of reality, but as a medium which helps in “*constructing* and organizing the terms in which we understand that social reality” (Tonkiss, 2004a: 373).

Discourse analysis in this study examines the representation of the environment in media discourses and the construction of the environment by different groups of people in Nepal. It also explores how the contestation takes place among the members of the public spheres both in the media and in local contexts. Similarly, it investigates how the media discourses have shaped and constructed a reality in the

Nepalese socio-cultural context. Furthermore, using discourse analytic methods it also seeks answers to questions such as details about the communicator, the socio-cultural context of communication, different communicators involved in the discourse and their inter-relations in the programme (Cook, 1992). As Cook (1992: 3) says about discourse analysis:

“[...] it is not concerned with language alone. It also examines the context of communication: who is communicating with whom and why; in what kind of society and situation; through what medium; how different types and acts of communication involved, and their relationship to each other.”

Since exploring the relation between text and contexts (including intertexts, subtexts, cotexts) is crucial in discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1985), this study seeks to understand the media construction of environment as well as the framing of the environment by local publics in mass-mediated contexts. It will examine how *Batabaran Dabali* acts as an agent of an elite public sphere by selecting elite interviewees and also explores how these elite discourses in the programme operate to exclude local publics. In this study, a discourse analytic approach is used to analyse both media discourse and the data generated during the focus group discussions. Since discourse analysis is useful in exploring the “functions served by specific constructions at both the interpersonal level and societal level” (Wooffitt, 2008: 445), in this research discourse analysis mainly helped identify how the language in the interaction was shaped so as to understand the underlying meaning in the environment discussion programmes as well as in the focus groups discussions.

5.5.2 Content Analysis

As noted above, content analysis is used as a supporting method of analysis. It basically helps in quantifying the occurrences of certain words, texts, images in the media through which social significance of such representations can be figured out to a certain extent (Hansen et al., 1998). According to Hansen et al (1998: 91) content analysis provides “systematic analysis of communications content”. It is useful in understanding and making reflections of wider media coverage and is therefore a powerful tool for providing a general overview of media content.

According to Hesmondhalgh (2006: 120), the main benefit of using a quantitative method like content analysis is that it offers “greater potential to *generalize* than do qualitative ones”. It also has benefit in drawing conclusions about the representation of certain topic in particular media genres (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). In this study, content analysis was very helpful not only in drawing conclusions about how the environmental topics become thematically salient in *Batabaran Dabali*, but was also useful in explaining representations of the environment and environmental issues in the Nepalese media.

However, content analysis faces problems in reflecting the recurrences, patterns, hierarchies and orders in the text. In this regard, as Hansen et al (1998: 95) write that content analysis tends not to identify the “intensity of meaning in texts”, its linkage to social reality and the social impacts which the texts create and as such does not answer questions such as:

“[...] how far is it possible to pin down the meaning of any text, whether it be the meaning as intended by the producers of texts or the meaning as it is ‘read’ and understood by consumers/recipients of texts?” (Hansen et al., 1998: 94)

Indeed, as Hansen et al said, content analysis cannot reveal in-depth understandings such as the producer’s intentions or the consumer’s interpretations. Here, discourse analysis offers a useful methodological-analytical counterpoint.

Despite this, content analysis is a popular method in mass communication research especially for analysing large number of texts. As van Dijk (1985: 3) puts it, content analysis can at least provide “partial insight into properties of media discourse, such as prevalent themes of the news, the kind of actors in the news [...] or style in the headlines”. In this regard, content analysis is useful in providing a quantitative analysis of the “structural properties” of media discourse (van Dijk, 1985). As content analysis mainly focuses on visible contents such as keywords, names and particular descriptions, it is useful to also apply a method such as discourse analysis to see the representation (Fairclough, 1995), exclusion (Foucault, 1984) and also opinions and ideologies (van Dijk, 1998) in texts and talks. In this study, content analysis was used to understand how the environmental topics were treated in Nepalese media in general and in an environmental radio discussion

programme in particular. As Davis (1985) points out, discourse analysis uses the same data but from a different viewpoint, as it does not just depend upon the manifest content. Rather, it attempts to discover the latent meaning within. Therefore, the same sets of data used for content analysis was selected for discourse analysis in *Batabaran Dabali*. This included *Batabaran Dabali* programmes aired over a period of one year (May 2009 - April 2010).

Summary

This chapter has sought to explain the components of the overall methodology I used in the study of the media and local construction of the environment. In order to access the former, programmes from a Nepalese Radio station, Radio Sagarmatha were recorded, and focus group discussions were carried out with three different categories of publics in Nepal in order to explore local constructions of the environment. Furthermore, various important aspects of focus group discussions were summarised, such as ethical considerations, role of gatekeepers and contacting the participants. Data from the radio programme were selected for the study since radio has been the most widely reached medium in Nepal, transecting both the urban and the rural population. On the other hand, the focus group discussion method was used mainly to understand how discussion in a group shapes the discourse produced (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005). This chapter also outlined the other important activities such as recording, transcribing, and coding as well as translation procedure.

Content analysis played an important if limited role in this research. As content analysis cannot identify either “producers’ intentions” or “consumers’ interpretations” (Tonkiss, 2004a: 373), my methodology of using both content and discourse analysis in analysing media texts helped interpret both the construction of environment in the media in Nepal and the main actions resulting from these discourses in Nepalese society. The data generated during the focus group discussions were analysed using a discourse analytic approach so as to complement the analysis of the media texts. This was not only useful in identifying commonalities on how the environment and related issues are constructed in the

media and among the focus group participants, but also was helpful in contrasting the representation of environmental issues between these contexts.

The following three chapters 6, 7 and 8 present analysis of the *Batabaran Dabali* programme. While chapter 6 presents content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali*, chapters 7 and 8 present discourse analysis of the same. The three chapters will explicate construction of the environment in this radio genre.

Chapter 6

The Representation of the Environment in *Batabaran Dabali*

This chapter presents the findings of content analysis of the *Batabaran Dabali* programme on Radio Sagarmatha. A total of 50 half hour programmes spanning the period of a year (May 2009 to April 2010) were analysed. Content analysis was conducted to investigate the frequency of environment-related coverage and provide a general overview of the representation of the environment on the programme. The analysis also aimed to examine the extent to which the coverage echoed patterns of newsworthiness outlined in other studies (such as Friedman et al., 1986; Greenberg et al., 1989; Einsiedel and Coughlan, 1993; Hansen, 1994) and the type of sources quoted, and the source contexts. A Content Analysis Coding Schedule (see Appendix 1) was developed and the data were coded as per the guidelines developed in a Topic Guide (see Appendix 2). A Spreadsheet package (Microsoft Excel) was used for analysis and tables and chart generation.

6.1 Source Contexts

The study found that the pattern of ‘talking about the environment’ in *Batabaran Dabali* mainly was in the genre of interviews with experts²⁶. These interviews comprised single²⁷, group²⁸ or multiple²⁹ interviews. More than half of the programmes (26) contained interviews with individual interviewees, 7 programmes contained group interviews and another 7 had interviews with two or more than two people. 7 programmes included investigative reports along with the interviews while 3 also included general news apart from interviews.

²⁶ The experts in *Batabaran Dabali* include government officials, officials working in environmental organisations, university professors, environment journalists etc.

²⁷ Single interview represents the entire interview with one person.

²⁸ Group interview represents two or more than two persons being interviewed in the programme in which the interviewees react to points made by other interviewees.

²⁹ Multiple interviews represent interviews (2-3 interviews) taking place one after the other during the programme time.

Table 6.1 Time Distribution of the Programmes

	Programmes	Programme Count	Total Time Allocation		Average Time Allocation	
			Min	Sec	Min	Sec
1	Single Interviews	26	642	48	24	43
2	Group Interviews	7	178	34	25	30
3	Multiple Interviews	7	171	44	25	31
	3a. Interview 1		70	13		
	3b. Interview 2		85	27		
	3c. Interview 3		16	04		
4	Investigative Report and Interviews	7	176	04	25	09
	4a. Investigative Report		61	47		
	4b. Interview 1		103	06		
	4c. Interview 2		11	11		
5	General News and Interviews	3	70	01	23	20
	5a. General News		07	17		
	5b. Interviews		62	44		

The time allocation³⁰ for these source contexts reflect that a total of 642 minutes and 48 seconds were given to 26 single interviews. On average, these single interviews lasted for 24 minutes and 43 seconds. While 178 minutes and 34 seconds were allocated to 7 group interviews, 171 minutes and 44 seconds were allocated to 7 multiple interviews. Each group interview lasted an average of 25 minutes and 30 seconds. Generally, multiple interviews lasted an average of 11 minutes and 30 seconds for each interview. Investigative reports and interviews (7) lasted a total of 176 minutes and 4 seconds. A programme consisting of an investigative report and interview shows that the time allocation for the report lasted from 4 to 9 minutes on average and the rest of the time was allocated to interviews. Similarly, the time allocation of programmes consisting of general news and interviews (total time 70 minutes and 1 second) reflected that the news coverage lasted for 1 to 4 minutes with the rest of the time given to interviews. This suggests that the programme mainly focuses on interviews with the experts (single, group or multiple), as a very limited time was given to investigative reports and general news compared to interviews.

The analysis suggests that the source context in *Batabaran Dabali* is mainly interviews with opinion-forming experts conducted over the telephone. The format of the single interviews in *Batabaran Dabali* prevents debate between interviewees,

³⁰ The time allocation of the programme in this table excludes the regular introduction, jingles and closing in the programmes.

and multiple interviews shared this characteristic as interviews took place one after the other. Although 7 programmes had group interviews, little time was devoted to discussions between interviewees. In fact, *Batabaran Dabali* was found to run with a mainly restricted format of one-to-one discussion providing minimum space for discussions among the interviewees. In this regard, the design of *Batabaran Dabali* itself is a form of exclusion with the monopoly of the interviewers' accounts and presumably the interviewees' in the case of long single interviews.

6.2 Environmental Discourse and Primary Definers of the Environment

This section outlines organisational affiliations as well as the gender, caste and ethnic representation of the interviewees on *Batabaran Dabali*. The analysis reflects that high level officials from the government and non-government sectors, members of constituent assembly together with academics and media professionals play the role of 'primary definers' of the environment on *Batabaran Dabali*. It will also illustrate that the ordinary people, women and ethnic minorities have limited representation on the programme.

6.2.1 Organisational Affiliations of Interviewees

Among 69 interviewees on the programmes, 24% were high-level government officials working in various government ministries, departments and offices, 19% were affiliated to national and international non-government organisations based in Nepal and 13% were members of the Constituent Assembly. These members were affiliated to political parties such as the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and the Nepali Congress. In addition, 12% were from universities in Nepal and abroad, and 10% were from the media, mainly the environmental journalists.

Table 6.2 Organisational Affiliations of the Interviewees

Organisational Affiliations	Percentage
Government	24%
Non-government	19%
Constituent Assembly	13%
University	12%
Media	10%
Not Specified	16%
Other	6%
Total	100%

Although 16% of the interviewees' organisational affiliations were not specifically mentioned in the programme, the conversations during the interviews reflect their connections either with the government or with non-government organisations. The remaining 6% of interviewees were from various sectors such as the hotel association and community forest user groups. It is clear from the analysis that elites having newsworthy voices, such as government authorities, officials of non-government organisations, members of political parties, academics and the media together define the problems associated with the environment in Nepal.

6.2.2 The Voice of the 'Voiceless'

The analysis shows that elite voices primarily define the problems associated with the environment in Nepal, while the voices of local communities are strongly under-represented. Content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* shows that representation of ordinary people was minimal. Out of the 50 programmes, only 5 of the programmes included local voices and opinions in discussions of environmental issues. Among the 5 programmes which contained local voices, 26 people from different walks of life expressed their concern about the environmental situation of Nepal. However, the interview time ranged just from 6 seconds to a maximum of 5 minutes which gave very little space for people to express their concerns. These voices included students, housewives, teachers, lecturers, traffic police, clerical staff, members of community forests, victims of environmental disasters, government and non-government employees, many of whom had been interviewed on the street. The time allocation (38 minutes and 18 seconds) for the ordinary people amounted to just 3% of the total time allocated for the 50 programmes aired (20 hrs 37 minutes).

Batabaran Dabali, by playing a jingle³¹ at the beginning or the end of the every programme, claims that the programme is dedicated to ensuring environmental

³¹ The jingle contains information claiming that *Batabaran Dabali* is in support of inclusion of citizens' rights in the new constitution.

citizens' rights in the new constitution³². In this regard, it operates largely as a means to inform the educated mass on environmental issues and the constitution making process. However, the larger population, who are dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods and who ultimately will become the direct beneficiary of implementation of these rights, are not given a voice. The analysis shows clearly how ordinary people are excluded from participation. It also indicates the role of experts in shaping environmental discourse and setting the environmental agenda in Nepal. Moreover, it places *Batabaran Dabali* as a forum for elite environmental discourses which is being used for exchanging environmental knowledge among elites themselves. It can therefore be concluded that Radio Sagarmatha, a non-government and non privately-owned station, although claiming to run its programmes with the notion of giving a 'voice to the voiceless', nevertheless provides a platform to relay elite voices on *Batabaran Dabali*.

6.2.3 Gender, Caste and Ethnic Representation in *Batabaran Dabali*

The study found that marginalised groups within Nepal were almost entirely excluded from coverage on *Batabaran Dabali*. In Nepal, although the restoration of democracy in 1990 provided space for diverse groups to "express their opinions openly", women and members of Dalit³³ and indigenous ethnic groups, remain at the periphery (Bennett, 2005: 5). *Batabaran Dabali* follows a similar pattern of exclusion in which the marginalisation of already excluded sectors of the population takes place. The programmes are generally dominated by the voices of male experts. In a total of 50 programmes, 93% of expert interviewees were men. Similarly, the gender composition of ordinary people (26) in 5 programmes also

³² Unfortunately, the new constitution has not yet been formalised. The constitution drafting process ended on 27 May 2012 as it could not meet the deadline despite four extensions since 2008. Consequently, after the government dissolved the Constitution Assembly in a "dramatic" fashion, there is no constitution in Nepal (Tamang, 2012). Tamang (2012) considers this failure as the "political accident" which no one in the country ever desired. While the Constitutional Assembly was dissolved, the interim constitution 2007 remains in force. In the meantime, the Maoist-led cabinet have proposed the next election of the Constitutional Assembly for 22 November 2012. However, other political parties have not yet reached consensus on this (Tamang, 2012).

³³ "The term, 'Dalit', is generally used to identify those on the lowest rung in the caste hierarchy. In most writings, the term is also used to identify the vulnerable and poor groups of people who are oppressed, suppressed and exploited" (International Labour Organization ILO in Nepal, 2005: 1).

showed 73% were of men. The fact that only 7% of the experts and 27% of ordinary people who feature in *Batabaran Dabali* are women clearly shows that the programme has not been successful in ensuring fair representation of excluded groups. An analysis of caste and ethnic composition³⁴ of all the interviewees shows that a total of 68% interviewees were found to belong to high-caste Brahmins and Chettries³⁵. While there was small representation of people from Madhesi (14%) and Indigenous (13%) ethnic groups, Dalits had a negligible presence (1%) (A total of 4% of interviewees' ethnic group was unidentifiable). This demonstrates that people from Madhesi, Indigenous and Dalit groups are under-represented. The ethnic composition of ordinary people interviewed also shows a higher percentage (46%) to be from high-caste Brahmin and Chettri groups while 27% were indigenous and 15% from a Madhesi background (12% were unspecified).

In Nepal, Brahmin and Chettri have been the dominant caste groups ever since the territorial “unification” of the country in 1768 AD (Bhattachan, 2002). The domination of these Brahmin and Chettri groups not only applies to the government and the private media; almost all mass media are monopolised by these dominant caste groups (Bhattachan, 2002). The content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* reflects a similar outcome of minimum representation of interviewees (expert and ordinary people) from other caste and ethnic groups, since high caste interviewees dominate the programme. In addition, a narrow representation of women, both as experts and ordinary citizens, also suggests that the programme is biased towards already marginalised people. Onta (2006) thus claims that the presence of high-caste males in the media has jeopardised the concerns of women and other marginalised groups.

³⁴ Caste and ethnic composition of the hosts and the interviewees were first identified by their surnames. Thereafter, these were validated by using the caste and ethnic groups listed (from 2001 census) in table 2.2 by Bennett, Dahal and Govindasamy (2008: 3).

³⁵ There are four main groups within the Hindu caste system in Nepal. Brahmins (the priestly caste) are at the top of the caste system, followed by Chettris (the warrior caste), Vaisyas (the caste of tradesmen and artisans) and Sudras (the occupational caste) (Burbank, 2002) at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. According to Hindu belief, “humans sprang from the body of Brahma, the god of creator of everything” in which the Brahmins are believed to come from the head and mouth of the god, Chettris from his arms, Vaisyas from his thighs and Sudras from his feet (Burbank, 2002: 47). The traditional caste system, in which the high caste people are seen to be in a dominant position, is operational even today. Bennett (2005: 6) writes: “In Nepal power was consolidated by interlinking it with the Hindu caste system, which, though diluted, remains even today”.

In summary, it is quite clear from the analysis that the editors of *Batabaran Dabali* select interviewees on the basis of their credibility and typically use sources such as high-level government and non-government officials. Indeed, as Hall (1973) states, one cannot underestimate the “ideological sphere” of the media professionals in shaping the editorial role. For *Batabaran Dabali*, a small group of media professionals select and deselect the contents of the programme. On this discussion programme, certain voices were found to be privileged and other voices (such as of ordinary people) were found to be ignored or silenced with only minimal representation. An exclusion of ordinary people, women and marginalised groups from the programme illustrates how discourse operates via exclusion procedure (Foucault, 1984).

6.3 Newsworthy Topics and News Values

Using content analysis, this section explores the dominant headline themes in *Batabaran Dabali* and shows that issues related to climate change have predominance over other environmental issues. It will also illustrate how *Batabaran Dabali* is influenced by the journalistic ritual of news selection based on newsworthy criteria (as discussed in Chapter 3.2 News Values) although it is predominantly a non-news³⁶ programme.

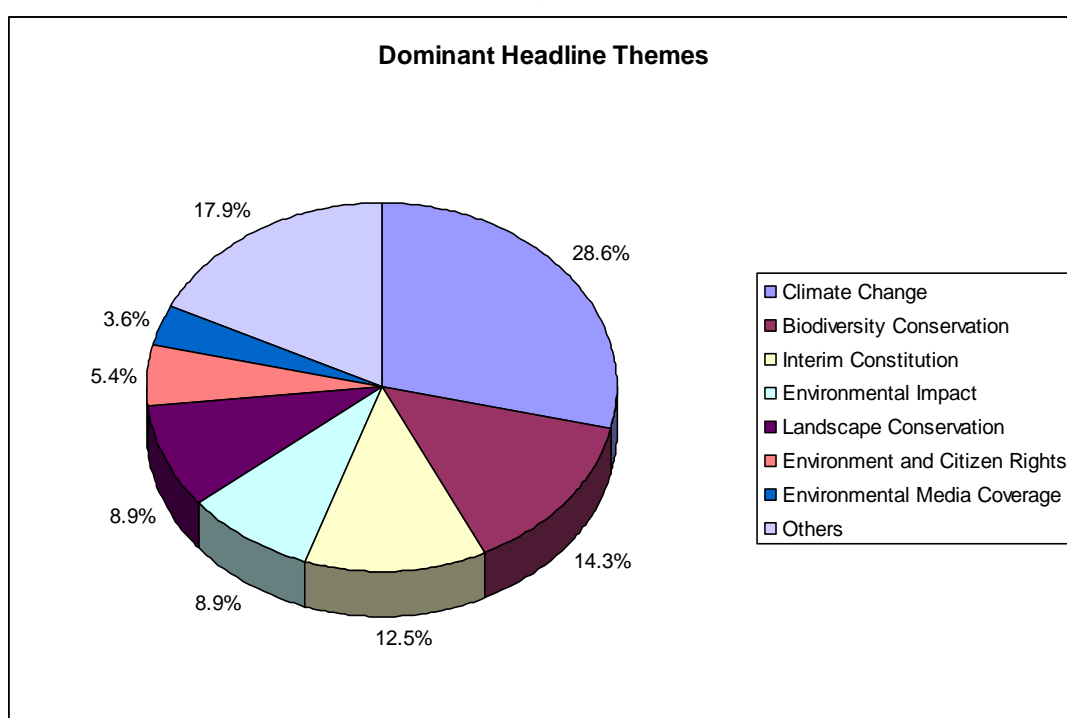
6.3.1 Dominant Headline Themes

An analysis of headline themes³⁷ in *Batabaran Dabali* reveals that headlines fall mainly into seven dominant themes. These include: Climate Change, Biodiversity Conservation, Interim Constitution, Environmental Impact, Landscape Conservation, Environment and Citizen Rights, and Environmental Media Coverage. The ‘Others’ headline theme included headlines which covered topics such as nature, natural resources, tourism, ministry-related issues etc (see Fig. 6.1).

³⁶ *Batabaran Dabali* is mainly a one-to-one discussion programme although it occasionally contains short news coverage.

³⁷ The headline theme is the topic set out by the presenter/interviewer. This is the main topic s/he mentions.

Figure 6.1 Dominant Headline Themes



The ‘themes’ in this analysis were categorised based on the topics covered in the headline. For example, the headline coverage of the programme ‘A South Asian conference on climate change’ was included under ‘climate change’ dominant theme. If the headline covered ‘Nepal’s biodiversity and its importance’, it was included under the dominant theme of ‘Biodiversity Conservation’. However, six programmes included a combination of headlines such as climate change and biodiversity conservation; interim constitution and environmental impact; interim constitution and landscape conservation.

In the analysis of these themes, the programmes having more than one theme have been regarded as having multiple dominant headline themes and included under each of the themes. For example, the programme with two headlines ‘Carbon trading’ and ‘Community Forest Conservation’ is included both under Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation. Thus, out of the 50 programmes analysed, the total number of ‘Headline Theme(s)’ reached 56. The analysis shows that the issues related to climate change accounted for 28.6% of the coverage, which is the highest percentage for any issue covered in *Batabaran Dabali* (see Fig 6.1). This clearly demonstrates that climate change receives more coverage than any other environmental issue.

The study found that a total of 14.3% of the programmes contained focus on various aspects of biodiversity conservation, such as fauna and flora conservation, wetland conservation and community forestry. Ironically, although the programme claims to have its prime focus on inclusion of environmental rights of citizens in an interim constitution by playing a jingle at the beginning or the end of the every programme, only 12.5% of the headlines explicitly mentioned the interim constitution. A total of 8.9% of the programmes also had a focus on the importance of landscape conservation such as that of Churia³⁸ and Lumbini³⁹ conservation. Besides highlighting the importance of Churia in the conservation scenario in Nepal, it also gave considerable attention to coverage of environmental impact (8.9%). Coverage of environmental impact included topics such as the impact of environmental pollution on traffic police and environmental impact on Nepal's Himalayas. Citizens' environmental rights featured in 5.4% of the headlines and 3.6% of the programmes also repeated topics already published in the local print media in which the host/reporter reads the coverage from the newspaper. The categories which had just a single occurrence or had no common themes were placed in the 'Others' category (17.9%). This category included general coverage of nature, natural resources, tourism, environment ministry related reports, issues addressed by the fiscal year budget on environment and the role of youth in conservation. The analysis clearly indicates that while *Batabaran Dabali* tries to address various aspects of environmental problems, climate change dominates the headlines.

6.3.2 News Values and *Batabaran Dabali*

As noted above, *Batabaran Dabali* is predominantly a one-to-one elite discussion programme. Therefore, a question arises whether the programme promotes the agendas of the elite publics. As the programme was developed by environmental journalists, it is essential to understand the influence of journalistic norms. Thus,

³⁸ A report published by Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC) on *Churia Conservation, Livelihood and Land Rights: Unravelling the Complexities* (2005: 16) states that Churia area "is the range gradually elevated from Terai plains up to 1,800 mt from the sea level, stretched almost the entire length of the country from east to west". The area suffers from exploitation of resources and degradation of the environment.

³⁹ Lumbini is a Buddhist pilgrimage site in the Rupandehi district of Nepal which lies in the foothills of the Himalayas. Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, is enlisted as one of the UNESCO World Heritage sites in Nepal (Vivekananda, 2009).

the analysis of this radio programme focused on understanding how news values operate in such a genre and explores whether the programme is similar to or influenced by the mainstream news media. Hence, the programmes were analysed with an eye on understanding the relative importance of various news values in the programme. However, Galtung and Ruge's (1965) list of news values alone were not sufficient to analyse *Batabaran Dabali*. Simply equating the news values with Galtung and Ruge's list of standard criteria would be ignoring many other scholars' additional insights in analysing newsworthiness (Braun, 2009). As until now no concrete list of criteria have been developed to refer to, for the purpose of studying *Batabaran Dabali*, news values from different scholars (as listed in Chapter 3.2 News Values) have been grouped together to form a single list. The criteria covered by Lippmann (1922), Galtung and Ruge (1965), Hall (1973), Bell (1991), Luhmann (2000) and McGregor (2002) totalled more than 30 criteria.

The compilation of different scholars' respective lists yielded many overlapping news criteria. For example, as discussed earlier (see Chapter 3.2 News Values), one of Luhmann's criteria of news as an "expression of opinion" from a reputed source is similar to the "elite people" and "elite nations" mentioned by Galtung and Ruge and the source credential mentioned by Bell (1991). These news values were useful in understanding how the 'elites' were given preference in *Batabaran Dabali* in framing the environment.

Table 6.3 Programmes Supporting to News Values

News Values	Programmes	Percentage
Elite People	50	100%
National Relevancy	50	100%
Negativity (Thematic Framing)	45	90%
Reference to Elites (Government)	44	88%
Quantities	18	36%
Elite Nations	17	34%
Predictability	7	14%
Continuity	6	12%
Personification	6	12%
Prefabrication	4	8%
Conflict	2	4%
Co-option	2	4%
Emotion	1	2%

Although Galtung and Ruge's "elite people" was selected in the list developed (see Table 6.3), Bell's analysis of source credential was especially helpful in

understanding source contexts since the elites (especially high-level government and non-government officials) were the credible sources for *Batabaran Dabali*. Since these sources (the elite interviewees) refer to other sources (such as the government) in the programmes, taking Bell's source credentials into account, news value 'Reference to Elites' has been included in the list (see Table 6.3). Similarly, a "predictability" value is listed both by both Galtung and Ruge and Bell. While for Galtung and Ruge's (1965: 67) news value "predictability" relates more to events that "one expects to happen", the "predictability" criterion mentioned by Bell uses the concept to indicate how media personnel schedule news. In analysing *Batabaran Dabali*, Bell's notion of predictability was selected as it was more relevant than the one suggested by Galtung and Ruge. In the process of compiling a list of news values so as to analyse *Batabaran Dabali*, the entire programmes were initially screened first with all the criteria (34) compiled from various scholars. The list was consolidated to 28 after integrating 6 overlapping news values.

The initial analysis showed that some of the criteria (i.e. 13 news values as listed in Table 6.3) had more bearing on the data while there was no evidence supporting 15 of the news values compiled. Thus, these 15 news values which had no bearing on the data were omitted. For example, the analysis did not indicate the importance of "frequency" and "threshold" of Galtung and Ruge. Moreover, the interviews in *Batabaran Dabali* neither supported the "competition" criterion of Bell nor news values such as "surprise" and "norm violations" listed by Luhmann. On the other hand, McGregor's "visualness" criterion was not relevant for the radio programme. Thus, not only overlapping news values have been omitted, more relevant news criteria in analysing *Batabaran Dabali* were chosen over the less relevant ones. Hence, a new list of thirteen criteria was developed by consolidating news criteria from different traditions.

In the Table 6.3, news criteria such as "negativity", "continuity", "elite people", "elite nations" and "personification" are drawn out from the list of Galtung and Ruge. The programme which gives overall negative theme was categorised as having "negativity" news value. The news value "negativity" was slightly modified to "negativity (thematic framing)" as the programmes were analysed as per the overall themes these programmes reflected. Similarly, a topic is covered on the

programme for more than a week, it was considered to have “continuity” criterion. Likewise, high-level professional interviewees were categorised as “elite people”. The programme was referred to as having news value “elite nations” if the interviewee referred to developed nations during the interview. The programmes in which journalists reported from the field were considered as having “personification” news value.

Similarly, news values such as “co-option”, “prefabrication”, and “predictability” were selected from Bell. Any simple story linked to highly newsworthy topics was considered as having “co-option” news value, while programmes using ready-made text were categorised as having “prefabrication” news value. If a programme could be predictable in the future, it was considered as having “predictability” news value. For example, a programme focused on Copenhagen conference aired a week before the conference in December 2009 was considered as having “predictability” news value. Taking into account Bell’s “source credential”, news value “reference to elite” was also included in the list. In this case, if the interviewees or hosts of the programme refer to elite people (high level government or non-government officials), it was categorised as having news value ‘reference to elite’.

Likewise, “conflict”, “quantities” and “national relevancy” were selected from the list of Luhmann. If the coverage included conflicts over environmental issues, the programmes were categorised as having “conflict” news value. The programmes in which interviewees refer to comparative figures in interviews were categorised to have “quantities” news value. Similarly, the programmes which were mainly on the issues concerning Nepal were termed as having news value of “national relevancy”. The “local relevancy” criterion of Luhmann has been modified as “national relevancy” factor in this analysis as most of the programmes concerned national issues. A criterion “emotion” was selected from the list of McGregor. If the coverage included voice of survivors and victims of environmental problems, these were considered as having “emotion” news value.

The analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* found that the programme does not follow a conventional news format. Nevertheless, it does support several criteria of news selection. As the programmes are mainly based on interviews with experts, the

programmes already heavily (100%) support the news criteria of “elite people”. Coverage of environment on *Batabaran Dabali* heavily privileged “national relevancy” (100%) as newsworthy, which has linkages with the local, regional and national context of Nepal. Even though there was some coverage of international conferences, discussions focused on their national and local interest. Similarly, 90% of the programmes could be categorised as having “negative thematic framing”. In these programmes, the interviewees mainly discuss the negative consequences of current environmental problems.

In *Batabaran Dabali*, the elite interviewees quote or refer mainly to government authorities (88% of the programmes) as the credential sources (this will be further elaborated in Chapter 6.3.3). It was also found that interviewees use frequent references to “quantities”. For example, in an interview aired on 9 August 2009, an interviewee refers to year 1832 as the year of industrial revolution and the amount of carbon dioxide accumulation before the year 1832 to be 282 parts per million. Later, he again refers to year 2007 to indicate an increment in carbon dioxide accumulation, saying that it is now 384 parts per million, which is more than 100. Thus, in 36% of the programme, the interviewees were found to validate their point with reference to quantities.

The interviewees were also found to compare the national context with the international environmental scenario referring to “elite nations” (34%). While this analysis excluded reference to neighbouring nations, elite nations generally included were the USA, European and other developed countries. Coverage of some of the programmes was quite predictable such as coverage of the Copenhagen conference just before and after the international conference in December 2009. These programmes were categorised as having “predictability” (14%) news value. Other coverage included international and national conferences, workshops and items and issues already heavily covered in the news media. Some of these programmes provided evidence of “continuity” (12%). For example, coverage on conservation of the Lumbini continued for two consecutive weeks on 7 June 2009 and 14 June 2009. Programmes such as those on conservation of Lumbini and environmental impact in the Himalayas were covered with the direct involvement of the reporters in the area contributing to the criteria such as “personification”

(12%). A few of the programmes (8%) were found to be using readymade newspaper texts which were covered with little modification (supporting “prefabrication”). A total of 4% of the programme supported “conflict”. These programmes mainly had coverage of clashes among locals around environmental issues. A total of 4% of the programmes also supported co-option in which simple stories of rainfall and draught were linked to highly newsworthy topic such as climate change. Similarly, very few (2%) programmes supported “emotion”, in which the programmes covered the plight of victims of environmental disasters using their own voices.

6.3.3 Quoted Actors and Quoted Sources

An analysis of actors and sources is important in understanding the role of the media in “social representation and power relationships in the society” (Hansen et al., 1998: 108). In this regard, content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* was worthwhile in finding out how the sources play a role in environmental discourses in Nepal. The analysis shows that the government was quoted or referred to in 44 of the 50 programmes. Reference to the government was defined to include quoting government authority, government organisations or government documents. The other frequently cited sources include national and international non-government organisations in Nepal, mentioned in 26 programmes. The third highly referenced sources are internationally affiliated personalities and international organisations outside of Nepal mentioned in 25 programmes. While 7 programmes quoted locals, 7 programmes also quoted national and international media organisations and media personalities. A total of 15 programmes quoted other sources such as technical experts (engineers), mountaineers, youth groups, universities, tourism sector, religious books, community forest groups and hotel associations (see Table 6.4 below).

Table 6.4 Quoted Actors and Quoted Sources

Organisation	Programmes	Percentage
Government	44	88%
Non-government	26	52%
International	25	50%
Media	7	14%
Locals	7	14%
Others	15	30%

The analysis clearly indicates that government organisations and government personnel not only have the dominant voice in environmental discourses in Nepal, they are also considered as the most authoritative sources. It also shows that non-government organisations (both national as well as international) and international references (such as quoting international high level officials, universities, documents) are the other highly-quoted sources. The analysis reflected that expert interviewees as well as journalists ignore alternative sources (such as locals) and hardly quote them in their discourse.

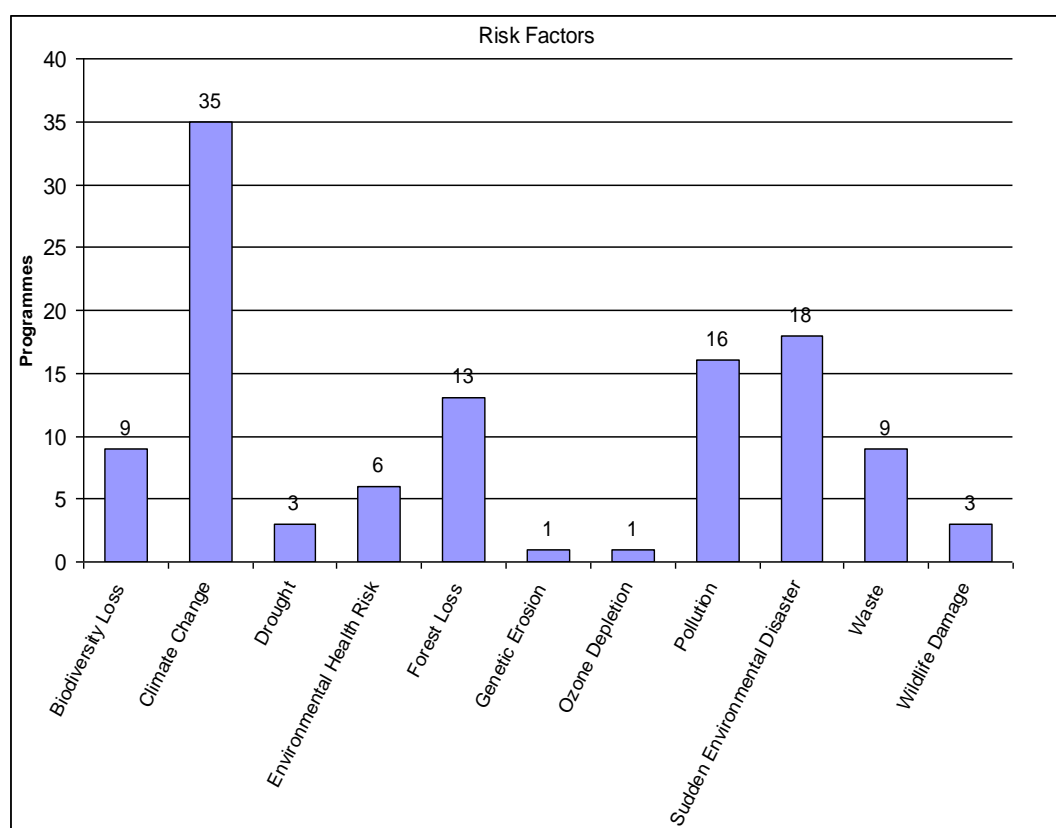
This analysis has been useful to find out how news criteria are considered in selecting topics even in a non-news programme. It was also useful to see how the discourses of environment experts are again linked with one or other criteria of news values, providing patterns of framing. The findings suggest that another genre of mass media communication (a discussion programme in this study) follows a similar pattern of news-making process which operates with an application of news values. This finding is similar to Braun's (2009) study of online forum *Daily Kos* (the forum dedicated to the discussion of US politics). Braun, in content analysis of *Daily Kos*, reported that liberal blogs were informed by standard news values, suggesting that news values are important even in a non-news environment.

6.4 Environmental Problems or Risks Type Mentioned

This analysis included finding out how the interviewers, interviewees, reports and reporters in *Batabaran Dabali* mention types of environmental problems or risk. The analysis reflected that the environmental problems or risks type mentioned in the programme were climate change, sudden environmental disasters (such as floods and landslides), pollution, loss of forests, waste, biodiversity loss, environmental health risks, drought, wildlife damage, ozone depletion and genetic erosion⁴⁰ (see Figure 6.2).

⁴⁰ "Genetic erosion is the loss of genetic diversity - often magnified or accelerated by human activities. In native plant populations, genetic erosion results from habitat loss and fragmentation, but it also can result from a narrow genetic base in the original collections or by practices that reduce genetic diversity" (Rogers, 2004: 113).

Figure 6.2 Environmental Problems or Risks Type Mentioned



Environmental risk types such as loss of forest and flooding, which have been mentioned as independent risk types, have been included in the categories ‘forest loss’ and ‘sudden environmental disaster’ respectively, since these had not been mentioned as a consequence of climate change in the interviews.

The data analysis shows that out of 50 programmes analysed, 35 programmes referred to climate change-related problems or risks such as ‘global warming’, ‘temperature rise’, ‘green house gas effects’, ‘poisonous gas’ and ‘carbon emission’. While these 35 programmes all mentioned climate change at least once during the interview, ‘global warming’, ‘greenhouse gas effect’ and ‘glacier melting’ were also mentioned 22, 13 and 7 times respectively. The total counting of the keyword ‘climate change’ in the entire year of programmes reaches up to 244, which is four times higher than the second most mentioned risks of ‘landslides’ and ‘floods’. While ‘sudden environmental disasters’ such as ‘landslides’ and ‘floods’ were found to be mentioned in 18 programmes, the keywords count of these two totalled just 60 in number. Similarly, ‘pollution’ was another frequently mentioned

environmental problem in *Batabaran Dabali*. The term ‘pollution’ includes several types of pollution such as air pollution, water pollution and noise pollution. Although discussed in just 16 programmes, keyword counts on ‘pollution’ showed the term ‘pollution’ to be mentioned 74 times. Likewise, ‘forest loss’ was mentioned in 13 programmes. The notion of environmental problems or risks such as ‘biodiversity loss’ and ‘waste’ both were found to be mentioned in 9 programmes. A total of 6 programmes also mentioned environmental health risks in their coverage. This study reveals that environmental discourse in Nepal has a very narrow representation of environmental problems or risks such as ‘wildlife damage’, ‘drought’, ‘ozone depletion’ and ‘genetic erosion’. The analysis reflects that the notion of environmental problems or risks is mainly linked with climate change as well as sudden environmental disasters such as floods and landslides. The environment is generally portrayed as ‘under threat’ and climate change is the most highlighted issue.

Summary

The purpose of content analysis was to provide a preliminary framework for analysing the environmental discourses in *Batabaran Dabali* in terms of its coverage, application of news values, quoted sources and the thematic importance accorded to various environmental issues. The analysis shows that the high-level government officials and representatives of non-government offices, members of the Constituent Assembly, universities and the media are the main sources in these interviews, indicating that the programme promotes the agendas of the elite public sphere. Coverage on *Batabaran Dabali* generally revolves around discussions with male experts, indicating not only a gender bias but also an ethnic bias with heavy inclusion of experts from dominant high caste Brahmin and Chettri groups. Furthermore, the analysis clearly indicates minimal representation of ordinary people. Similarly, the voices of environmentally affected people have little space in this radio genre. It is also found to underrepresent the lay experiential knowledge of the larger population who are close to natural resources and whose livelihoods mainly depend on the environment. Thus, analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* not only reflects a minimal representation of the ‘voice of the voiceless’, by limiting the voice of ordinary people in the programme, a clear evidence of selection and de-

selection of gender and ethnic background of the experts shows that the programme favours high caste elite male experts.

Every *Batabaran Dabali* programme starts with a slogan appealing for the environmental citizens' rights in the new constitution of Nepal. However, the programmes largely relay government voices reflecting what has been done by the government for this purpose. Although it tries to play an influential role in the national political scenario on environmental decision-making by bringing in government authorities involved in constituent making, the programmes could not relay the concern of unheard voices in these programmes. While analytical coverage and questions to experts for clarification on ongoing environmental problems in Nepal have value, a large proportion of the programme's audiences may fail to connect with the discourses mainly based on interviews with high level officials.

Content analysis as a preliminary method shows that the issues related to climate change receive prominence in the headline coverage. Moreover, the analysis found that the expert discourses in *Batabaran Dabali* are mainly linked to global challenges such as climate change. An analysis indicates that the programme supports many of the news values, despite this being a predominantly non-news programme. The most supported news values in *Batabaran Dabali* are found to be "elite people", "national relevancy", "negativity", "reference to elites", "quantities" and "elite nations". It was also found that the government is a heavily-quoted source in these programmes. This indicates that the choice of contents for *Batabaran Dabali* and its discourses resemble that of the traditional news media. An analysis of application of news values in *Batabaran Dabali* has been useful not only to identify the relevance of news values in a discussion programme, but also to see how the discourses of environment experts are linked to one or the other news criteria. The findings suggest that news values which are basically applied in studying news reporting also have relevance in other genres of mass media communication (a discussion programme in this study).

The analysis found that *Batabaran Dabali* does not support several (15) criteria suggested by various scholars. However, an interesting point to note is how

newsworthiness of the environmental programmes is defined by focus group participants in this study (It will be discussed in Chapter 10). In fact, many of the criteria which are given less priority in *Batabaran Dabali* such as “personification”, “emotion” and those not applied in the programme, such as “meaningfulness”, are considered to have high news value by the participants. This suggests that the programme is rather “self-referential” (Luhmann, 2000) as the journalists in *Batabaran Dabali* confine themselves to the expectations of the programme but not of the others (i.e. audiences). According to Luhmann (2000), “self-referential” refers to a confirmation of the logic of the system; this means upholding the values, expectations and practices of journalists as if they are separate from the outside world. Luhmann’s concept of “self-reference” is used in this thesis to indicate the pattern of texts or discourse in the media which is disinterested in the publics, reinforcing the elite, reinforcing journalists’ expectations as well as reinforcing a top-down communication system.

The next two chapters will use discourse analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* to focus on the construction of the environment in *Batabaran Dabali*.

Chapter 7

Local to Global Challenges: Competing Constructions of the Environment and Climate Change in *Batabaran Dabali*

The content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* demonstrated that climate change is considered to be the most newsworthy issue in the coverage of various environmental problems in Nepal. An emphasis on climate change issues also showed how agenda-setting function of the media played a role in constructing climate change as the most important issue. This chapter will explore how the discourses of expert interviewees, along with the hosts of the programme, significantly construct the environment in Nepal. While the environment is constructed as a series of complex relationships among constitutional, political, legal, economic and cultural dimensions, this chapter will illustrate how the interviewees and the host of *Batabaran Dabali* frame climate change as alarming, uncertain, solvable as well as having potential for economic prosperity. In addition, it will illustrate how the focus of the environmental discourses shift away from local environmental issues towards the global issue of climate change. While the first section illustrates framing of “the environment” in *Batabaran Dabali* in general, the second section focuses specifically on the construction of issues related to climate change in the same programme.

7.1 The Contested Terrain of the Environment in *Batabaran Dabali*

In order to understand how the expert interviewees construct the environment, this section presents analysis of the expert discourses in *Batabaran Dabali*. The analysis reveals that the environment is framed at the crossroads of constitutional, political, legal, economic and cultural challenges.

7.1.1 The ‘Constitutionalisation’⁴¹ of the Environment

A total of six constitutions have been promulgated in the 62 years of Nepalese constitutional history. The historical characteristic of the new constitution drafting process (started in May 2008) was that it was being developed through the election of a Constituent Assembly (Belbase, 2009). In this regard, it was expected that people from different walks of life have an opportunity: “to offer their suggestions concerning their interests, concerns and areas of expertise in the development of constitution-drafting” (Belbase, 2009: 1). However, the Constitutional Assembly was dissolved by the government on 27 May 2012. Its members are now not the members of the parliament. While the political situation in Nepal is “frustrating”, no decision has yet been made on how to go ahead in forming the new constitution that is on hold (Tamang, 2012).

The analysis found that *Batabaran Dabali* had been advocating inclusion of various environmental rights in the constitution during the study period. In an overwhelming majority of the programmes, while interviewing experts the host asked constitution-related questions although *Batabaran Dabali* had no formal role in the Constituent Assembly. Thus, this section outlines how a large majority of the expert interviewees construct the constitution as a new hope for the environmental condition of the country. It also illustrates how some interviewees frame the constitution-making process as unfair, abstract and having little hope for future proper implementation.

7.1.1.1 *The new constitution and environmental agendas*

During the data collection period *Batabaran Dabali* was mainly focused on discussions related to how a variety of environmental issues could be included in the new constitution. The analysis shows that the representation of the new constitution as a ray of hope for Nepalese citizens is evident in the majority of the programmes. Consider the following examples:

“The interim constitution has a clause which mentions that the people have rights to live in a clean environment. This has to be included in the new

⁴¹ Inclusion of new environmental laws or amendments in the new constitution of Nepal is referred to as ‘constitutionalisation’ of environmental issues throughout this thesis.

constitution. Apart from that there should be a comprehensive mentioning of the use and rights of environmental resources, natural products.” (Min Biswakarma, Interim Constitution Drafting Committee Member, *Batabaran Dabali*, 24/05/09)

“Firstly the point we have included in the constitution is that there will be rights to live in a clean, fresh and sustainable environment. The other is that everyone will have a right to live in a safe environment free from the adversity of climate change.” (Dharmaraj Niraula, Constitution Drafting Committee Member, *Batabaran Dabali*, 04/10/09)

These narratives suggest that the amendments made in the new constitution would favour the citizens. The interviews tend to construct such issues as living life in a clean, healthy and safe environment as a citizen’s right to be enshrined in the new constitution. They further suggest that the expert interviewees (the members of the constitution-making body) are working for the Nepalese people to ensure environmental rights and equitable access to environmental resources. In view of the fact that the new constitution is trying to be inclusive in terms of enlisting various environmental issues, the majority of the interviewees construct the new constitution as a panacea to environmental problems as the existing constitution fails to address many environmental issues. This process of the ‘constitutionalisation’ of the environment will be further elaborated in Chapter 8 (see Chapter 8.2 The Discourse of Co-responsibility).

7.1.1.2 Framing of the environment as a political process

Although a large majority of the interviewees describe the importance of the constitution and suggestions are made for amendments in the new constitution as discussed earlier, a significant number of interviewees construct people in power as not being serious about the environment. Consider the following examples:

“We have been campaigning as well as lobbying. Youth is doing its part. Now is the time for the parliamentarians to do something.” (Sushila Pundit, Campaigner, NYCA⁴², *Batabaran Dabali*, 01/11/09)

“These kinds of topics (natural resources related) have not gained as much attention as required in the parliament or in the main political parties. In fact, we

⁴² Nepalese Youth for Climate Action.

should be thankful to people like you (media) and also to the experts such as Dr. Chaudhari for pressurising the parliamentarians on such issues.” (Gagan Thapa, Constituent Assembly Member, *Batabaran Dabali*, 03/01/10).

In the first excerpt above, the campaigner, while highlighting their campaign efforts, constructs parliamentarians as not being serious about environmental issues. Similarly, in the second excerpt above, the Constitution Assembly member of the natural resource committee notes how the environment has not been an important topic in the high level discussions. In addition, a small numbers of interviewees have little faith in the new constitution embracing the enlisted rights. For example, in an interview aired on 3 May 2009, a portrayal of how the environmental problems do not get prioritised among the political leaders and constitution making body is apparent:

“Running a country is not just winning an election and making a constitution. Better prioritise everything (including environmental issues). Otherwise, you won’t be a successful leader. We should be able to sharpen their brain.” (Modnath Prashrit, Politician and Writer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 03/05/09)

The excerpt above frames the environment as part of a political process. The speaker’s emphasis remains on how the political parties ignore the environmental conditions in the country since these political leaders have been mostly interested in power politics. Here, Mr. Prashrit constructs the existing leaders in power as failing in terms of internalising the environmental problems. On the other hand, citizens are represented as people who have hardly been able to come out of their private spheres. While it portrays a relationship between leaders and citizens in a politicised form, the extract also frames a wide gap between the people in power and the citizens. Another interviewee provides a parallel account of a possible gap between the constitution and its practical use:

“If the rights are there in the constitution, it won’t come to you easily. Instead people should be aware of their rights and should be able to demand them, just as we fought for establishing federalism and democracy.” (Prakash Mani Sharma, Lawyer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 08/11/09)

Mr. Sharma asserts that the solution does not remain exclusively in the inclusion of environmental rights in the constitution. He not only constructs the mechanism of

accessing rights in the constitution as a difficult process, but also indicates that even if environmental rights are enshrined in the constitution they will remain a distant dream. While constructing fighting for rights as an activity worthy of respect, he also suggests that citizens should not expect rights to be delivered to them. While the narrative calls for active participation from the citizens, a possible exclusion of citizens from their rights by powerful elites is clearly evident here. This dichotomy suggests that there is a disparity between people in power and ordinary citizens, suggesting that the government would not facilitate the political process in which involvement of the citizens is a vital component. On the other hand, a construction of an imminent tension between the government and the ordinary citizens in the excerpt suggests that an attentive public sphere in the environmental domain in the country remains underdeveloped. While some of the interviewees, such as the speaker above, doubt the inclusiveness of the new constitution, a few other interviewees frame the constitution-making process as complex. For example, in the narrative below, the speaker shares his discussion with some of the parliamentarians regarding the inclusion of environmental agendas in the constitution:

“As some of the parliamentarians have shown some seriousness on this matter (environmental issues), I am of the opinion that they will definitely reach some sort of consensus ... I don’t think that is just a speech. Some parliamentarians have been quite serious while talking.” (Ram Prasad Chaudhari, Professor, *Batabaran Dabali*, 26/07/09)

With the expression ‘I am of the opinion’, Prof. Chaudhari gives his “personal perspective” on parliamentarians’ efforts to include environmental agendas in the constitution in the excerpt above. According to van Dijk (1998: 44), “personal perspective” tends to appear in “fixed expressions” such as the one mentioned above, which signifies the ideological perspective of groups and their members. In this regard, the expression represents aspiration of many such people about the inclusion of environmental issues in the constitution. A construction of hope among a minority of the parliamentarians is apparent while Prof. Chaudhari says ‘I don’t think that is just a speech’. Here, Prof. Chaudhari gives emphasis to the seriousness of some of the officials involved in the constitution drafting process. While he frames the officials’ promise as a positive sign, the identity of the few members of

the constitution-making body is set up as those who possess sincerity towards the environment. However, a limited number of the interviewees construct the constitution-making process as lacking strategy. For instance:

“Environmental issues are not highlighted as political subjects. This may bring a situation in which the constitution will need more and more amendments.”

(Min Biswakarma, Interim Constitution Drafting Committee Member, *Batabaran Dabali*, 24/05/09)

In the excerpt above, an interviewee constructs the need to treat the environmental issues as political topics, suggesting that until and unless environmental topics are politicised, they are unlikely to be prioritised.

In summary, the majority of interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* frame the constitutionalisation of the environmental issues as fundamental. Nevertheless, they construct constitution-making as part of the political process and as such suggest that inclusion of significant environmental issues is doubtful. A construction of the need to politicise the environmental issues in order for them to be prioritised is apparent in these interviews. In addition, a construction of authorities as powerful and civil society as powerless indicates an emergence of a tension between these two spheres.

7.1.2 Legal and Economic Framing of the Environment

This section outlines how the majority of the interviewees frame the legal aspect of the environment in Nepal as weak. It also presents how the legal and economic facets of the environment are constructed as interconnected by these expert interviewees.

7.1.2.1 Legal framing of the environment

The majority of the interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* construct the legal system in the country as insubstantial and as such contributing environmental degradation. For example, an interviewee who runs a hotel business near the National Park shows his concern over the illegal activities being operated inside the National Park as:

“I meant to say our laws are weak. Our punishments are too lenient and fines are less. That is why poachers are encouraged I guess.” (Hari Bhakta Ghimire, Chairperson, Hotel Association, *Batabaran Dabali*, 13/09/09)

While constructing the legal system in the country as poor, a portrayal of environmental degradation due to illegal activities is evident here. The speaker’s view above resembles the majority of other interviewees in constructing laws and rules in the country as flimsy. Similarly, in the excerpt below, a high level government official, while emphasising the need to strengthen the legal system, constructs the existing laws in the country as ineffectual:

“We should be developing policy and legal structures as well. Policy and laws are very weak. As I said to you earlier, there are water-related mafias as well. Since I worked closely with forest organisations, I thought there are just the forest mafias. But, water mafias are even more. They keep the licenses in the pocket and keep bargaining. As there is an active water mafia which is putting the country in danger, what I have seen is an urgency to develop appropriate and time-relevant changes in the laws to punish them.” (Dr. Ravi Sharma Aryal, Joint Secretary, Water and Energy Commission Secretariat, *Batabaran Dabali*, 11/04/10)

Here, the speaker separates the government with the use of “ingroup” designator ‘we’, thus establishing a clear contrast between the two groups i.e. government and the corrupt people of private organisations. He uses the analogy such as ‘water mafias’ to designate how powerful these organisations are and frame potentially larger networks. Use of such analogy implies that these people will go to any extent for their own profits. The excerpt constructs the laws in the country as not good enough to regulate the problems created by ‘water mafias’. While the speaker strongly urges changes in the existing laws, he indicates loopholes in the government since licenses have been issued to inappropriate organisations. In this regard, a water resource, an important component of the environment, is constructed as an economic and social battleground.

This analysis also shows “positive self-representation” and “negative other-representation” (van Dijk, 1998: 61). In this type of representation, “speakers of one group will generally tend to present themselves or their own group in positive

terms, and other groups in negative terms” (van Dijk, 1995: 22). The representations are enhanced by the use of analogies such as ‘water mafia’. As van Dijk (1998) suggests, discourse frames “values” and “norms”. Similarly, in the same programme the speaker again frames the corrupt hydro-electric organisations as one of the main reasons for energy crisis in Nepal. The following extract clarifies how he constructs the legal framework of the environment associated with hydroelectricity production in Nepal:

“The so called hydro-based or hydro-related organisations who are enjoying their monopoly by holding the licence in their pockets, they should be discouraged. If you search any documented evidence, most of the potential rivers in generating substantial electricity through river-flow, they all are monopolised. If you see the implementation part, it is minimal ... The deadlines are being extended. This should be discouraged and should be allocated to the deserving ones. Otherwise, licence should be revoked. It should be given either to the government or to the deserving person or organisation. Otherwise, this dark phase will be a never-ending phenomenon.” (Dr. Ravi Sharma Aryal, Joint Secretary, Water and Energy Commission Secretariat, *Batabaran Dabali*, 11/04/10)

The speaker represents the government authority having power to punish the corrupt organisations. He uses a phrase ‘*so called* hydro-based organisations’ which constructs these organisations as not even worth calling hydro-based organisations. He also argues that the monopoly of these organisations may lead to an extended period of power outages in the country. In this extract, he frames hydro-based organisations as fraudulent. He also constructs the relation between these two parties (i.e. government and the hydro organisations) in tension. In addition, the speaker implicitly constructs the government as useless since it has not been able to function sufficiently well to control corruption. The narrative not only suggests that the government is responsible for promoting illegal activities by not selecting the right organisations, but also describes the government as not having been strict enough in implementing rules to corrupt organisations. The use of the phrase ‘the deserving person or the organisation’ gives further emphasis that the licences were not issued to the appropriate ones. At the same time, while constructing government organisations as trustworthy, the speaker also praises the government’s efficiency in handling such circumstances. However, he constructs an alarming

situation if the government does not handle it in time and as such constructs the environment as the economic and legal battleground. A competing construction of the government both as the useless and the responsible institution is apparent here.

7.1.2.2 Framing trade and industries

There are many instances in *Batabaran Dabali* in which a high number of expert interviewees frame relations between government and industries as being in stress. For example, in the following excerpt, an interviewee frames relations between the government and the industry as tense since the government is not in a position to change the decision granted earlier:

“The removal of industries is not legal. Once the government permits industries to be established, it (the government) will be liable for compensation while removing these industries.” (Khet Raj Dahal, Environmental Engineer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 07/06/09)

The interviewee in the excerpt above identifies government as responsible for promoting anti-environmental activities by allowing industries to be set up around Lumbini (one of the world heritage sites in Nepal) area. The excerpt above not only represents weak legal enforcement in the country but also frames how economic benefit has been the reason for the sustenance of a relationship between the government and the industries. A significant number of interviewees also construct the government as having an economic motive behind ignoring environmental consequences as they may be “punished by disinvestment” if it makes investors unhappy (Dryzek, 1997: 8). Consider the following example:

“Let’s take an example of industries. If any of the industry dumps the garbage in the river, the Ministry of Industry can’t close it because the ministry wants the industries to prosper.” (Subodh Gautam, Environmental Journalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 18/10/09)

The excerpt above clearly indicates how the government fears possible economic constraints as a result of restrictions to industries. While trade and industries are constructed as unfavourable to the environment in earlier examples, the extent of trade and industries as profit-making businesses **recur** on several occasions. In the

example below an interviewee explains how government officers get bribed by industry people in order to open up an industry in a government restricted area:

“I think at that time there was a CDO (Chief District Officer) called Lalit Bahadur Thapa. If someone has done good work, we should praise as well. The industrialists tried to bribe him with 6 lakhs rupees⁴³, which he refused to take.”

(Narayan Sapkota, Environmental Journalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 14/06/09)

Although the government official in this particular case refuses to be bribed, bribery is represented as a common phenomenon and trade and industry people are constructed as lacking credibility. In addition, a small number of interviewees also construct the environment as the victim of illegal activities being operated in Nepal by foreign traders. For example, while reporting from the field on the illegal extraction of sand and pebbles, an environmental journalist in the Terai⁴⁴ region emphasises how environmental damage is caused by foreign traders:

“Definitely, this government has become helpless. Even the home administration can’t utter a word against Indians. They are sold at the hand of those Indian contractors ... Our Terai region will be in vain if we do not do investigation and research on how they entered Nepal.” (Baij Nath Yadav, Environmental Journalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 10/01/10)

While framing the weakness of the government, the journalist describes the authorities as promoters of foreign illegal businesses since the authorities have been bribed by these traders. He not only criticises the acts of the foreign traders who have been the main actors in this environmental negotiation, but also identifies them as powerful and coercive. The construction of the widespread deterioration of the environment in the Terai region of Nepal further indicates a looming threat to Nepal from foreign traders in this account. While the narrative suggests that the country is deficient in trade rules, it calls for stronger domestic policies so as to enhance environmental protection. Here, a construction of shortfalls in ethical behaviour in the government is also clearly evident. A representation of weak legal enforcement in the country points to an alarming situation in Nepal. Moreover, a

⁴³ Nepalese Rupees (Rs.) 600,000 = £ 4,284.79 (19 September 2012).

⁴⁴ Terai is the southern plain area of Nepal. It is also considered as one of the more biologically diverse areas of the country (Forests Monitor, 2006).

portrayal of the government authorities having indifference towards the environment indicates little hope for a better environmental future for the country.

7.1.2.3 International environmental issues

A small number of interviewees also frame government as ineffective in showing seriousness in creating a legal framework for environmental issues in an international arena. For example:

“Truly speaking, whatever environmental issues are there in the country, in my opinion they have not been given importance. Either our government raises the issue of environment just because they need to sign the international treaties or with the expectation to get support from there (foreign countries).” (Ram Prasad Chaudhari, Professor, *Batabaran Dabali*, 03/01/10)

Here, the government is not only framed as legally inept but also as being over-reliant on foreign nations. This suggests that Nepal has not been sincere in adopting and implementing international treaties. Similarly, while constructing Nepal’s imprudence in international laws and treaties, another interviewee explicates Nepal’s weakness in its legal system by giving an example of the lack of strategies for the patenting of biological resources:

“In order to claim it (biological resources) to be ours (Nepal’s), we should address this. Just by seeing it on papers or mentioning it verbally is not the solution. We should register it legally.” (Pushpa Acharya, PhD Researcher, *Batabaran Dabali*, 06/12/09)

In the narrative above, the interviewee describes Nepal’s biological resources as being in a vulnerable situation since they have not been protected by patent rights. Here, he constructs Nepal as being weak in claiming its own resources due to a lack of environmental laws. He also criticises the government for failing to take concrete steps since it has not yet been able to develop laws that addresses the issues of patenting biological resources. Similarly, a few interviewees also frame how some foreign businesses operate in the name of tourism as:

“They don’t inform the government or the relevant offices of the countries. They steal the bio-resources and then commercialise it. That is how bio-piracy is going on ... Most of them come on a tourist visa. No one knows what they

collect ... One day our entire bio-diversity and bio-resources will no longer be found here. Rather, these will be somewhere in foreign museums or other research institutions.” (Ram Prasad Chaudhari, Professor, *Batabaran Dabali*, 26/07/09)

The narrative not only suggests that Nepal is highly vulnerable to bio-piracy but also details how these foreign traders come as tourists and operate illegal activities in Nepal. A representation of foreigners as such indicates that tourism also has “aggravated existing environmental problems and placed more pressure on the fragile economy and national resources” (Pandey et al., 1995: 2). The statement of the interviewee polarises Nepal and the foreigners by using the “outgroup” designator ‘they’, indicating that there is a risk of exploitation from outsiders. While framing Nepal’s weakness in monitoring of biodiversity, the speaker above also emphasises that the concerned foreign authorities have been overlooking the situation and as such facilitating the smuggling of biological resources from Nepal. A construction of natural resources as threatened due to invasion from foreign nationals and framing of the conspiracy in the name of tourism is apparent here.

7.1.3 Cultural Negotiation and Framing of the Environment

As “culture can affect environment and the environment can affect culture” (Altman and Chemers, 1984: 11), it is essential to understand how people link their culture and environment and construct the environment based on their cultural understanding. A significant number of interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* not only construct an interconnection between culture and the environment, but also highlight the changes in the traditional cultural practices as contributory factors in the degradation of the environment in Nepal. Amidst the construction of culture and the environmental relationship within the domestic arena, these interviewees also frame how foreigners play a role in damaging the environment.

7.1.3.1 Culture and the environment

A thematisation of how the cultural tradition of conserving natural resources in Nepal has changed over time is apparent in many interviews. For example:

“Earlier there was a culture of giving importance to Panchapallav (ritual assortment of five different leaves). They used to give priority to planting trees

of ritual relevance such as pipal (sacred fig) ... If the Pipal Chautari (brick platform around the holy fig tree) collapsed in the past, people in the villages would work together to rebuild it. Now, that sort of culture has changed.”

(Modnath Prashrit, Politician and Writer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 03/05/09)

The narrative suggests that the plantation of unique types of flowers, plants and fruits having religious and spiritual value has been a “distinctive cultural feature of home gardens” (Sthapit, Gautam and Eyzaguirre, 2006: 11) as well as in community places in Nepal. Although due recognition of the efforts of earlier generations in conserving the environment is given in the narrative above, this account suggests that there is a development of individualism among Nepalese citizens and, as a result, friction among individuals is on the rise. In fact, it constructs how changing lifestyle patterns in recent times have abandoned tradition and affected the environment adversely. Apart from framing fading community bonding, it suggests that strong religious faith contributed to environmental conservation earlier. A portrayal of current citizens as self-centred is echoed in several other interviews:

“When I was a kid, I still remember there used to be a tradition of making ponds. That sort of culture has changed now.” (Sunil Babu Pant, Constitution Assembly Member, *Batabaran Dabali*, 25/10/09)

“We have not been able to even maintain what our forefathers have conserved. This is a big threat for the environment today.” (Ram Lal Shrestha, Former member Secretary, Lumbini Conservation Fund, *Batabaran Dabali*, 14/06/09)

While making a comparison between people in the past and in the present Nepalese socio-cultural context by the interviewees, a representation of present-day citizens as egocentric is noted at several instances. In addition, while constructing culture and nature as interconnected, some interviewees frame cultural commitment as an important component in the society for environment conservation. For example, an interviewee in the following excerpt portrays how the culture in the Everest region of Nepal has helped conserve the environment:

“They have a very unique culture. In the Area above Lukla, animal killings are restricted. These restrictions ultimately result in animal conservation in those areas as no one attempts to kill them. The culture is that the people in the local area believe that if the meat is dropped in the fire, the god would get angry and

would bring calamity. These beliefs however have made positive impact on environment conservation.” (Sanjeev Adhikari, Environmental Journalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 21/06/09)

The speaker above sees cultural practices as a way of controlling animal killings and as such playing a positive role in conservation. On the other hand, a representation of culture as a guiding principle for environmental conservation for some communities is apparent in a few occasions in *Batabaran Dabali*:

“The community has stressed the fact that the dead bodies are being buried randomly, which has adversely affected the environment. It has urged not to build concrete graves and develop this as a culture as well. The user community instead have made it compulsory to plant at least six trees over each grave.” (Samjhana Maharjan, Environmental Journalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 19/07/09)

In the excerpt above, the reporter discusses the new culture which is being developed among the local community forest user groups as an approach to environment conservation, which contrasts with the construction of ego-centrism in Nepalese citizens earlier. A construction of a possibility of cultural modification as a way of tackling current environmental damage is apparent here. Moreover, she also frames people’s carelessness as the reason behind degrading environmental conditions in the locality. However, the reporter senses the tension among the communities themselves regarding conservation practices. A competing identity of local people is found here between people with no sense of conservation and those who are committed to conservation.

7.1.3.2 Tourism, culture and the environment

Tourism is a major foreign currency earner among the various service industries in Nepal (Baral, Baral and Morgan, 2004). Consequently, tourism is generally viewed in a positive light in Nepal. However, a small number of the interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* frame tourism as an avenue where cultural negotiation takes place. They also project tourism (especially Indian tourists) as having negative effects on the environment. Consider the following example:

“The contribution to pollution is due to tourist buses from India, though it has declined in numbers to some extent. They used to go inside with lunch packets

and just leave them there.” (Khet Raj Dahal, Environment Engineer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 07/06/09)

The narrative above shows clear evidence of stigmatisation of Indian tourists as environmental polluters. In this kind of ideological schematisation the way people represent themselves and others may be “biased” (van Dijk, 1998) with the narrative clearly showing how the discourse operates with selection and control (Foucault, 1984). Here, the interviewee selects one group of people (Indian tourists) over the other (locals) while framing them as environmental polluters. The interviewee in the excerpt above portrays Indian tourists as careless towards the environment. However, the interviewee does not mention the pollution or the environmental impacts caused by local visitors. The narrative clearly distinguishes between the two different categories of people i.e. the foreigners with the “outgroup” designator ‘them’. While this distinction shows a negative representation of ‘others’ and positive representation of ‘self’, a sharp division of foreigners as ‘them’ is evident in another programme in which an interviewee claims that tourists have an enormous effect on the socio-cultural environment in Nepal:

“There will be social and cultural impacts from them (tourists). For example the dresses they wear. They wear shorts in summer. If these are women, then it is even more uncomfortable to us. Similarly, we are not used to their music, their food here. In a way, if I have to say in the sociological perspective, it (foreign culture) will spoil the community as people try to imitate them and their way of living by discarding their own culture.” (Khet Raj Dahal, Environmental Engineer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 07/06/09)

An association of foreign culture with anti-social behaviour frames foreigners as culturally insensitive people who disrespect Nepalese culture and society. While the interviewee in the excerpt above claims foreigners to be playing a key role in implanting their own culture in Nepal, he also frames Nepalese people’s vulnerability to the quick adaptation to a new culture. According to van Dijk (1998: 44) such ethnocentric expressions having negative opinion about the act of foreigners are generally “expressed by first person plural pronouns” as expressed in the example above saying ‘we are not used to their music, their food here’. It is therefore clearly evident that the interviewees stigmatise foreigners as

environmental and cultural polluters as well as insensitive people, suggesting how the “local traditions and values experience their gradual demise” while western culture “penetrates every aspect of life” (Shrestha, 1997: 25).

In summary, competing constructions of the cultural values linked to the environment are noticed among the interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali*. A significant number of the interviewees construct traditional Nepalese culture as an important component in society so as to have better conservation practices among the people. Some interviewees construct tourism as contributing to the diffusion of western culture in Nepal with foreigners represented as playing a role in socio-cultural change which leads towards a poor environmental situation in the country.

7.2 Climate Change: the Dominant Environmental Discourse in *Batabaran Dabali*

While interviewees and the host in *Batabaran Dabali* discuss a range of environmental issues, topics on climate change overshadow the other environmental issues. The content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* (see Chapter 6) also identifies climate change as the most newsworthy topic accounting for 28.6% of the total headline coverage. Out of the 50 programmes, 36 programmes include at least once reference to climate change. The keyword count also found that climate change is the most frequently cited (244 times) environmental issue. As Doulton and Brown (2009: 191) say, news about climate change is being treated in the media as never before. *Batabaran Dabali* has followed a similar pattern in relaying the enormity of climate change, with extensive coverage in its programmes. The section below explores how interviewees and the host in *Batabaran Dabali* construct climate change in a distinct way.

7.2.1 Framing Climate Change in the Nepalese Context

The framing of climate change in *Batabaran Dabali* suggests that it is considered the most pressing environmental issue in Nepal. However, the interviewees and the host of *Batabaran Dabali* provide competing constructions of climate change in the Nepalese context. The interviewees and the host not only frame climate change as an issue having a tremendous current impact, they also construct climate change as a problem occurring only in the future. Some interviewees emphasise how climate

change assumptions are being made without empirical data, while a few of the interviewees and the host frame the issue as solvable.

7.2.1.1 Climate change is real and alarming

The majority of interviewees and the host in *Batabaran Dabali* frame climate change as a phenomenon which is already being observed in everyday life. This gives an impression that climate change is real and is happening now. For example, in the following excerpt, an interviewee not only emphasises how all environmental problems are linked to climate change, but also stresses how people have started to witness the impacts:

“Everything is being affected by climate change ... that is the effects in agriculture, water resources, and everything.” (Sushila Pundit, Campaigner, Nepalese Youth for Climate Action, *Batabaran Dabali*, 01/11/09)

The interviewee in the narrative above frames all the environmental problems as being associated with the globalised issue of climate change. A construction of climate change as the biggest environmental problem indicates a worrying situation in the country. The majority of the interviewees frame the effects of climate change as being experienced in everyday life:

“You see, this is well known to everyone that the climate is changing. We have been seeing it in our everyday life daily. It has a tremendous impact in Nepal. Its effect is being witnessed worldwide.” (Mr. Adarsha Pokharel, Climate Change Expert, *Batabaran Dabali*, 10/05/09)

A construction of climate change being witnessed at the level of everyday life, at national and international level, is apparent in the narrative above. In this excerpt, the speaker puts everyone in the “ingroup”. He uses a classical political rhetorical device to establish well known fact that climate change is everywhere. He claims common knowledge by saying that the problem is ‘well-known to everyone’. In this excerpt, the speaker uses “three part lists” (Atkinson, 1984) to strengthen his complaint. First, he states that the problem is being seen ‘in everyday life’. Secondly, he stresses the fact that the problem has ‘tremendous impact in Nepal’ and finally that the problem is being ‘witnessed worldwide’. According to Atkinson (1984: 60), “packaging praise or criticism” in such a way is used mainly to

“strengthen, underline or amplify” speakers’ messages. Similarly, a high number of interviewees also draw the attention of the audience towards current climate change impacts in Nepal:

“It (Nepal) is a high impact region due to global warming.” (Jagadish Chandra Baral, Chief of Carbon trading Study Unit, *Batabaran Dabali*, 06/09/09)

“We are highly at risk. We are among the 7 countries which are highly at risk.” (Sushila Pundit, Campaigner, Nepalese Youth for Climate Action, *Batabaran Dabali*, 01/11/09)

The narratives above mainly frame Nepal as a highly vulnerable country. In fact, these narratives construct Nepal as one of a few countries likely to suffer serious consequences of climate change in the future. Doultson and Brown (2009: 195) term this kind of discourse in the media as “disaster strikes”, which focuses on the “terrible consequences that dangerous climate change is already having on the developing world”. Moreover, climate change is also portrayed as alarming since nothing can be done at the personal level. For example:

“We cannot stop the rise in world temperature ... We cannot reduce the worldwide effect of climate change.” (Prakash Sharma, Interviewer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 16/08/09).

The dominance of alarmism in accounts of climate change in *Batabaran Dabali* echoes Ereaut and Segnit’s (2006) analysis, which concluded that climate change was mostly constructed through an alarmist repertoire which describes it as terrible and beyond the control of human beings. Ereaut and Segnit carried out research on constructions and conceptions of climate change in the UK in late 2005 - early 2006 by reviewing wide range of coverage of climate change in different media (i.e. by analysing around 600 articles from UK dailies, weeklies and magazines, 40 television and radio advertisements, news clips, 30 press advertisements and 20 websites). According to Ereaut and Segnit (2006: 13), although the alarmist repertoire tries “to bring climate change close to people’s lives” by giving extreme examples, its effect is often to distance people from the problem. This is mainly due to the enormity of the problem as depicted in the repertoire that “excludes the possibility of real action” by the media consumers (Ereaut and Segnit, 2006: 7).

7.2.1.2 *Predicting the impacts of climate change*

Alongside construction of climate change as a present problem, a representation of climate change as a possible risk in the future is also evident on several occasions. Some interviewees frame climate change both as a current issue and a problem for the future. For example, the interviewer in the excerpt below constructs climate change impacts as a future threat although she earlier described how the impacts of climate change are being witnessed in everyday life.

“The other thing I want to add is that climate change impacts will be seen in future.” (Sushila Pundit, Campaigner, Nepalese Youth for Climate Action, *Batabaran Dabali*, 01/11/09)

Several other interviewees share the view that the impact of climate change will be seen in the future. For instance:

“Climate change impact will be faced by everyone irrespective of which political philosophy you believe in or whether you are involved in politics or not, or whether you are a leader or an ordinary citizen, man or a woman, it is inevitable.” (Sunil Babu Pant, Constitution Assembly Member, *Batabaran Dabali*, 25/10/09)

By representing climate change as one of the greatest challenges for human beings in this century (Ereaut and Segnit, 2006), a large number of interviewees thus call for the attention of concerned authorities. They mainly construct climate change as universal and as such social divisions based on political ideology, class, gender have no meaning in a climate change context and potential catastrophe. A portrayal of developing nations as potential victims of climate change suggests that there is a serious crisis ahead. This reminds us of Beck’s (1992) notion of “risk society”. Beck (1992: 20) argues that “we do not *yet* live in a risk society” but are heading towards it. He however claims that the risks which society is going to face in the future are different than those of the past and that risks are experienced unequally.

Similarly to Beck, the interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* construct climate change as a risk in the near future. The majority of the interviewees frame a frightening situation in which developing countries such as Nepal will have no choice left than to bear catastrophic climate change impacts:

“We, the developing countries, are the ones who are going to face the impact of climate change.” (Dr. Ravi Sharma Aryal, Joint Secretary, Water and Energy Commission Secretariat, *Batabaran Dabali*, 13/12/09)

“Its impact will be seen in Nepal’s Himalayas. If it is the case, the direct impact will be in our livelihoods in Himalayas and among the people in hilly regions.” (Dr. Toran Sharma, Environmentalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 16/08/09)

The narratives above not only frame future climate change disasters as certain but also suggest that the devastation will be unprecedented in Nepal. The interviewees set the identity of Nepal as a country in a vulnerable position, destined to be the victim of climate change. Doulton and Brown (2009) in their study of the UK press designate the discourses which indicate the terrible impact of climate change in the developing world in the future as “Potential Catastrophe”. These kinds of climate change discourse mainly reflect the normative judgement such as “responsibility lies with developed countries” (Doulton and Brown, 2009: 197). This notion (the discourse of victimhood) will be further elaborated in Chapter 7.2.2.

7.2.1.3 The lack of research on climate change impacts

In *Batabaran Dabali*, a small number of interviewees who earlier framed Nepal as having heavy impacts of climate change also speak of Nepal as lacking data and empirical research on climate change. They indicate that the impact of climate change in Nepal is vague. Consider the following examples:

“There was no survey done at the site ... at the location. And thus, we do not have any relevant data.” (Mr. Adarsha Pokharel, Climate Change Expert, *Batabaran Dabali*, 10/05/09)

“No study or research has been carried out on these (climate change) issues. We are only talking on the basis of old historical data.” (Subodh Gautam, Environmental Journalist, 18/10/09)

“Therefore, there is no data on how the climate is changing and how it has affected the different geographical locations in Nepal. So, whatever we say, it is just guesswork.” (Dr. Toran Sharma, Environmentalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 16/08/09)

The narratives suggest that the tale of climate change lacks verifiability in the absence of empirical research in Nepal. The second and the third narratives above also frame climate change communication as having coverage only on the basis of the presumption of the dearth of new research in the area. Here, a call for more research to have better information is apparent in interviewees' construction of climate change as lacking data. Babrow (2001) calls such uncertainty about the information which doubts the quality and uses of data "epistemological uncertainty". He points out that such uncertainties arise mainly due to "concerns about qualities of available information" such as "clarity", "completeness" and "volume" or "validity (e.g., freedom from error, source expertise or trustworthiness, ambiguity, applicability, consistency)" (Babrow, 2001: 558).

7.2.1.4 Climate change can be solved

Although a large number of interviewees claim that climate change is the most significant problem for Nepal, with terrible consequences for the environment, in a few cases interviewees, including the host consider that climate change could be countered. For example:

"We can definitely reduce it and adjust to it (climate change)." (Prakash Sharma, Interviewer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 16/08/09)

A similar construction is evident in the following example in which the interviewee frames climate change as a solvable problem:

"Definitely the impact of climate change will be less if we practise the practical knowledge and expert formulas of our ancestors." (Rabindra Nath Bhattarai, Asst. Professor, *Batabaran Dabali*, 07/03/10).

In the excerpt above, the interviewee not only portrays the people of earlier generations as environmentally sensitive, but also emphasises the need to apply methods used by forefathers in protecting the environment. Here, the interviewee considers inherited cultural practices could contribute to solving climate change. This notion of cultural significance in environmental conservation repeats several times across various interviews as discussed earlier. The interviewee in the narrative emphasises small actions such as plantations that could help conserve the environment. Ereaut and Segnit (2006) term this as "pragmatic optimistic

repertoires” which assume that the devastation of climate change is preventable by human action.

In summary, the expert discourses in *Batabaran Dabali* projects competing and multiple constructions of the effect of climate change. For example, environmentalist Dr. Toran Sharma frames climate change as ‘having a larger impact in future’ and also as ‘guesswork’. Similarly, Sushila Pundit, a campaigner, constructs climate change both as ‘real and alarming’ as well as a ‘future problem’. A few of the interviewees, such as climate change expert Mr. Adarsha Pokharel, sees climate change as ‘real and alarming’ as well as having intractable impacts due to lack of data. The host of the programme also constructs climate change interchangeably, describing it as alarming as well as solvable.

7.2.2 Discourse of Victimhood

This section illustrates how a significant majority of interviewees and the host of *Batabaran Dabali* frame Nepal as the *victim* of climate change. Moreover, it will also demonstrate how the interviewees and the host of the programme together construct Nepal’s socio-economic development per se as being at stake.

7.2.2.1 We are the victims

As briefly discussed earlier, the majority of the interviewees and the host see Nepal as suffering from climate change and thus as a victim of the developed world. For example, a high number of interviewees, while blaming developed nations, emphasise how innocent Nepal has been:

“It is just like us getting punishment for a crime we have not committed.”
(Adarsha Pokharel, Climate Change Expert, *Batabaran Dabali*, 10/05/09)

“We are suffering from climate change caused by the activities of the developed world in the past.” (Purushottam Ghimire, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, *Batabaran Dabali*, 15/11/09).

The interviewees not only construct how Nepal has been suffering due to the activities of the developed nations but also frame a denial of responsibility since they believe that Nepal has made a negligible contribution to climate change. Such victimisation occurs as a result of Nepal being a poor nation:

“Firstly, we do not have skills ... neither do we have technology nor knowledge. We lack resources too. That is the reason we are going to be the victims.” (Dr. Ravi Sharma Aryal, Joint Secretary, Water and Energy Commission Secretariat, *Batabaran Dabali*, 13/12/09)

The narrative frames Nepal as helpless and unable to play a role in combating climate change since the country has been lagging behind in every aspect of social life. The narrative also sets the implicit identity of rich nations as perpetrators of injustice. While the interviewee in the excerpt above projects Nepal as a miserable victim of climate change, the host of the programme mentions Nepal as sufferer in several instances:

“We cannot prevent catastrophic climate change ... We surely are the victims of climate change.” (Prakash Sharma, Interviewer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 16/08/09)

Both the host and a large number of expert interviewees deny Nepal's contribution to climate change, using a discourse of victimhood with the use of metaphors such as ‘punishment’, ‘suffering’, ‘victim’, ‘trapped’ etc. Van Dijk (1998: 58) calls such “attributions” negative descriptors, which labels others or enemies as “responsible agents, who are consciously, intentionally and cynically aware of what they do and of the consequences of their actions”. Here, an “ingroup” designator ‘we’ is used to distinguish between the developing and the developed nations. Van Dijk (1998: 58) terms these types of designators “polarization” in which using the “logic of Ingroup-Outgroup relations, the Others are presented as a threat”. Thus the experts’ understanding of climate change in *Batabaran Dabali* is found to use ideological metaphors, identifying Nepal as a helpless country in a dreadful situation. A notion of injustices perpetrated by developed countries is repeated several times. For example, in one of the interviews an interviewee frames the people from the developed world as not being sensible enough:

“Westerners are generating unstoppable carbon. Here, we are conserving forest and earning money out of it. It’s a joke and (I’m) just wondering how long it’s going to continue. The big developed countries are responsible for excessive carbon emissions but here we have to plant trees to compensate for this.” (Modnath Prashrit, Politician and Writer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 03/05/09)

In this excerpt, the interviewee highlights a situation in Nepal in which it has taken upon itself to compensate for the actions of the developed world. Whereas allegedly selfish people from the west are accustomed to destroying nature, conservation of nature is a burden put by the rich people onto the poor. This again reflects a strong sense of dichotomisation of rich and poor countries. Moreover, the interviewee portrays an endless problem of climate change since no one knows how long this process will continue.

7.2.2.2 The underdevelopment 'trap'

A small number of interviewees and the host in *Batabaran Dabali* also construct the development activities of poor nations as constrained by climate change caused by the developed nations. Moreover, climate change is seen as one of the main reasons for Nepal being underdeveloped since the developing countries are forbidden to follow the path of the development. An adversarial relationship of developed and developing countries is clearly evident in these interviews. In fact, the developed world is seen as self-centred and thus is framed as “breeding and nurturing the culture of dependency and dependent development in Nepal” (Shrestha, 1997: 22). For example:

“They (developed countries) have reached the pinnacle of their development ... and now they don’t let us do that ... It is very difficult for us (developing nations) as development is not possible without greenhouse gas emissions.”
(Adarsha Pokharel, Climate Change Expert, *Batabaran Dabali*, 10/05/09)

The narrative suggests that the developing nations are unable to proceed as their future is withheld by the responsibility towards climate change mitigation in the world. The developing nations are already bound to reduce carbon emissions despite the fact that they have not yet experienced a threshold of development. This suggests that these countries have no choice other than sacrifice their development. Furthermore, a portrayal of a looming conflict between developed and developing nations is evident and in several programmes the host of *Batabaran Dabali* predicts that development-related activities will be withheld due to Nepal’s effort in mitigating climate change:

“We do not fall into the group of countries who contribute to emissions. We are going to be trapped in a situation before we have tasted development and human civilisation.” (Prakash Sharma, Interviewer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 23/08/09)

This framing of Nepal as perpetually underdeveloped due to the activities of developed countries is repeated across a number of other interviews by the host of *Batabaran Dabali*:

“[...] they (the developed nations) should also give developing nations a chance to grow, shouldn't they? Sometimes they say that they will co-operate with us in terms of our (developing nations) development. Why do they make us live in such a hope? Why are they making us more dependent on them?” (Prakash Sharma, Interviewer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 13/12/09)

Here, Mr. Sharma depicts the developed countries as accountable for the developing countries not being able to progress well. In addition, he suggests that the developed nations are creating a situation where developing nations have no choice other than rely on these affluent nations for their development activities.

7.2.3 The Economic Construction of Climate Change

This section illustrates how the interviewees construct climate change as a potential source of economic benefit to Nepal. By framing Nepal as the victim of climate change caused by external forces, a significant number of the interviewees claim that developed nations are liable to pay compensation. A small number of interviewees also mention the dependency which occurs as a result of donations by developed nations. This section will also show how a small number of interviewees and the host of *Batabaran Dabali* frame donors as selfish and manipulative. In addition, while showing how carbon trading may have an economic benefit, this section also illustrates underlying challenges in carbon trading as seen by these interviewees. It will also explore how the interviewees construct carbon trading reporting as the media exaggeration.

7.2.3.1 Compensation in the form of donations

In *Batabaran Dabali*, a high number of interviewees construct developing nations as victims of developed countries which are responsible for climate change. In this vein, a focus on receiving compensation from developed countries in mitigating

climate change recurs across numerous interviews. Consider the following examples:

“We should be getting compensation for whatever contribution we have been making ... I think we should get a twofold compensation: one for excessive amount of carbon dioxide being generated by them (developed countries) and the other for our contribution towards saving earth by producing a minimal amount of carbon dioxide.” (Sunil Babu Pant, Constitution Assembly Member, *Batabaran Dabali*, 25/10/09)

“We have been discussing that we should get donations ... we are not contributing to it, they (developed countries) are.” (Dr. Toran Sharma, Environmentalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 16/08/09)

The narratives consider the acts of developed countries to be intolerable, people from developed nations as insensitive and cruel to the environment and so the people of rich nations are liable for whatever damages have been done to the environment. In these excerpts, the interviewees try to attract the attention of the concerned authorities in Nepal to seek support from rich nations. In fact, the above extracts urge that there should be compensation for the acts of the “Others”. Here, a framing of an economic opportunity to Nepal is clearly evident. It is worth noting that van Dijk (1998) links this type of “ideological orientation” to “attributes” in which bad acts are usually attributed to “Others”. In the first excerpt above, the good act of “self-attribution” is reflected while demonstrating Nepalese people to be contributing to environment conservation ‘by producing minimum amount of carbon dioxide’.

A small number of interviewees also frame Nepal as weak in putting the country’s agenda in international fora. For instance:

“Since Nepal was of same block, the voice could have been raised ... They should have done, as you said, they should have raised their voice (in terms of donations, compensations or support to Nepal) having had so many in the delegation ... If they are again back here working as before, it would mean the Copenhagen summit is just a visit to a Copenhagen city and this is not an

achievement at all.” (Bhushan Tuladhar, Executive Director, ENPHO ⁴⁵, *Batabaran Dabali*, 20/12/09)

Nepal, considered one of the worst hit countries in the world, had pinned much hope on the Copenhagen conference held from 6-18 December 2009 to advance the climate change agenda (i.e. seek support in tackling climate change impacts). However, as seen in the narrative above, it is claimed that the representation of Nepal was weak in the conference. The speaker in the excerpt above sees government officials as minimally concerned about the issue and the participation of a large number of delegates from Nepal as mere foreign travel for the officials’ own recreation rather than for a particular cause. This indicates disappointment in the actions of the Nepalese delegates on climate change issues. A similar dissatisfaction is apparent in an interview in which the interviewee mainly criticises the failure of the large numbers of the high level delegation to present Nepal’s case strongly:

“What’s our need? What kind of support do we need? In what aspect do we need technological intervention as well as financial intervention? I don’t think Nepal has been able to put it clearly with so many in the team.” (Dr. Toran Sharma, Environmentalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 13/12/09)

The speaker in the above statement indicates that Nepal has not been sufficiently clear in identifying the country’s needs. He suggests that solidarity between developed and developing nations is lacking, separating the two worlds with “ingroup” and “outgroup” designators, using the keywords such as ‘us’ to designate developing nations and ‘they’ the developed ones. He also indicates that there is a ‘tug-of-war’ going on in such platforms where delegates from other countries are committed to their own agendas while the Nepalese delegates have been weak in representing their country’s needs.

7.2.3.2 ‘Selfish’ donors

In a small number of interviews, the self interest of the donors leading the developing nations to become victims is apparent. For instance:

⁴⁵ ENPHO (Environment and Public Health Organisation) is a national non-government organisation in Nepal.

“The developed nations have a tendency to show their supremacy by providing small chunks of financial help here and there. These grants have never been accepted with any proper plans.” (Adarsha Pokharel, Climate Change Expert, *Batabaran Dabali*, 10/05/09)

“At the moment, the donors decide Nepal’s needs. If there is a person in need of clothes, the donors say he/she needs shoes. The donor does not give a sweater to you even if you are in need of a sweater. If this is the case, they seem to want us to remain underdeveloped.” (Dr. Toran Sharma, Environmentalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 13/12/09)

The interviewees in the narratives above see Nepal’s fate as donor-driven, indicating how, rather than categorising the requirements of the least developed countries and their varying needs, the developed countries are making their own judgments when deciding grants for the developing nations. The speaker frames the donors as manipulative in allocating funds since they operate in their own interest. In fact, Nepal’s identity is created as a vulnerable country that can easily fall prey to developed nations. A similar construction is evident in the following example:

“What is our priority? Is it the time to develop our basic infrastructure and speed up our economic development or just follow them (the developed countries) on what they say in terms of forest conservation, carbon trading etc?” (Prakash Sharma, Interviewer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 09/08/09)

In fact, a framing of developed countries as powerful given their financial capability is noticed on several occasions. In the excerpt above, while questioning Nepal’s priority regarding the development activities, the host of *Batabaran Dabali* portrays Nepal as the follower of climate change whims. A dichotomy (economy vs. ecology) is clearly observed when he states that the economic development of the country is lagging behind since Nepal has been a follower of the developed countries. This demonstrates again the power relations between the developed and the developing nations in which the representation of the donors is inconsiderate and selfish.

7.2.3.3 Carbon trading: opportunities and challenges

A high number of interviewees and the host in *Batabaran Dabali* frame carbon trading as a golden opportunity for Nepal and suggest being pro-active in finding

opportunities within the carbon trading business. For example, an interviewee constructs climate change as a worldwide opportunity and as such Nepal should seek the benefits:

“We should not wait for the others to call us. We should seek the opportunities if the prospects exist.” (Krishna Prasad Acharya, Head, Redd Forestry and Climate Change Cell, MFSC⁴⁶, *Batabaran Dabali*, 21/02/10)

However, the interviewee indicates that there is competition in the market since climate change has been a synonym for a business where one needs to be particularly clever. In this regard, he indicates that Nepal has not been sufficiently astute in terms of access to climate change funds. The notion of climate opportunity is repeated several times in *Batabaran Dabali*, the majority of these interviewees suggesting that lessening of carbon production can bring commercial benefits:

“It is also an opportunity for a non annex⁴⁷ country like us to reduce emissions and then get monetary benefits.” (Dr. Arun Bhakta Shrestha, Climate Change Expert, ICIMOD⁴⁸, *Batabaran Dabali*, 07/03/10)

“It is advantageous to us. It is also an opportunity because until yesterday we were talking about timber alone but now it may be seen as a medium for an additional income.” (Dr. Nagendra Prasad Yadav, Technical Forest Advisor, LFP⁴⁹, *Batabaran Dabali*, 09/08/09)

Both the excerpts above emphasise linking efforts of local people in environmental conservation with the global business of carbon trading. Amid the growing concern over the possibility of withholding of development activities due to climate change dealings, the speakers frame how trading of the forests can support Nepal’s economic development; there is evidence that carbon trading could be profitable. In addition, in another programme the host speaks about how the people in Nepal are awaiting climate change funds eagerly:

⁴⁶ Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation.

⁴⁷ The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change listed most of the developing countries in non annex group (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2012b). However, this distinction was eliminated after the 17th Conference of the Parties in Durban in 2011 (Stavins, 2012).

⁴⁸ ICIMOD (The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development), a regional knowledge development and learning centre operating in eight member countries, is based in Kathmandu, Nepal.

⁴⁹ Livelihood Forest Programme.

“People, experts say that there are lots of possibilities to get benefits from this (carbon trading). What should Nepal do to achieve maximum benefits from the opportunity that climate change has brought for Nepal so that Nepal can work better?” (Prakash Sharma, Interviewer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 31/01/10)

In the excerpt above, by saying ‘experts’ the host of the programme emphasises that what is being said is authentic and as such the benefit from carbon trading is a confirmed action. By repeatedly stressing the opportunities to be gained as a result of climate change he suggests that Nepal should not delay. Whereas climate change was framed as the main barrier to Nepal’s development earlier, in this narrative the host of *Batabaran Dabali* constructs climate change as a blessing for the development of Nepal.

7.2.3.4 Communicating carbon trading

While a high number of interviewees could see significant opportunities as well as underlying difficulties in carbon trading, a few experts also caution against a lack of confirmed knowledge regarding the carbon trading business.

“Sometimes I feel the danger of it. Like you see ... number one: the expectations of the citizens will start increasing extensively. People will contemplate that the carbon trading has started and the money will start pouring in. If this doesn’t happen, people will be frustrated. And then who will be responsible for this?” (Jagadish Chandra Baral, Chief of Carbon Trading Study Unit, MFSC, *Batabaran Dabali*, 06/09/09)

The interviewee in the excerpt above questions the certainty of climate change communication and warns how the expectation of the citizens may exceed the reality due to extensive media coverage of the benefits of carbon trading. He not only questions the accountability of the people or organisations setting the agenda but also cautions about the negative impacts of raising hopes. Increasing aspirations among the people are seen by some experts as dangerous. One of the interviewees requests the host of *Batabaran Dabali* to clear the misunderstanding the media have created:

“Earlier, coverage in various newspapers framed carbon trading as means of monetary benefit. But it is unlikely to bring such large cash benefits. I would

like this programme to make this clear.” (Krishna Prasad Acharya, Redd Forestry and Climate Change Cell, MFSC, *Batabaran Dabali*, 21/02/10)

Carbon trading reporting is clearly criticised here as media exaggeration. Elsewhere, the interviewee claims that people have been overtly anxious about climate change funds and have been dependent on external assistance. Here, the interviewee blames the media for exaggerating the potential of carbon trading in Nepal. Contrary to what was said earlier regarding the extreme opportunity climate change has brought, the interviewee here suggests that the international business of carbon trading will not change Nepal’s economic situation. A similar construction is apparent in the following examples:

“It is just like getting an extra bonus on the benefits we have been getting from the forest resources. We have to understand it in that way and we are not in the situation where we can say that we have this much carbon.” (Krishna Prasad Acharya, Redd Forestry and Climate Change Cell, MFSC, *Batabaran Dabali*, 21/02/10)

“We should not have big hopes from this (carbon trading) because Nepal is a small country. The benefit we get might therefore be limited.” (Dr Arun Bhakta Shrestha, Climate Change Expert, ICIMOD, *Batabaran Dabali*, 07/03/10)

In fact, underlying problems within the carbon trading business are also mentioned in a small number of interviews suggesting that Nepalese people have high expectations of carbon trading. Therefore, a suggestion that people in Nepal should not be over ambitious about the prospects of generating more money from carbon trading is evident in these excerpts. At the same time, a framing of carbon business as lacking clarity is apparent as the country itself has not been clear regarding the amount of carbon collection.

7.2.4 Reframing Existing Environmental Discourse

The analysis shows that several of the interviewees also emphasise the importance of understanding existing environmental problems from a climate change perspective:

“As a natural disaster, we have looked into the flood earlier. But, now the only thing is the need to view this from the climate change perspective.” (Prakash Amatya, Executive Director, NGO Forum, *Batabaran Dabali*, 14/03/10)

In the excerpt above, the speaker highlights the need to reframe the existing environmental problems within the climate change context. He also stresses the need for environmental problems such as flooding to be considered as a result of climate change so as to reinforce the notion of climate change occurring in the present. Later in the same programme another interviewee emphasises that there is a need to reframe the existing activities with the focus on climate change.

“We need to repackage it (environmental problem) by observing the same thing from the perspective of climate change.” (Suman Prasad Sharma, Joint Secretary, MPPW⁵⁰, *Batabaran Dabali*, 14/03/10)

Whether or not climate change underlies various environmental problems, the demand to change the existing environmental discourse is evident in the excerpt above. It is worth noting that this interviewee works for the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works, which does not have direct involvement in environmental issues, yet clearly feels pressurised to keep pace with current trends on climate change.

Summary

The expert discourses in *Batabaran Dabali* are generally informative on various environmental issues, placing *Batabaran Dabali* in a unique position in a country where very few environment-focused programmes are broadcast. However, *Batabaran Dabali* operates as a realm of negotiation in making claims about environmental issues; expert interviewees and the host together construct the environment as a complex phenomenon which is beyond the horizon of ordinary citizens. In fact, *Batabaran Dabali* projects the environment as a constitutional, political and legal battlefield. A representation of a strong connection between the environment and the economy as well as the environment and culture is also apparent on many occasions. In *Batabaran Dabali*, contestation takes place among the interviewees as well as the host in framing the environment as a multifaceted

⁵⁰ Ministry of Physical Planning and Works.

issue which can only be dealt with by an authorised body with strong scientific knowledge. As discussed earlier in chapter 6, although *Batabaran Dabali* claims that the programme is dedicated to ensuring citizens' environmental rights in the constitution (by playing a jingle at the beginning and the end of every programme), it mainly focuses on informing an educated audience.

In *Batabaran Dabali*, the expert interviewees and the host of the programme are found to condemn the actions of developed nations by constructing Nepal as the worst hit victim of climate change. A representation of a relation between developed and developing nations in tension suggests that there is a widening gap between the two worlds. While the majority of the interviewees and the host construct the issue of climate change as the most urgent environmental problem in the country, they also frame it as a business opportunity via carbon trading. A dichotomous representation of climate change is evident in *Batabaran Dabali* since climate change is constructed both as a misfortune and an opportunity (in terms of commercialising climate change into a profitable business). A few of the interviewees also highlight the need to attune existing environmental problems to the climate change conception. In fact, the dominance of climate change discourse as well as the emerging idea of repackaging environmental problems into a climate change context indicates a current inclination towards shifting attention away from various environmental problems to focus solely on climate change. In this regard, the environment in *Batabaran Dabali* fluctuates between local and global challenges in which the globally acknowledged problem of climate change takes precedence over other local environmental issues. Moreover, irrespective of the local or global challenges, the expert discourses in *Batabaran Dabali* are found not only to be full of dichotomies dividing the discourses into 'us' and 'them' but also full of contradictions.

The issue of climate change in *Batabaran Dabali* attracts the greatest emphasis among the various environmental problems in Nepal. Topics are varied and disagreement among the experts themselves is spotted on many occasions. As a result, *Batabaran Dabali* presents different notions of climate change. Opposing positions and assertions are evident, since climate change discourses range from 'it is happening', 'effects are seen already', 'not our fault', 'it will happen in future',

‘we can solve with personal effort’ as well as to ‘it is just guesswork’. This finding is similar to the study of constructions and conceptions of climate change in the UK by Ereaut and Segnit (2006: 7) which found climate change discourses to be “confusing, contradictory and chaotic”. According to Ereaut and Segnit (2006), this kind of climate change discourse gives the impression of a “discourse in tension” which generates the *meta-message* “nobody knows!” making the publics even more confused. In this regard, expert notions of climate change cause ambiguity as expert interviewees “advocate[s] apparently arguing among themselves in the battle for consensus” (Ereaut and Segnit, 2006: 10).

Chapter 8

Power, Knowledge and Citizens: Constructing a Triangular Relationship with the Environment in *Batabaran Dabali*

In chapter 7, discourse analysis was used to explore the construction of the environment in the expert discourses in *Batabaran Dabali*. This chapter also uses discourse analytic techniques to explore the relationship between the government and civil society in environmental conservation as reported in *Batabaran Dabali*. The chapter illustrates how the interviewees problematise co-responsibility of the government and the citizens in order to achieve environmental rights and responsibilities in a new constitution. Furthermore, it explores how public environmental knowledge is constructed both as knowledgeable and ignorant. A closer look at the triangular relationship between power, knowledge and citizens with the environment illustrates that *Batabaran Dabali* has been a contested arena for all three spheres.

8.1 Competing Constructions of the Government and Citizens

There is a tendency in Nepal to consider that the media have been used as a “powerful means” by “state authorities, political parties and leaders to extort the citizens to actively support their policies” (Dahal, 2002a: 30) with an assumption that communication is linear. *Batabaran Dabali* follows a similar pattern as the host and the interviewees (high-level government and non-government officials as well as journalists) advocate the inclusion of various environmental agendas in the new constitution. However, competing constructions of the government and civil society are apparent in several instances. While the discussions of the interviewees revolve around legalising civic rights and responsibilities, there are no opportunities for ordinary citizens to participate in discussions with these expert interviewees. Furthermore, the interviewees construct a crisis in a relationship between the state and civil society. They portray the government as overburdened, mismanaged and corrupt.

This section illustrates how *Batabaran Dabali* follows a pattern in which the government is mainly criticised for being an irresponsible institution in high number of instances, yet at few times is praised by the interviewees for its efforts. In other words, it will explicate how the majority of the interviewees frame government authorities as “selfish bureaucrats” (Dryzek, 1997: 16). It will also explore how the small numbers of the interviewees construct government authorities as “benign and public-spirited expert administrators” (Dryzek, 1997: 16). In fact, this section will show how the interviewees (mostly environmentalists, journalists and representatives of NGOs) project competing constructions of the government. In addition, it will illustrate how the citizens are framed as members of a rather passive public sphere in which the citizens play a minimal role in environment conservation and thus represent the biggest drawback in the current environmental scenario in Nepal.

8.1.1 An Unmanaged, Unstable and a Corrupt Government

The Nepalese government is often seen to select services which favour “partisan interests, not the general interest of the public[s]” (Dahal, 2002a: 26). This bias is reflected in *Batabaran Dabali* as the majority of the interviewees (other than those affiliated to the government) endorse the view that the government makes little effort in environmental conservation. They frame the government as not being able to utilise its ability in an appropriate direction and argue that the ignorance and carelessness of the government have been key factors in the degradation of the environment. A large number of the interviewees portray the government as deficient in delivering services to the citizens. A framing of the government as misusing power for its own benefit and not taking care of the citizens is clearly evident in several instances.

In *Batabaran Dabali*, a significant number of the interviewees (experts and ordinary people) raise questions regarding the government’s administrative roles. This draws attention to the lack of management skills in the government. Following is an example narrated by a non-elite voice:

“It is just like a house. If the head of the house is not doing well, what can we expect from the kids? No one should let the citizen suffer.” (Pashupati Pandey, Housewife, *Batabaran Dabali*, 10/05/09)

The interviewee in the excerpt above constructs a paternalistic role of the government by comparing it to the head of a household. Here, the citizens are framed as immature, needing guidance and protection. Furthermore, crisis within the government itself is apparent in the indication that there is a problem within the house. Moreover, possible intrusion from a foreign body in the Nepalese domestic sphere is suggested, endangering the government and thus the sovereignty of the country. For example:

“If the head of the house is unaware of managing the house, there is always a chance of interference from outsiders. This is quite obvious and you too are aware of this.” (Dr. Toran Sharma, Environmentalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 13/12/09)

Related to this, tension within the government is seen to have resulted in citizens becoming victims of current environmental problems. The notion of a weak government system repeats in a high number of interviews:

“We can talk about the environment only when there is a stable government ... There is nothing good going on in the government. When there is a revolution going on within the government, how can we expect to have a good environment?” (Pashupati Pandey, Housewife, *Batabaran Dabali*, 10/05/09)

Such representations of a government in chaos indicate that while people in the country dream of well-managed governance there is widespread frustration. Furthermore, it suggests that the citizens are not optimistic about better environmental prospects in the future. A somewhat similar understanding is reflected in the following excerpt which constructs the government system as fragile:

“When Mr. Gopal Rai was a minister, we registered a concept paper. We even got assurance for help but unfortunately he passed away. He died only after 15 days of signing the document, so that was the demise of our concept papers along with him. What can we do? That’s what the situation of Nepal is like.” (Parsuram Giri, Chairperson, Forest User Committee, *Batabaran Dabali*, 02/08/09)

This narrative reveals that there are very few government employees committed to the environmental conservation sector in Nepal and indicates a lack of proper institutionalisation of the government. Here, Mr. Giri emphasises the inefficiency of the government in the day-to-day operation of activities. An example of how the government system operates in Nepal may be seen in his countless visits to the district development committee to chase a minor request:

“Had I have just one pair of shoes, they would have torn apart by now. We have been to the District Development Committee (DDC) so many times. I don’t know why they behave as they do.” (Parsuram Giri, Chairperson, Forest User Committee, *Batabaran Dabali*, 02/08/09)

While the excerpt above suggests how the government system operates, it reflects doubts on the officials’ intentions. It raises a question about the transparency and accountability of the government agency. A similar discourse around corruption in the government is evident in a number of other interviews in *Batabaran Dabali* in which interviewees frame corruption as an endemic problem in Nepalese society, especially in the government sector.

“The government here is concerned with accumulating wealth and their own benefits.” (Prakash Mani Sharma, Lawyer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 08/11/09)

“They don’t understand ... They just keep on fighting over trivial matters. They are busy looking for their share.” (Dr. Toran Sharma, Environmentalist, 13/12/09)

“They all have vested interests just to accumulate wealth for themselves.” (Khet Raj Dahal, Environmental Engineer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 14/06/09)

The excerpts above raise the question of governance and ethics; government officials are portrayed as self-centred opportunists who abuse their power to accumulate wealth. Here, the government is presented as a possibly corrupt institution. The expert interviewees argue that there are no deserving people in the government, suggesting that corruption is the sole reason for the failure of the government system in Nepal. A similar understanding is reflected from environmental journalists’ construction of corruption within government departments. The journalist in the following example explicates the situation of the Churia area where excessive exploitation of natural resources (such as sand,

pebbles and stones) has taken place despite the Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources and Means' directive to the government to ban the illegal export of these materials to India. Although this had ceased completely in the daytime, illegal export of such materials continued during the night:

“The vehicles full of extraction are sent in the night with the help of a few corrupt government authorities in the field. That is the sad part.” (Baijnath Yadav, Environmental Journalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 10/01/10)

In the statement above, the journalist's account of how the illegal activities take place behind citizens' backs portrays some government officials as fraudulent. The majority of the interviewees (unaffiliated to the government) thus construct the government as a faulty institution at management level and morally; interviewees point to an unprecedented rise in corruption in the Nepalese government.

8.1.2 The Burdened Government and the Passive Public Sphere

This section illustrates how the interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* strongly endorse the view that the government is over-burdened with its responsibilities while framing citizens as passive. It emphasises that citizens have not been able to co-operate with the government, problematising the relation between the state and its citizens. The expert interviewees and the host in *Batabaran Dabali* not only construct citizens as passive, but also as careless and ignorant. This resembles the “top-down deficit model of public understanding of science” which views the publics as “passive recipients of information” (Gregory and Miller, 2000: 97). The notion of the publics as ignorant will be further elaborated in Chapter 8.3.1. In fact, the qualities of the government are both praised and undermined by the interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali*.

8.1.2.1 The burdened government and insensitive citizens

A significant number of the interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* construct citizens as having become government-dependent and as a result government is over-burdened. They also indicate how the local environment, managed earlier by community members, is now seen increasingly as the government's responsibility. This indicates that the people in Nepal are becoming more self-centred and

community feeling is eroding. For example, the speaker below demonstrates this view of the prevalence of increased government reliance among citizens:

“Even if a tap dries and even if they could replace the tap with the bamboo one, they would just wait for government funds. The people are slowly moving away from a service-oriented to a more budget-oriented mentality, thus aggravating the situation.” (Modnath Prashrit, Politician and Writer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 03/05/09)

In the above statement, by giving an example of a simple act like replacing a tap, Mr. Prashrit frames the growing dependency of the people towards the government and their increasing money-oriented mentality. This reflects a criticism of the changing pattern in community works in Nepal; rather than mutual support the community relies heavily on government funds and the government is overburdened as a result. This notion repeats in other interviews with several interviewees constructing the government as laden with too many responsibilities due to the growth of inactive citizens in the country. For example:

“The state may be late to reach everywhere but citizens should be aware of their surroundings. These become their responsibility as well. ‘It’s the government who should be doing everything for us’ - such a mindset needs to be changed.” (Dr. P.K. Jha, Professor, NASA Scholar, *Batabaran Dabali*, 20/09/09)

The narrative above shows how interviewees perceive passive citizens as a threat to the sovereignty of the country. Hence, the interviewees not only stigmatise the publics as insensible citizens but also question their citizenship on a number of occasions. An implication of such construction is that it creates challenges for public communications seeking to raise environmental awareness.

8.1.2.2 *The careless and self-preoccupied publics*

In *Batabaran Dabali*, a high number of the interviewees overtly complain about the publics being careless and ignoring their own responsibilities. For instance:

“They don’t care about the forests, even forest fires. They don’t show willingness in extinguishing forest fires, in contrast to our ancestors, who were more active. The people of this generation have not even reached that level.” (Modnath Prashrit, Politician and Writer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 03/05/09)

This example not only suggests that Nepalese people do not engage in community and conservation activities as they did in the past, but also indicates their changing attitudes. A binary opposition is noticed which positions earlier generations as superior, and the current generation as inferior. A contrast between the position of experts and community is clearly evident here. While on the one hand the narrative portrays the expert, like the interviewee himself, as being concerned about the environment, on the other hand the community are portrayed as self-centred. This concept of the self-centred citizens may be seen clearly in these examples:

“The drainage channels are directly linked to the river. To make matters worse, it is only too easy to throw waste into rivers rather than engage in basic activities like composting the garbage or dumping it at an appropriate place for the garbage collectors.” (Prakash Mani Sharma, Lawyer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 08/11/09)

“We don’t care about dumping the garbage at specific time and place. Even if the collectors come, we don’t give them the waste, and later we start blaming the municipality for being irresponsible or say they don’t come and collect the garbage etc. That is why we should realise it is our own responsibility.” (Lal Bahadur Thapa, Lawyer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 28/06/09)

These excerpts criticise citizens for being irresponsible towards the environment by depicting them as unconcerned about future environmental impacts. In the second excerpt above, the fact that citizens blame the government for whatever goes wrong indicates the development of a blame culture. By illustrating how citizens ignore basic environmental responsibilities, negligence is foregrounded.

There are further examples of this notion of citizens as self-occupied and careless. For instance, the host of *Batabaran Dabali* foresees difficulty if citizen rights are written into the constitution:

“If there is a clause saying that the citizens will have rights to the adaptation of climate change, will any of the citizens ever go to the court?” (Prakash Sharma, Interviewer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 08/11/09)

While questioning one of the interviewees, the host suggests that the citizens may not be bothered whether or not their rights have been included in the constitution and that they may even be unaware of what is being written in the constitution. By

questioning whether they would be keen to go to the court even if the need arose, the interviewer infers that citizens are submissive. They are stigmatised as members of a passive public sphere and there is an implicit call for public engagement as a solution to existing environmental problems.

8.1.2.3 Responsible government and passive citizens

A small number of the interviewees frame the government as delivering services to the best of its ability despite its multiple responsibilities. However, on several occasions a contrast is noted in the interviewees' perceptions of the government and citizens. Consider the following example:

“Government can't do everything. In the current situation, people are running away from their responsibilities and are living their life comfortably.”
(Dhirendra Bahadur Shrestha, Member, Constitution Making Body, *Batabaran Dabali*, 27/09/09)

A parallel account is noticed in some of the other interviews in *Batabaran Dabali* which frame the government as doing its best and create the identity of the government as a responsible institution. In this regard, a significant number of the interviewees emphasise the need for active citizens who not only claim rights but also fulfil their responsibilities. Consider the following examples:

“In the present scenario, the state (Government) alone is considered to be responsible for providing and protecting the rights of the citizens, whereas the citizens just seek to exercise their rights.” (Lal Bahadur Thapa, Lawyer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 28/06/09)

“This is not just a matter to be comprehended by the parliamentarians, ministers or secretaries. The common people of Nepal should also be aware of this and only then will the environment be conserved.” (Min Biswakarma, Member, Interim Constitution, *Batabaran Dabali*, 24/05/09)

In these excerpts, the citizens are portrayed as being keen merely on claiming rights and not in fulfilling their duties. By contrast, interviewees Mr. Thapa and Mr. Biswakarma construct the people in power as wise by praising their efforts in environmental conservation.

In summary, *Batabaran Dabali* presents competing constructions of the government: unmanaged, unstable and corrupt system on the one hand, and on the other as taking responsibility and consequently an overloaded institution. However, a predominance of the construction of the government as irresponsible institution is clearly evident in interviewees' account. In addition, citizens are portrayed as passive, careless and unaware of their responsibilities. There are also instances of a problematic relationship between the government and the citizens.

While Nepal has witnessed a tension between the elite public sphere of the government system and the excluded citizens who find themselves on the "dispossessed periphery" (Thapa and Sharma, 2009), *Batabaran Dabali* also reflects a growing polarity between the government and civil society. Analysis clearly shows that *Batabaran Dabali* frames the environment as a question of government, political governance and intervention, while framing the government in a variety of dichotomous ways. In fact, the government is constructed in contrast to citizens and vice versa: government is paternal and citizens are juvenile; government is responsible and citizens are feckless.

8.2 The Discourse of Co-responsibility

A significant number of the expert interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* focus on the rights and responsibilities of citizens and demand changes in citizen behaviour. There are several occasions where the experts state their belief that inclusion of citizen responsibility in the new constitution would bring changes to the existing environmental scenario. These experts argue that the rights and responsibility are the two sides of the same coin. In this regard, the environment is framed as a matter of co-responsibility.

"In fact, *conservation* of the environment is not just the responsibility of the state. Well-aware citizens also have responsibility towards it." (Dr. P.K. Jha, Professor, NASA Scholar, *Batabaran Dabali*, 20/09/09)

"It's important to note that just getting the rights alone is not going to be the solution. People should bear their part of the responsibility as well." (Dhirendra Bahadur Shrestha, Member, Constitution Making Body, *Batabaran Dabali*, 27/09/09)

“People too have responsibilities. People should bear the responsibilities with all enthusiasm and only then should seek their rights.” (Prakash Mani Sharma, Lawyer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 08/11/09)

These narratives suggest that the “elites often see themselves as moral leaders” (van Dijk, 1993: 9). A call for public engagement in environmental activities is apparent in these excerpts. However, a clear contrast is evident in many instances, as reflected in the examples above in which the interviewees set their own identity as devoted conservationists while portraying ordinary citizens as careless. Significant numbers of interviewees not only criticise citizens for not being active in environmental conservation but also construct citizens as lacking responsibility towards the environment. These interviewees mainly project the view that there is a dearth of civic participation:

“It’s completely unethical and unfair just to exercise the rights and overlook the responsibilities and blame the state for failures ... There should be commitment from the government and also the support from the citizens. We are not talking about very big things here.” (Prakash Mani Sharma, Lawyer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 08/11/09)

At this point, the relationship between the government and citizens is constructed as being in tension due to the lack of co-responsibility between the two spheres. On the other hand, a portrayal of citizens as passive emphasises the dual albeit perhaps reluctant responsibility of the government to provide and protect citizens’ rights. The perception of a need to strengthen the role and responsibility of the government as well as the citizens is apparent on a number of occasions. For example:

“This is not just an issue for residents of Kathmandu; the entire nation is facing it. It should be every individual’s responsibility and the state should also provide the pertinent rights to its people.” (Lal Bahadur Thapa, Lawyer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 28/06/09)

The narrative indicates an urgency to act from the citizen level and also warns citizens about future consequences, advocating the need for an active citizen’s role when the entire nation is facing environmental problems. At the same time, citizens are represented as egoistic. All the examples above portray the government as lacking support from citizens and as such demand mutual responsibility for

environmental conservation. Such negative constructions of citizens may have the effect of discouraging people who are currently active in conservation activities. Rather than encouraging such participation, these criticisms could be counter productive.

8.2.1 Constitution and Co-responsibility

The majority of the interviewees find fault with the existing constitution, which does not mention citizen responsibility. Thus they demand the inclusion of various environmental rights and responsibilities in a new constitution. In fact, the expert interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* not only ‘constitutionalise’ environmental issues but also see the problem as a legal matter. By so doing they translate the problem of environment degradation into abstract legality. In other words, they construct the process of constitutionalisation as an abstract codification in which the solution lies in the systems of law and ethics which is beyond the reach of ordinary citizens. For example:

“[...] until now none of the constitution has managed to mention citizen’s responsibility.” (Dhirendra Bahadur Shrestha, Lawyer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 27/09/09)

“Until now the constitution is silent in this regard. Citizens have responsibility to conserve their surrounding area and stop its exploitation.” (Dr. P.K. Jha, Professor and NASA Scholar, *Batabaran Dabali*, 20/09/09)

In the excerpts above, the faults of the existing constitution is represented as the sole reason behind many environmental problems, since it has not been able to address the responsibility of the citizens. The direct link between environmental problems and shortcomings in the existing constitution not only calls for an inclusion of citizen responsibility but also for urgent citizen participation in conservation. Inclusion of citizen responsibility in the constitution is mainly depicted as necessary in order to maintain national sovereignty:

“Rights and responsibilities are two sides of the same coin. In order to create an ambience of environmental discipline and maintain environmental law and order, it becomes absolutely essential not just to seek for the rights, otherwise environmental resources and services will not be sustainable at all.” (Lal Bahadur Thapa, Lawyer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 28/06/09)

While the narrative suggests that the amendments in the constitution will secure a better environmental future for citizens, a new constitution is represented as a remedy for environmental problems. Several other interviewees also see the inclusion of ‘citizen responsibility’ into the constitution as the solution and strongly assert that expecting rights without responsibilities will lead to nothing but frustration:

“We demand rights but right without responsibility is void. If we move forward carrying rights along with responsibility, I would say it’s a very good opportunity in this constitution-writing phase to address environmental issues and include them more appropriately in the constitution.” (Adarsha Pokharel, Climate Change Expert, *Batabaran Dabali*, 10/05/09)

Thus, the interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* construct environmental problems as a result of a lack of citizen participation. The majority of the interviewees maintain their view towards mutual state-citizen responsibility, saying that environmental conservation is possible only when there is a sense of co-responsibility. However, it is surprising to note that the programme lacks deeper discussion with ordinary citizens or dialogue on how inclusion of citizens’ rights and responsibilities might guarantee a better environmental future. The study found that *Batabaran Dabali* arguably fails to foster inclusive democratic debate since it focuses mainly on experts’ views rather than enabling people from diverse backgrounds to discuss their views on these environmental public agendas in the constitution.

8.3 Framing Public Knowledge

This section illustrates the apparently contradictory construction of public environmental knowledge as lacking as well as valuable in *Batabaran Dabali*. Construction of the publics as unaware had dominance, however, over the acknowledgement of lay experiential knowledge as the ‘real knowledge’.

8.3.1 The Ignorant Mass

In *Batabaran Dabali*, a significant number of expert interviewees and the host construct the publics as deficient in environmental knowledge on several occasions. For example:

“To build their houses, they cut trees. However, they don’t have awareness and knowledge on planting even a single tree in their compound.” (Modnath Prashrit, Politician and Writer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 03/05/09).

Here, the interviewee clearly separates himself from the citizens with “outgroup” designator ‘they’ while constructing his own position as the expert. Indeed, not only the ordinary citizens but poor people particularly are stereotypically presented as ignorant and unwise on many occasions. The distinction between the two groups (i.e. experts and lay people) is noted several times in the interviews. For example, an interviewee frames the poor people as not being knowledgeable by contrasting the rich and the poor:

“I mean the people who do not have resources will not have enough capacity either. The main agenda of Nepal is to reduce poverty and make the people competent who lack resources.” (Dr. Toran Sharma, Environmentalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 13/12/09)

The interviewee in the excerpt above conflates lack of resources as an indication of lack of competence. The judgement of the capacity of the people is based on the amount of the resources they have, with the poor generalised and excluded from being skilled. According to Foucault (1984: 110) the “discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination”, but it exercises power. An exercise of creating a demarcation between rich and poor through expert discourse in *Batabaran Dabali* alienates the poor from the mainstream agenda as the poor are stigmatised as lacking ability although the narrative talks about the need to remove the demarcation by reducing poverty. In fact, the experts assume that the knowledge of the poor does not connect with the environment; and when it does so, it connects defectively. In this regard, the experts construct a wider gap between rich and poor people. In fact, the experts stress that poor people should be made competent (as seen in the example above), recommending a narrowing of the gap between rich and poor.

In *Batabaran Dabali*, a very limited proportion (3%) of the total time was given to non-specialist people as compared to the experts. A total of only 5 programmes (out of 50 studied) include the voices of the ordinary people. Regardless of the fact that the local interviewee on the programme acknowledges awareness of the term

climate change and an interest in securing the benefits of carbon storage, the host frames the locals as ignorant:

“Not only Mahendra Chaudhari and Shama Chaudhari (community forest users), a chairperson of Shyalapani community forest of Laxmipur, Dang also does not know much about carbon trading and the benefits of it.” (Prakash Sharma, Interviewer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 06/09/09)

In the excerpt above, it is surprising to note how the host of the programme expects local people to know much about technical terms such as *climate change* and *carbon trading*. The interviewer’s construction of the publics is firmly within a “deficit model” which positions the publics as lacking scientific knowledge and literacy (Irwin and Michael, 2003). Here, a framing of the people’s supposed need for abstract scientific understanding is apparent. Similarly, in another programme, while reporting about a landslide the host says:

“The people in the village, where most of them lack education and are in extreme poverty, have no idea about global warming and its impact such as drought, heavy rain, floods and landslides.” (Prakash Sharma, Interviewer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 16/08/09)

The narrative above constructs ordinary people as uninformed about the impacts of climate change. With this sweeping assumption about the lack of awareness about climate change, the host of the programme judges local knowledge and continues to portray ordinary citizens as ignorant. In the same programme he states: “The villagers do not have knowledge of climate change and its impacts” (Prakash Sharma, *Batabaran Dabali*, 16/08/09). By repeating that the people in the village had no idea about climate change and its impact, an impression is created to the audiences that if the villagers had knowledge about climate change, they might have been successful in mitigating its impacts. Here, the host of the programme does not seem to consider the underlying complexity of climate change. Rather, a heavy expectation is overlaid on the villagers and the locals stigmatised as ignorant, based on whether or not they could link their lives with climate change. A similar assumption is evident in several other programmes. For instance:

“The situation is that the local people have not yet been made aware of the fact that industries in the local area can hamper the environmental situation. They

don't have the ability to predict the environmental impact and be prepared for it." (Nimesh Regmi, Environmental Journalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 07/06/09)

In the narrative above, the lack of citizens' environmental knowledge is framed as enabling industries to grow as these industries have no fear that the locals may demand environmental rights. Similarly, another interviewee in the same programme says that the people in Lumbini area lack knowledge about environmental conservation and as a result the environmental situation of the locality is degrading:

"The locals are not aware. First of all, they should have been made aware of environment conservation so as to conserve the environment." (Khet Raj Dahal, Environmental Engineer, *Batabaran Dabali*, 07/06/09)

A clear contrast between experts and the locals is apparent in terms of a knowledge gap between the two groups with *Batabaran Dabali* representing itself as part of the expert group. In this regard, the dominant expert voices in *Batabaran Dabali* create a distance between ordinary people with lay knowledge and the elite people (high level government officials, non government officials, journalists). Wynne (1993) suggests that conflict may arise when there is a general stereotype of lay people as less knowledgeable than experts. This growing polarity between the lay and experts is reflected in a few of the interviewees' accounts of how the information gap is also created in the media landscape in Nepal. Consider the following example:

"We have been reading the news that a special team has gone for the conference. But the irony is that the talks, the big planning and discussions which take place in big conferences do not trickle down to the local level, users' level or at a community level." (Prakash Amatya, Executive Director, NGO Forum, *Batabaran Dabali*, 28/03/10)

This example indicates how the information is transmitted to different segments of society in a biased way. This also reflects how planning and decision-making on the environment are confined to experts alone. The interviewee above constructs experts as the people having higher knowledge and locals as having less knowledge, representing a massive disparity between these two groups of people. Although referred to ironically, this example explicates the existing reality of the

relations between the experts and the uninformed citizens in Nepal. While the experts have access to planning and discussions, the ordinary citizens are deprived of even the opportunity of being well-informed. Indeed, this reflects that the media have not been more of use to rural population in Nepal since the concentration of information among the rich and powerful has widened the gap between rich and poor as well as the core and periphery (Kharel, 2002).

8.3.2 The Knowledgeable Public

It is perhaps a paradox that although a significant number of interviewees construct the publics as ignorant, a consideration of the publics as knowledgeable is also evident in *Batabaran Dabali* on some occasions. For example, in the following excerpt, an environmental journalist shares his field experience and reflects how he became acquainted with the locals as knowledgeable:

“I found that there is a high level of awareness on environmental issues among the locals in this area ... Locals are very worried about the impact of climate change. In fact there are many glacier lakes in this locality. People are worried about their future in case the lakes dry up. They do have awareness on these matters.” (Sanjeev Adhikari, Environmental Journalist, *Batabaran Dabali*, 21/06/09)

In the excerpt above, the reporter of the programme accredits local knowledge and awareness about the environmental problems. Although most of the time the hosts in *Batabaran Dabali* project the view that ordinary citizens have limited knowledge of environmental issues, here the reporter offers a positive representation of local people's knowledge about climate change and reflects people's concerns towards climate change impacts. However, the focus remains mainly on highlighting problems with their livelihood and sustenance rather than their own practical capability to cope with disaster and strategies based on their knowledge. Similarly, a small number of interviewees frame the locals, such as the community forest user group members, as well aware of the benefits of the forest and its conservation even though the term *climate change* does not exist in the vocabulary of many of the locals. For example:

“The community forest user groups in Nepal are not ignorant. They are well aware. The terminology such as *climate change* may be new to people, but the forest user groups of Nepal are aware of forest conservation. They already know that forest conservation will lead to sustainable water sources and financial benefit.” (Bhola Bhattarai, General Secretary, FECOFUN⁵¹, *Batabaran Dabali*, 04/04/10)

Being a representative of a community forest user group himself, the interviewee in the excerpt above describes his experience of coming across technical terms such as *climate change* and considers how environmental jargon (such as *climate change* and *carbon trading*) play a role in creating a gap between the knowledge of the experts and the ordinary people. He is critical of the stereotypical representation of locals as ignorant. Rather, he tries to safeguard the identity of these locals as the wise publics in terms of their experiential knowledge. He also claims that they know what they have been doing and explicates their relationship with nature. This notion repeats a few times by other expert interviewees in their construction of local people as knowledgeable:

“For that, there is an important role of the community. The community people have in-depth knowledge. They have extensive experience as well.” (Ram Prasad Chaudhari, Professor, *Batabaran Dabali*, 26/07/09)

A reflection of the knowledge of community people towards sustainability of environmental resources provides a positive representation of community knowledge and clearly indicates that some experts do value local knowledge. A similar understanding is also revealed in the following example:

“For example, we went to Mustang. There was no potato harvesting and apples were not good either. But, spinach was grown well. People have started growing corn. The cultivation of chillies, cucumber, pumpkin, cabbage and cauliflower by the locals on their own also shows adaptation, if we see it in that way.” (Sunil Babu Pant, Constitution Assembly Member, *Batabaran Dabali*, 25/10/09)

⁵¹ FECOFUN (The Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal) is a formal network of Forest User Groups (FUGs) from across Nepal.

The narrative constructs the local population as successfully acclimatising to the existing situation as well as having extensive knowledge about their environment⁵². It is clearly evident in the way in which they have started changing their traditional crops since these had not been growing as well as previously. This also indicates local farmers' adaptability to climate change as a result of their own experience. However, by saying "if we see it in that way" in the last sentence, the speaker casts doubt on the knowledge of the locals towards climate change. This suggests how the experts point out alternative perspectives in accepting ordinary people's local adaptation as knowledge of the environment.

In summary, the expert interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* do recognise local knowledge to some extent. However, they are seen to be reluctant in acknowledging such knowledge. While local knowledge is not adequately highlighted in *Batabaran Dabali*, a construction of the doubt around such knowledge is apparent in several instances. Moreover, *Batabaran Dabali*, because it targets mainly policy level people and relevant experts, is seen to neglect people with less knowledge on such issues and to treat the lay people overwhelmingly as an ignorant mass. This recalls Foucault (1980: 52), who claims: "[k]nowledge and power are integrated with one another" and hence while it is impossible for "power to be exercised without knowledge", it is also not possible "for knowledge not to engender power". *Batabaran Dabali*, having a privileged voice, is no exception in exercising power to practice expert discourses. The analysis reveals that *Batabaran Dabali*, although claiming to focus on the promotion of environmental citizen rights, in practice prioritises expert voices while marginalising ordinary people. While it continues to dichotomise people based on their expertise and knowledge, the programme appears unsuccessful in creating its own identity as a resolution to this induced polarity.

⁵² The construction of the public knowledge in coping with the situation is similar to that in the study of Wynne (1989) of Cumbrian farmers who were more highly knowledgeable about their farm than the scientists. In his study Wynne found that the scientists were more involved in bureaucratic procedures than consulting the locals and hence could not recognise practical incompatibilities between their advice and the realities of hill farming.

Chapter 9

Locally Contextualised Representations of the Environment

In chapter 7 and 8, discourse analysis was used to explicate the construction of the environment in *Batabaran Dabali*. With the same discourse analytical approach, this chapter will investigate differences and similarities in constructing the environment and environmental problems among rural, city and expert groups, with both lay and expert knowledge of the environment. Furthermore, this chapter explores how the participants of the focus group discussions frame a disparity between the citizens and the people in power while constructing powerless citizens as an excluded mass. In addition, it will illustrate how these rural, city and expert groups construct a lack of civic sense and civic responsibility as an explanation for the deteriorating environment which resembles the elite voices in *Batabaran Dabali*. The analysis also explores the ways in which awareness and actions of urban citizens are challenged by experiential lay knowledge of rural people.

9.1 A Construction of the Environment and Environmental Problems

This section will illustrate how the rural, city and expert groups construct the environment differently. Furthermore, it will demonstrate how these different groups of people from rural communities, city professionals as well as environmental experts reflect their relationship with the environment and environmental problems. In addition, it will outline how the participants frame a growing polarity between the rural and the urban environment.

9.1.1 Multiple Constructions of the Environment

The first interesting thing of note in all focus group discussions was the enthusiasm of those taking part. Participants (other than experts) have had few opportunities to talk about the environment or their localities in any kind of forum. Lay participants (groups of rural communities and city professionals) explained that the focus group discussions provided a platform for them to discuss their concerns with similar categories of people.

The analysis of focus group discussions shows that the rural groups construct the environment as simple and something which is close to their lives. On the other hand, the city and expert groups frame the environment as complex and multifaceted. However, it is interesting to note how a majority of the participants across all the groups construct their immediate surroundings as the environment. Consider the following extracts from the rural groups for example:

“What we see in front of our eyes all comes into the environment, the things which are around our house.” (Binita, CFUG-2⁵³)

“In my opinion the environment is what we are seeing in front of us now.” (Gyaan/LF)

“Air, water, our surrounding is the environment.” (Kamala/CFUG-1)

In each of these extracts above, the participants frame the environment as accessible and something in their proximity. One of the participants constructs the environment as a blend of people and their interaction with the local surroundings:

“Environment includes air, clean water, clear voice and honesty in society.” (Laxman/CFUG-2)

Here, the participant frames the environment as more than the physical components in their locality. By saying ‘clear voice and honesty’ the participant indicates that the environment includes social relations and social harmony in the society. With the inclusion of social relations in his definition of the environment, he indicates that the environment is more complex than simply a physical environment.

A limited number of rural participants frame themselves as environmentally ignorant, despite having already defined environment as local surroundings. This can be understood in terms of rural participants’ concern that their everyday definition of the environment is less valid than that offered by urban people or experts who they consider to be more knowledgeable. For instance:

“We are not educated like you all. We could have defined the environment if we have been educated.” (Sarala/CFUG-2)

⁵³ See Table 5.2 Details of the Focus Groups for the explanation of the codes used for the focus groups.

The narrative not only reflects a construction of a knowledge divide between the villagers and the urban people, but also sets the self-identity of the villagers as uninformed people. The participant distances herself and her group members from the city people with the use of “ingroup” designator ‘we’ referring to the rural group. Similar to rural groups, several participants from the city groups portray the environment as something which is closer to them:

“Nature ... environment means whatever is around us. This means wherever we are living.” (Rachana/BP)

“What we sense, think, understand and read ... the things around us are an environment.” (Mahesh/DP)

“Environment is nature ... what we see and experience in our everyday life.” (Milan/ITP)

The above extracts reflect participants’ everyday accounts of the environment. In addition, the city groups emphasise the link between human beings and the physical environment:

“Environment is our surrounding as well as interconnectedness of different components in society. It indeed is a complex system.” (Parmananda/BP)

“Environment is an interwoven network ... it is an interaction between us with our surroundings.” (Babin/BP)

“It really is complex. Environment includes many things; for example the system in which we are living apart from the air, water and climate.” (Siddhi/ITP)

Here, it is clearly noticed that the city groups use more academic and technical definitions while constructing the environment. These city groups mainly frame the environment as a complex system or a network of relationships between various components in society. They indicate how the political aspect in society comes into existence as explicated in the example below:

“It is the network of political, social and natural environment.” (Asesh/DP)

Although very limited participants from the city groups refer to a political aspect in constructing the environment, a representation of inter-connection between the

environment and the political sphere appears strongly among the participants from the expert groups:

“It is an interaction between water, air, land, animals, human beings...including socio-political surroundings.” (Pramila/EE-2)

“Environment is an interaction between biological and socio-political factors.” (Nishant/EE-2)

As seen in the narratives above, the experts’ definitions of the environment mainly emphasise on how the ‘interaction’ between different components in society takes place. A depiction of the socio-political factors in society here suggests that the environment is a complex phenomenon. Moreover, experts use academic-scientific definitions in representing the environment:

“If you see from the standpoint of conservation organisation...I mean whenever I think of the environment, I automatically think about the ecological processes.” (Neema/EE-1)

“If we see from the perspective of the environment agency, environment includes both green and brown⁵⁴ components.” (Neesha/EE-1)

In the excerpts above, the experts refer to environment organisations while constructing the environment. Nevertheless, these experts also refer to the local environment like other lay groups, as in the following examples. In this regard, the experts are seen to construct the environment in different ways:

“What you see in front of your eyes and what you have in your visibility is the environment...It is a complex single unit, a complete ecosystem.” (Somnath/EE-2)

“It includes the surrounding in front of you as well.” (Pramila/EE-2)

The experts’ framing of the environment both as concrete and abstract thus constructs the environment as multifaceted. Furthermore, an environmental expert frames a clear boundary between the experts and the lay people, based on scientific knowledge and understanding:

⁵⁴ In the environment sector, while green refers to “natural”, brown refers to the “man-made components” (Brown Environment Resource Centre, 2012). Environmental problems such as general pollution, air pollution, water contamination, river pollution, industrial poisoning and pollution from power stations come under brown environmental agendas (Forsyth, 2001).

“We do conservation, talk about conservation and keep saying that we live a long life by conserving forest i.e. by getting oxygen from the forest. We have a reason for saying it as we are employed in a conservation organisation. We do not have a lack of basic things. But, you see when these poor, who live by selling timber, when will they link this with the oxygen. There is a long way to go. Therefore, the environment they see is different from what we see.”
(Biraj/EE-2)

A depiction of a gap between rich and poor is also apparent in the excerpt above. While prosperity is associated with knowledge and poverty is linked with ignorance, a formulation of the two binary opposites (knowledge vs. ignorance and rich vs. poor) is clearly evident. With the use of “ingroup” designator ‘we’ to the experts and “outgroup” designator ‘them’ to the community people, an indication of a gap between expert and lay construction of the environment is also apparent here.

In summary, constructions of the environment among the three different groups of people (rural, city and expert) differ perhaps unsurprisingly. However, some common characteristics are noticed in how the different groups construct the environment. A reference to the importance of immediate surroundings as an environment is prevalent among all the groups. While the rural groups are found to construct the environment as close surroundings, an emerging notion of complexity is also noticed in several occasions. The city groups on the other hand frame the environment as the surrounding where they live as well as a complex interaction between nature and human beings. Only a limited number of participants highlight a link between socio-political situation and nature in this group. On the other hand, expert groups frame the environment as a complex system in which the socio-political sphere mainly plays a role in determining the environmental condition. Thus, the participants are seen as divided based on their locality, experience and knowledge while constructing the environment. In fact, the ‘environment’ is seen to be a spectrum of different narratives.

9.1.2 Constructing Relations between Self and Environment

An analysis of focus group discussions reflects that the rural, city and the expert groups portray environmental impacts on their lives in distinct ways. While the

rural groups frame their life as full of complexities due to environmental problems, the city groups construct environmental problems as part of their everyday life as they do not find any choice other than adjusting to the situation. On the other hand, the expert groups portray their daily life as a balancing act while they cope with abstract and concrete issues.

9.1.2.1 Rural people and strenuous life

Rural groups construct the growing population, lack of basic resources, presence of pollution, oppressive urban elites and lack of state intervention as the causes of environmental problems in their locality. The villagers' deprivation of basic necessities such as water (due to drying of water sources), fresh air (due to extreme pollution from the factories) and productive agricultural land (due to extreme chemical treatment) reveals how challenging their lives have been. For example, an overwhelming majority of the participants from the Nala and Hokse villages describe the problem of water scarcity:

"We are very frustrated. We don't get to sleep the whole night. We go at 2 am and come back at 5 am. We go with two buckets. But, come back with just the one at 5 am ... by the time we reach to the tap there will be so many in the queue already." (Laxmi/CGUG-2)

"While there used to be five households dependent on the drinking water in this hill (shows the area), there are fifteen households now for the same amount of water. Maybe that is why there is a scarcity of water here." (Kamala, CFUG-1)

The excerpts above make clear that there is a serious lack of resources, but the narratives also suggest that the increasing population has aggravated tension among the villagers (as seen in the second excerpt above). The majority of participants from the rural group in Nala village explain how their local livelihoods have been challenged:

"The quality of soil is degraded to that extent that even the chemicals do not work now. It does affect environment a lot." (Kamala/CFUG-1)

"We know we are harming ourselves by using chemicals for our own food. We don't have a choice ... we are using it for our survival as crops do not grow here without treating them with the chemicals now." (Bhojraj/CFUG-1)

These narratives show how villagers see their lives as threatened by deteriorating environmental conditions. They suggest that the villagers are extremely worried for their uncertain future. The extent of the problem is formulated in an example below in which the participant frames the situation as alarming:

“A concrete step is needed from the state. If the people do not make arrangements for replacing chemical fertilisers with organic or compost fertilisers, people here will die within 2, 4 or 10 years ... Nala village is one of the main suppliers of vegetables in Kathmandu. You too are eating the same food grown with excessive chemical treatment. The only difference is that we know the fact and you all (the city people) are not aware how many chemicals we have been using!” (Bhojraj/CFUG-1)

A community forest user group member in the excerpt above explains how problems associated with the use of chemicals are exacerbated due to lack of state intervention. He represents himself along with the other community members as the victims who are compelled to eat poisonous food despite being aware of the consequences. His construction of the problem calls for urgent action to save people from being affected in future. Here, it is interesting to note that the rural people are far more knowledgeable about the risks posed by chemical contamination of their soil (with their experiential knowledge) and much concerned than the city groups. While poor rural people are vulnerable, they are also informed. This challenges Beck's (1992) idea that the vulnerable are those without knowledge. According to Beck (1992), risk is associated with class division and consequently poor people are more vulnerable as they have less access to knowledge and information. In addition, a gap between the poor villagers and city elites is evident in the excerpt above. This widening gap between urban and rural people is evident in a number of extracts. In the following extract, a local farmer in Sindhupalchowk district provides insight into impacts of increasing factories owned by elites as the reason behind depletion of resources which attributed to their harsh lives:

“The main problem in Sindhupalchowk district is the pollution from the factories. Previously people were happy that the factories generated jobs for the local people. But, slowly negative impacts started to be seen, such as the crops

stopped growing due to the excessive amount of dust coming from the burning of stone in those factories.” (Gyaan/LF)

The participant frames the villagers as ignorant previously in considering the factories as an opportunity for employment in their locality. A representation of an increased awareness among the villagers on the negative impacts of such factories on the environment is clearly evident here. In fact, a representation of the rich factory owners as exploiters is apparent in the above extract. Similarly, another participant from the same group recollects the extent of the problem as follows:

“Due to the industrial encroachment people even had to migrate as there was a direct impact from these factories. Many people suffered from different diseases. It is not easy to oppose the rich people. They only look for the benefits. Even though we want to, we cannot stop them ... they are very powerful people. They challenge us, saying ‘do what you want’ but we are helpless.” (Kamal Prasad/LF)

A significant majority of the participants in Sindhupalchowk district thus construct themselves as victims of a deteriorating environment due to growing industrialisation as seen in the excerpt above. This not only suggests how the livelihood and the health of the villagers had been threatened in the past, but also reflects villagers’ fear of similar consequences in future. A dichotomous representation of the people is clearly evident here, in which the rich people are constructed as dominant and poor villagers as powerless.

In summary, while environmental problems such as water scarcity, pollution from the factories and degrading soil quality due to extensive use of chemicals are identified as the major environmental problems among the rural groups, these rural groups construct growing population, industrial encroachment and lack of state intervention in the village as the causes behind their harsh lives. These rural groups not only frame how they are deprived of basic necessities, but also portray their lives as endangered due to powerful elites. Moreover, a growing polarity between the citizens and the authorities is also evident here. In addition to the indication of a growing tension among the villagers themselves in terms of water collection, there is a conflict between the poor villagers and the rich factory owners. Thus, a

construction of villagers living in miserable conditions is evident in the rural construction of the environment.

9.1.2.2 Urban life and adjusting to problems

A majority of the participants from the city groups speak of environmental problems as part of their daily life. They describe how they adapt to the existing problems even though these make their lives miserable. For example, an IT professional recalls the direct impact of the factories around the houses as:

“What can we do? You see at the middle of the residential areas, brick factories are operating. In my area, a while ago there was a fire in the chemical factory. For the whole week we had to wear masks all the time even while we were sleeping.” (Milan/ITP)

The excerpt above not only suggests growth of unregulated industries in residential areas but also shows a weak urban management system in which people’s lives are risked at the cost of commercial production. While the participants are critical of government failure in protecting the capital city from unchecked pollution, a depiction of how the people are forced to bear whatever happens as part of city life is evident in the above excerpt. Although the government has introduced several environmental rules (such as vehicle emission control and relocation of brick factories from urban areas), lack of effective policies and follow-up systems are framed as major challenges to the environment in Nepal. Similarly, several participants from the business professionals group give an account of how problems such as sound pollution affect them:

“Basically, people listen to music when they are about to sleep but we listen to the noise of vehicles (laughs). Nowadays I can’t sleep in quiet places since I am used to the noise.” (Babin/BP)

Although noise pollution is considered “an interfering air-pollutant” having auditory and non-auditory “effects on the exposed population” (Murthy, Majumder, Khanal, and Subedi, 2007: 1), the participant in the extract above indicates that he has adapted to the noisy environment. A similar construction of how the people are used to sound pollution is apparent in other city groups. For example:

“Indeed the sound pollution ... the population of the vehicles are increasing day by day. We live nearby but what to do? We have no choice. Something must be done” (Manav/ITP).

Despite considering noise pollution as “a significant environmental problem” (Murthy et al., 2007: 1), the participant acknowledges that the problem is part of urbanisation and as such they are forced to live with it. Although the narrative above reflects that the participant has accepted the situation, this is not considered as normal. Thus, he emphasises the fact that the relevant authority should work on minimising the impact of sound pollution in the city. A construction of a lack of a mechanism to control sound pollution is also evident here. A similar account of how the people are forced to live in a polluted environment is present in the following extract:

“Air pollution is growing. Today, you definitely have to cover your nose while you are closer to Bagmati (river). You see we are complaining but living in or nearby the same surroundings.” (Milan/ITP)

In the excerpt above, while the participant is highly critical of the unbearable stench coming from the rivers, he sees it as an unavoidable aspect of city life. Similarly, several participants from these city groups contextualise both the physical and psychological impact on themselves as follows:

“We are frustrated. If we get up in the morning, there is no water at home ... I don’t have a water reserve tank at home and therefore have to get up at 4 am to fetch water from the hand pump. Anyhow, we have to be able to drink water.” (Babin/BP)

“Water comes for just two hours a day. My house is at the gorge, this makes me difficult to get tap water, but today luckily there was water. I used an electric water pump from 3 am to 7 am to fetch water. That is why I am very happy today (smiles).” (Siddhi/ITP)

In each of the extracts above, the participants not only associate the problem of water shortage with well-being, but also as part of the forced adaptation process in urban life. In other words, these participants describe this as part of their daily routine as they have no choice other than adapt to the situation.

The construction of urban life and adjustments to the problems recurred several times across all the focus group discussions. In fact, the participants were seen to be more concerned to their local surroundings. This is in contrast to the construction of the environment as complex and the problems associated with the environment as distant in *Batabaran Dabali*.

9.1.2.3 Expert negotiation between work and daily life

The focus group discussions with the experts reflect that the experts negotiate their lives both as urban citizens and as environmental experts. A portrayal of the experts as ordinary citizens who are also deprived of basic environmental rights is apparent on several occasions in expert discourses. For example, in the following excerpt an environmental expert highlights the issue:

“Even though we work for a conservation organisation, we can’t deny that pollution comes as the main environmental problem in the Nepalese context. But, the worst thing is we are working in the green sector and we have not addressed the brown sector. But, working in an international environmental organisation and being deprived of clear and fresh air to breathe really gives a strange and a mixed feeling.” (Neema/EE-1)

Despite working in the green sector, the expert quoted above acknowledges that they have not been able to prioritise the issue of pollution. She not only frames how environmental problems have been separated into ‘brown’ and ‘green’ but also claims that local issues are being neglected by international environmental organisations (including the one where she has been working). While a tension between the environmental organisations working in the green and brown sectors is clearly evident, the expert sets her identity in a dilemma since the organisation she is associated with works only for the green sector. She mainly emphasises the need for the attention of environmental organisations working in the green sector to address brown issues since the problems are increasing. In addition, although the issue has been attached to personal health and hygiene, this interviewee frames the issue as the deprivation of basic environmental rights to the citizens. A switching of perspective between the ordinary citizen and the environmental professional is apparent once again when the same expert later recollects how environmental values are negotiated when its economic aspects are recognised in day-to-day life:

“I work for an environmental organisation; that is why I give importance to the environment, but as an ordinary citizen I also look for other aspects. If I had surplus money only then I think I would have solar panels. Otherwise, I will just use an inverter⁵⁵.” (Neema/EE-1)

Here, the expert claims that even though she is aware of the need to minimise environmental impacts, it is not easy to apply this knowledge in practice since this depends not only on awareness, but also on an individual’s financial condition. On the other hand, several experts elaborate on the enormity of drinking water shortages in their daily negotiation with the local problem:

“Water distributed from Sundarijal (source) is also inadequate. If we use the motor, water comes. Otherwise it won’t. Drinking water problem is the big problem. Whatever we do, this is our daily life.” (Pramesh/EE-2)

“Exactly, the whole day we work for conservation, think of conservation but you see once we are back to home we start worrying that there is no water for tonight.” (Neesha/EE-1)

The experts frame themselves as victim of problems such as water scarcity in the city. The narratives above suggest that the experts live with two contrasting interchangeable roles: sufferers as ordinary citizens and as managers of the environmental problems in their own organisations. A representation of experts’ dualistic roles in society is apparent in a further example in which an expert frames herself as the victim of water shortage and pollution in daily life:

“We work for global environmental organisations but we are deprived of basic environmental rights as citizens.” (Sarina/EE-1)

An important insight emerges from the extract above: the experts construct themselves as privileged and informed citizens about the environment. However, the realities they have been facing bring them back to square one where they find themselves coping with tangible problems in which their theoretical knowledge has been of little relevance. In this regard, the experts juggle their roles between abstract and concrete issues.

⁵⁵ An inverter is an electronic device which is used to generate power. The device is operated by re/charging the batteries in it. Normal household Inverters in Nepal can cost from Rs. 9,700 to Rs. 15,500. The batteries cost separately ranging from Rs. 10,000-15,000. (The conversion rate for £1 equals Rs. 140.03 - 19 September 2012).

9.1.3 Rural vs. Urban Environments

This section illustrates how the participants from the rural groups contradict their own construction of the rural environment. Although they had earlier described the rural environment as difficult, this section shows how the same participants frame the rural environment as pleasant. In addition, it will also present how the city groups also construct the rural environment as a benefit. A dichotomous representation of the environment is present as these groups frame the rural environment both as distressing (see 9.1.2.1) and as a blessing. For instance, while comparing village and city life, an overwhelming majority of the participants from Hokse village consider themselves fortunate to live in the village rather than the city:

Facilitator: This village looks very clean. You do go to the city, don't you? How do you find the city?

Archana/CFUG-2: Compared to city, I find my village much more beautiful.

Binita/CFUG-2: Where else should we go? Home is the best place and village is very peaceful.

Archana/CFUG-2: Yeah, I too love my own place.

Laxman/CFUG-2: Exactly, here everything is good, including the weather.

Facilitator: What do you think about Kathmandu then?

Laxman/CFUG-2: Very polluted!

Binita/CFUG-2: Can't even walk in the streets ... we have to wear face mask there. Here, it is not like that.

Laxmi/CFUG-2: I love the environment of this village. The weather is good. We grow and eat fresh vegetables. In Kathmandu, you have to eat tomatoes harvested months back.

A construction of the urban environment as unhealthy is clearly evident in the example above. This notion is repeated in other focus group discussions held in Nala village in which a majority of the participants compare the quality of the village environment with the urban environment. For instance:

Kamala/CFUG-1: Once we come back from city, we fall sick.

Gaurav/CFUG-1: Without a mask there is no way we can walk on the streets in Kathmandu. Here it is not like that.

Sumita/CFUG-1: Can't even breathe properly.

Bhojraj/CFUG-1: Yeah, we can't even breathe there. Eyes get red and start getting wet due to pollution. Whenever we return from there (Kathmandu), we get sick. We are living in a very clean environment in fact.

The example above suggests that the urban environment is unhealthy when compared with the village environment. A binary opposition is clearly evident here: the rural environment is considered as fresh and the urban environment as unhygienic. A similar contradictory construction of the rural environment as a blessing (as compared to city) is evident in another focus group held in Pangretar village where a significant majority of the participants draw attention to how bad the city environment has become. For example:

“Now, we don't want to go to city. We wish we didn't need to go to. We only go when there is absolute necessity.” (Sumita/LF)

While all the three rural groups reflect a big difference between the urban and the rural environment, they project themselves as fortunate to have lived in such fresh surroundings. However, they also identify themselves in a pitiful situation since there is no choice to survive within the village environment as their village lacks resources.

“We go to the city only when somebody is badly ill or have to get admission in school/colleges for kids or some people go in search of jobs. People go for various reasons. We lack opportunities here since everything (facilities) is concentrated in Kathmandu. That is the reason.” (Gyaan/LF)

In fact, a dichotomous representation of the rural environment is presented as the rural environment is framed both as pleasant as well as lacking resources as compared to the city. Moreover, there is a tense relationship between village and city life in how the villagers avoid going to the city in the above extract. In addition, the participants frame themselves as an excluded mass since there are not only fewer opportunities in rural settings but also all development infrastructures are increasingly concentrated in the capital city. Although villagers frame themselves as being deprived of facilities in the village, they represent themselves as happy in their own locality. Similar to villagers, several participants from the city groups also frame the rural environment as ideal. For instance:

“There is a vast difference inside and outside the valley. While the valley is much polluted, outside it is not.” (Kavita/ITP)

“If we look in terms of cleanliness, Kathmandu seems much polluted. Kathmandu indeed is more polluted than villages.” (Anita/DP)

The extent of the construction of a clean rural environment is demonstrated in an account by one of the participants from the business professionals group in which he claims better living and better health in rural areas:

“It’s a total change in lifestyle. In terms of health, both mum and dad now have improved health. Earlier, I used to feel bad coming home ... it was in such a congested area. Now, it is completely a different sort of feeling. I feel very relaxed when I reach home.” (Parmananda/BP)

In the extract above, the participant frames moving to the outskirts of the valley or to a village as one of the solutions to the growing urban environmental problems. However, a changing trend of city people moving towards rural settings here indicates an emerging threat to the rural environment. A construction of rural areas as a “mental and physical refuge from urban life” (Bunce, 1994: 141) suggests how the urban participants idealise the countryside. This idealisation i.e. demarcation of rural from urban is similar to what Bunce (1994) wrote about attachment and nostalgia for the countryside by British and North American people in *The Countryside Ideal: Anglo-American Images of Landscape*.

In summary, while the rural environment is generally perceived as clean and fresh, the urban environment is framed as chaotic, polluted and frustrating. In fact, the narrations also reveal that the rural groups change their position in constructing the rural environment from fragile (as noted in the earlier section) to serene. The examples suggest that the rural groups who claim themselves to be living in difficult conditions also see themselves as fortunate to be living in a clean rural setting. Moreover, a growing sense of threat of encroachment on villages from the urban population for industrial use as well as in search of better living occur several times during the discussions with rural groups.

9.2 State vs. Citizens: A Representation of a Conflictual Relationship

This section explores how the participants frame corruption in the government, criticise the weak legal system and bemoan unstable political situation of the country as contributory factors in damaging the environment. In addition, it will explicate another dimension of tension between rich and poor which is evident in the construction of the legal system as biased. It further explores how the participants portray a conflictual relationship between the state and citizens by revealing a growing disparity between the people in power and the ordinary citizens.

9.2.1 Corruption in the Government System

The majority of the participants from the rural groups see ‘widespread corruption’⁵⁶ in the government as the reason behind the widening gap between rich and poor. Participants perceive the conservation of the environment as a significant challenge. For instance, a participant from a rural group from Nala village describes how the one-sided effort at citizen level would not sustain conservation of the environment as follows:

“It (the environment) cannot be saved by our efforts alone. Even if we try, we will only be able to save a certain area. You know one thing, if the source (government) is polluted, you cannot expect clean water from it.”
(Bhojraj/CFUG-1)

Environmental issues are complex, and the interviewees frame the environment as lacking proper attention by the government. The narrative suggests that the effort of the citizens alone will not lead to any drastic change in the current environmental situation. A dichotomous representation of government and citizens is clearly evident in the extract above in which the government is constructed as corrupt whereas the citizens are framed as the victims. Again, a somewhat similar understanding is reflected in the following excerpts from the rural groups:

“They have not done anything for the citizens. Their efforts are limited to speech only.” (Laxman, CFUG-2)

⁵⁶ This aligns with what Devkota (2007: 294) writes: “Corruption is rampant in Nepal, and it spreads from different executive levels to primary units of political, bureaucratic and legislative bodies”.

“They (government) promise to do this and that but nothing is going to happen now. They should have done long ago. I don’t think they will ever do anything. They should either do it on their own or ask citizens to do it.”
(Harikrishna/CFUG-2)

“The environment in Nepal is deteriorating. We had tremendous hope from them but they didn’t live up to our expectation, rather they made it worse.”
(Ajita/CFUG-1)

The excerpts above suggest that the government is weak in delivering its promises and has not been sufficiently practical. Several participants from the rural groups mention that the trend for breaking promises has continued for many years, an indication that the citizens are on the verge of losing hope in the government system. A clear contrast between the government with the use of “outgroup” designator and the citizens with the “ingroup” designator further reflects the binary opposition between the two groups. Moreover, this not only indicates the citizens’ exhaustion with unfulfilled promises from the government but also reflects a challenge to the government with an offer of citizen support by saying ‘ask citizens to do it’ in the second excerpt above. Furthermore, a growing gap between powerful elites (including the media, see Chapter 10) and citizens is evident in many examples in which the people in power are constructed as cruel and the citizens as the victims:

“We poor people have to work hard whereas the exploiters (referring to government authorities) continue exploiting common people” (Gaurav, CFUG-1).

In fact, in many instances the majority of the participants describe themselves as deceived and exploited by a government perceived as undemocratic. There is thus both a dichotomy between the rich and the poor and a dichotomous representation of ordinary citizens as sufferers and government authorities and politicians as exploiters. This recurs several times during the discussions with the rural groups. For example:

“How much must the ministry have spent? While poor are dying here, the ministry spent millions of rupees in it (ministerial meeting on climate change in Kalapathhar).” (Laxman/CFUG-2)

A representation of citizens in a pitiable condition in this extract implies that the government has not managed to improve its poverty-stricken country where there is such a large disparity between the rich and the poor. Moreover, the expert groups also frame themselves as victims of corruption within the government system. A framing of a corrupt government is reflected in several instances:

“For example, I know the Kyoto protocol⁵⁷ has identified the limit on vehicle emissions. But, you see, whenever I send my bike for an emission check up, it gets failed. After failing the emission test, I repaired my bike in the workshop and sent it for a check up again. But it failed again even though it had a 2.6 emission level, whereas the upper limit was 4 in Kathmandu valley. When I questioned why my vehicle had been repeatedly failing the test, the policemen asked for Rs. 5000⁵⁸ to pass this test. This means the Kyoto protocol has been a tool for personal gain for even the policemen. Although the traffic police are the ones to monitor this, you will see many vehicles with high emission being driven in the Ring Road with a green sticker. These are the root causes I guess. Where there is a failure of governance, nothing is going to happen by just saving two crocodiles and four tigers.” (Pramesh/EE-2)

The government system is described here as corrupt and full of loopholes, and it is apparent that these officials also feel helpless. In addition, it also indicates how the experts work in the midst of binary opposites such as abstract policies vs. concrete activities. Furthermore, while the experts formulate corruption in the government as the main reason for environmental degradation, they also demand a radical change in the system. A similar construction is reflected in the following excerpt:

“We are in that state now where until and unless we remove leaders of 5-6 levels from the top ... nothing is going to happen. But, it’s not in our hands either. We are not politicians.” (Babita/EE-1)

An important point that emerges from the excerpt above is that the environmental experts are not optimistic regarding the government’s efforts to conserve the environment. By saying ‘it’s not in our hands either’, the speaker stresses that environmental organisations are themselves handicapped faced with corruption in a

⁵⁷ An agreement that is linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is known as Kyoto protocol. The protocol is considered important in terms of reducing green house gas emissions (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2012a).

⁵⁸ The conversion rate for £1 equals Rs. 140.03 - 19 September 2012.

government system and mismanagement of the system itself. Hence, the experts represent themselves as victims, and political power is not seen as a positive force for environmental protection.

9.2.2 Legal Framework and Policy

A significant majority of the participants across all the groups see weaknesses in the operation of the legal system as another major drawback in achieving environmental targets, even though there are some policies already in hand. Furthermore, the lack of effective and practical policies is also evident. For example:

“There is no policy. The main thing is that there is a lack of management. This is also the main reason for environmental pollution.” (Gaurav/ITP)

“There should be a strong policy to address environmental problems. Otherwise, the problem will ever be the same.” (Bhojraj/CFUG-1)

“We do have weaknesses. One aspect is that there is no law enforcement.” (Ramchandra/EE-2)

In these extracts, the participants across rural, city and expert groups not only claim that the policies are weak but also emphasise that the policies, even though in place, have not been properly utilised due to weaknesses in implementation. While a gap between policy formulation and policy execution is apparent in the extracts above, participants from all groups also point to a failure in policy planning. The narratives suggest that until and unless there is a radical change, there is no solution to the environmental problems. This is similar to the framing of laws and policies in Nepal as weak by the majority of the interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* (see Chapter 7). Several expert participants also claim that the legal system is corrupt and environmental laws neglected while policies are being enforced:

“We have policies but we are weak in policy enforcement. Even if they are enforced, maybe they have not been done lawfully.” (Nishant/EE-2)

“The other thing is the mentality of people who enforce law. Some people are using it as a tool for earning money.” (Ramchandra/EE-2)

“There should be rule of law but I wonder who is going to implement it? The question here is accountability, as the people who have got the right have used this as a tool for earning money.” (Pramesh/EE-2)

Several experts see the lack of accountability in the system as the major drawback, and are also critical of policy enforcement in practice, which implies that policy implementers are dishonest. However, in the expert construction of the laws and policies, civil society is very conspicuously absent (as seen in the third example above). In fact, the experts do not consider themselves as part of the policy formation process and hence hold the government policy makers as the main people responsible. The experts also claim that weaknesses in policy implementation have worsened the local problems by politicising it:

“The law should have been enforced so that the garbage problem could be solved but they (government authorities) always try to escape (from their responsibilities). Look at the dumping of garbage for example - first in Gokarna, then in Okharpauwa and now Sishdole. I just wonder how long the politics on this (garbage problem) will continue. People from Sishdole demand 40 things and it (the landfill site) closes for 8-10 days. But then we go to dump there again. We will always be in pain or there will be a problem until and unless we learn to manage waste from home.” (Adarsha/EE-1)

The extract above frames the law implementers as incompetent, and suggests they are not only running away from their responsibilities, but also politicising an environmental issue such as garbage management for their own benefit. A portrayal of tension between the government and the citizens is apparent here, and the narrative frames the conflict as a never-ending problem. A need for a practical solution to a problem is evident here as the expert focuses on providing training by environmental organisations (non-government) for the householders in managing waste at home since the government has not been able to find a solution to it.

It is also interesting to note how a significant number of participants from the rural groups frame laws and policies as biased. The participants describe how people in power misuse their position by exploiting ordinary citizens and condemn such acts of the elites. In fact, their construction of discrimination in the laws and policies in

the country reflects how these rural people feel cheated and isolated by the policy makers. Consider the following example:

Facilitator: Do you know about environmental laws? You said that you should not kill wild animals ... it also is a law, you may know this.

Laxman/CFUG-2: Of course we know.

Laxmi/CFUG-2: We know about the laws.

Binita/CFUG-2: But, laws are made only for the poor. There are no laws for rich people here.

Keshari/CFUG-2: What would we do even if we know about the laws?

Binita/CFUG-2: Yeah, for them (rich people) animal killing is nothing. They can escape the law even if they kill people! Whereas, for the poor there are laws even if someone kills an ant. [...]

Archana/CFUG-2: It is really very sad....The laws are not being kept deliberately. And the reason is obvious, they are continuing exploiting poor and becoming more affluent.

The community forest user group members of Hokse village in the example above identify problems in implementing laws in the country. By saying ‘They can escape the law even if they kill people’, the participant (Binita/CFUG-2) accuses the legal system of rampant corruption. It implies that the government in Nepal makes laws to favour the rich. A dichotomy between rich and poor is also reflected in the discussion above. While portraying this polarity, the participants frame the laws and the policies in the country as discriminatory. In fact, the example above suggests that the rural people have less hope for the solution in the near future since the gap between the rich and the poor is widening even more.

9.2.3 The Uncertain Political Situation

The ten year long armed conflict in Nepal which destroyed “physical infrastructure and social harmony” (Shakya, 2009: 3) ended in April 2006. This affected the majority of the Nepalese people, and the negative repercussions of decade long conflict were still evident in the testimony of focus group participants. The election was held on 10 April 2008 while the country was going through a post-conflict transitional period (Miklian, 2009). The focus group discussions were held in the same week, so the participants had mixed feelings of hope and uncertainty for the upcoming days in Nepal.

An analysis found that a large number of city professionals see fault in the government system and also blame the transitional socio-political situation of the country for the deterioration of the environment. For example:

“The main reason for us and our country having become poor is weaknesses in the government. The political situation has not yet settled down.” (Milan/ITP)

“Indeed, the political situation is not good at the current time ... and there is no overall broad policy in our country. There are no plans and policies with a long vision. One government criticises the other and there is no follow-up system.” (Anita/DP)

This also suggests that there is a tension within the government itself as rather than enforcing policies, the authorities blame other units in the government for the failure (as seen in the second excerpt above). The other participant from the same group adds:

“The most important is a favourable socio-political condition of the country which governs all the components of the environment. The country (Nepal) lacks this at the moment ... Hope the situation will get better soon.” (Asesh/DP)

In fact, the majority of the participants from development professional group assert political instability as the reason behind the government not being able to function well. A construction of unfavourable socio-political situation as the prime reason behind the deteriorating environmental situation in Nepal is clearly evident here.

9.3 Self Reflexivity and the Environmental Citizenship

In contrast to the earlier construction of problems caused by weak government and a flawed legal framework, this section explores how participants frame environmental issues as a by-product of the irresponsible acts of citizens. The responses of a significant majority of the participants in the focus groups reflect that the participants are not only aware of the negative consequences of environmental problems (such as garbage) but are also aware of their responsibilities as civilised citizens. In addition, all the groups perceive citizens as both selfish and passive, and therefore as the reason behind the degrading environment.

9.3.1 Waste Culture and Civic Sense

The city groups, mainly the groups of development professionals and IT professionals, frame the lack of awareness among the citizens as the major problem in controlling pollution in the city. Although lack of awareness is portrayed as a major problem, the participants have varied reasons:

“It’s a pity ... we are not yet aware that the garbage has to be collected in one place.” (Lalita/DP)

“We can see Bagmati (river) for example. We drain directly into the river. We don’t even know how polluted Bagmati has been.” (Savir/ITP)

The narratives suggest that even though they have some awareness of waste management, city people have not been able to practically implement this in their own lives. In the second excerpt above, the line ‘We drain directly into the river’ suggests that there is a lack of policy to regulate discharges into the river from the urban population. This is mentioned in further examples:

“First of all we are not aware enough. Even if we are aware, we are not using our knowledge.” (Sauravi/DP)

“Although people are educated, they (city people) are not using their knowledge of environment conservation.” (Ajita, CFUG-1)

In these excerpts, the participants from both the city and the rural groups describe urban people as lacking awareness and deficient in practical application of their knowledge. In addition, a high number of participants from the city groups see urban people as negligent and irrational:

“Sometimes I have also seen that whenever people throw waste, it drops onto someone else’s head. So, you clean *your* house - but what if *others* throw their waste away? I think there is lack of education.” (Birendra/BP)

“They (city people) are aware ... But, they find it easy to throw (waste) from the window (laughter).” (Anita/DP)

“The problem lies in civic sense and cleanliness. There is a lack of civic sense ... like throwing waste outside your house after cleaning your own area.” (Parmananda/BP)

The narratives implicitly construct urban citizens as irresponsible not only towards the environment but also towards other people. In fact, these participants from urban groups frame themselves as the victims of fellow citizens. A clear dichotomy is noticed in a construction of others as uncivilised and uneducated while portraying themselves as members of civilised citizens. This also indicates a tension among the citizens themselves since a notion of awareness vs. negligence plays a role in demarcating various groups.

9.3.2 Increasing Awareness and the Changing Attitudes

In contrast to this lack of civic sense, some of the participants from both the city and rural groups indicate that environmental awareness among the citizens is increasing. One of the participants from the development professionals group reflects how his own increased awareness helped change his behaviour as:

“Honestly I am saying, until 3-4 years back I hardly bothered and threw away chocolate wrappers in the street. Now, I feel that it should be thrown in a proper place. At least I put the wrappers in the bin or if I don’t see a bin, put it in my pocket.” (Aresh/DP)

The participant’s account of his improved behaviour indicates that a general sense that dropping litter is wrong is increasing. A sense of such increased awareness is also gained several times during the discussions with the rural groups. A representation of the rural people as well-organised in terms of waste management occurs several times during the discussions. For example, the majority of participants in the group of local farmers in Sindhupalchowk district describe improved environmental conditions in the village:

“Previously there used to be fewer trees around the houses. Now people are aware about the benefits ... People are also aware that one should not let the rubbish be scattered around the houses.” (Kabita/LF)

“Previously it was a kind of hell as villagers had no idea about litter. You could even see scattered human faeces ... Now it is much better.” (Srijana/LF)

A portrayal of a different and improved environment indicates an increased awareness in the village. Here, a growing number of trees and the cleanliness

around the houses are represented as the indicators of how the villagers have applied their awareness. Increased awareness is reported in other rural groups:

“Awareness has increased ... increased in the sense that people don’t throw garbage in front of the house.” (Archana/CFUG-2)

“We don’t throw plastics here and there...Now we know how harmful it is.” (Lila/CFUG-1)

The rural groups construct themselves as being environmentally responsible. The rural participants’ dedication towards conserving the environment repeats several times. Similar to the rural groups, a limited number of participants from the city groups also construct rural people as well-mannered citizens:

“When I went to one village, I was surprised when saw a notice board written in broken English saying ‘Plastics here please’. What a shame for the city people like us.” (Samit/BP)

This suggests that although city people are more educated than the rural people, they acknowledge and appreciate rural people’s awareness and practical application of knowledge. In fact, the rural people are constructed as advanced in environmental management despite their lack of education.

9.3.3 Environmental Problems and Civic Responsibility

Apart from corruption in the government (as discussed in 9.2.1), the majority of the participants from the city groups (mainly the development professionals) highlight people’s self-centred attitudes as further drawback in environmental conservation. For example, in the excerpts below, the participants (across city and rural groups) reflect how their local environment is deteriorating due to lack of concern towards the environment:

“The reason is that no one starts and wants to be the first one. People (urban) hardly care about how they dispose of waste.” (Sauravi/DP)

“They (urban people) are concerned about their own room, their own house, their own locality but they don’t bother to go further and realise the smell will come back.” (Anita/DP)

“People (urban) are becoming more self-centred ... that is why our environment is so bad.” (Ajita, CFUG-1)

This suggests that the people living in urban areas are less concerned about the environment. In the first and the second excerpts above, the participants from the development professionals group describe themselves as careless citizens. However, a dichotomous representation of urban and rural people is clearly evident in the third excerpt, in which the urban people are framed as careless while the rural people are environmentally friendly. A lack of citizen engagement is given as the reason behind the degrading environmental situation in all the excerpts above. Moreover, participants are also self-critical of their own ignoring of environmental problems:

“I see a terrifying picture because people like us are ignoring the situation and not applying what we know in our own lives.” (Mahesh/DP)

“We too are usually limited to theory ... we don’t apply rules for ourselves. I wonder how society is going to change while people like us also ignore the facts.” (Pramila, EE-2)

The excerpts above also suggest that the professionals involved in development activities and environment conservation have not been able to justify their own roles as agents of change. A construction of a gap between knowledge and practicality is also clearly evident here. Some focus group participants from the city groups also frame the situation as challenging:

“It is easy to wake up the people who are really sleeping but not the people who pretend to be sleeping.” (Ramesh/BP)

The above depiction of the difficulty in changing public attitudes suggests that people are running away from their roles and responsibilities as citizens. In addition, a lack of commitment towards the environment indicates that the citizens are becoming self-centred. This aligns with the construction of the publics as passive, careless and self-preoccupied by the expert interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* (see Chapter 8). Therefore, a large number of participants demand for a change in citizen behaviour and also a radical transformation in how the current system operates:

“We should do something to wake the people up ... Instead of adopting the top to bottom approach, we should follow the bottom to top approach.” (Babita/EE-1)

However, it is interesting to note an indication of a strong sense of community mobilisation emerging in all the rural groups. For example, a majority of the participants from the rural group of Sindhupalchowk district reflect how the villagers applied their experiential knowledge once they realised that their activities had been damaging the environment:

“We came to know about the nature of the soil on our own. We found that the paper and plastic we dumped years ago didn’t degrade. Then we realised that it is harmful to our soil.” (Kulchandra/LF)

This indicates that these groups of rural people are “active citizens” not a “lumpen mass” (Gregory and Miller, 2000: 97). By referring to the solid waste management problem, the participant in the excerpt above iterates how lack of awareness led to their irrational behaviour towards the environment earlier. Similarly, another participant refers to villagers’ efforts in managing their local environment:

“We request that friends plant trees and they have planted a lot in these areas. We have been working on developing a local park. The thing we wanted to do was compulsory waste management every week. We have been discussing a lot with our friends. I think if we do this and become successful, it is going to be a challenge for the city people. I think we should make them (city people) learn from us doing this locally.” (Gyaan/LF)

A representation of community mobilisation is apparent here. Gyaan/LF identifies the villagers as active citizens. Similar community mobilisation is evident among the participants of Nala village:

“There is no point in the authorities/environmentalists from Kathmandu teaching others (them) about the environment, the importance of the environment as well as cleanliness until and unless they clean their city first. They should apply their knowledge first.” (Gaurav/CFUG-1)

In fact, several participants feel that city people are not practical. In the narrative above, the participant constructs themselves (villagers) as knowledgeable in managing the environment. This reminds of what Irwin and Michael (2003: 94) say: It is possible that “within lay groups there may be identifiable experts

operating (and vice versa)". In other words, the knowledge of the lay people may not be as 'lay' as the experts assume. The narrative not only reflects how rural people challenge urban people in terms of their increasing awareness and changing attitudes towards the environment but also indicates a widening gap between the rural and the urban people. The rural participant's call for engagement of urban people in environmental management is in agreement with Giddens' (2009: 199) view of ecological citizenship which "demands radical" change among the people (in this case city people).

Summary

This chapter has explored how rural, city and expert groups differently represent the environment and environmental issues, reflecting multiple constructions of the environment. The chapter also explained how people construct themselves and others. A framing of the failing government and weak policies as the reasons behind degrading of the environment by the focus group participants is similar to the constructions of the environment as a subject entangled in political and legal battle by the interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali* (see Chapter 7). Similarly, a construction of lack of civic sense and civic responsibility aggravating the situation here recalls portrayal of the citizens as part of passive public sphere in *Batabaran Dabali* (see Chapter 8.1.2). A contrasting construction of the environment is evident here; framing the environment as everyone's problem on the one hand while constructing the issues as no-one's problem on the other. The discourse of evasion recurs across all the groups, reflecting how the government, policies or other fellow citizens are held responsible for the deteriorating environment. While some key axes of tensions (urban vs. rural, concrete vs. abstract and state vs. citizens) are noticed in all the focus groups, it is interesting to note an emerging sense of self-mobilisation among the city and expert groups with the aim of ameliorating local environmental problems. In contrast, the rural groups not only depict themselves as practical in terms of environment conservation but also challenge the city people for their lack of contribution. In fact, there is a remarkable community mobilisation among the rural groups, who are already turning their lay environmental knowledge into action. This is significant in the Nepalese context as it can present a model to be replicated in other areas.

Chapter 10

The Environment, Communication and Multiple Public Spheres

As with Chapter 9, this chapter also uses a discourse analytic approach to explore how the focus group participants construct the role of the media and environmental media coverage in the local context. The chapter examines the construction of the role of the media as both significant and declining according to the focus group participants. It also examines how these participants view environmental media coverage as not newsworthy to them by framing the coverage in various ways i.e. as technical, unappealing, having little news value and needing change. The chapter will also explore how these participants remark that environmental media coverage is increasing. In line with this, this chapter also examines how these participants consider issues of climate change as most urgent among various environmental issues. As background information, an overview of the media use and listenership of Radio Sagarmatha and the *Batabaran Dabali* programme among these participants is presented in the first section.

10.1 Focus Group Participants and their Media Use

The initial questionnaire administered to focus group participants asked them which media they use the most (see Appendix 7). The focus group participants across all the groups identify television as the most frequently accessed medium (91%) closely followed by radio (89%) for news, entertainment and other programmes. Newspapers are the third most used medium (66%) with the internet only being used in urban areas (55%). Although participants switch between different media, television is found to be the favourite media for all three (rural, city and expert) groups. However, participants in both rural and urban areas complain that they do not have an opportunity to listen to radio or watch television programmes as much they desire due to long hours of power cuts during the load shedding⁵⁹ period. In

⁵⁹ Load shedding is a temporary power cut in Nepal cutting electricity for periods regularly from a few hours to more than twenty hours a day. Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) in Nepal enforces the schedule.

fact, load shedding had an impact on the use of electronic media among all the participants.

The majority of them have to depend on programmes whenever there is a supply of electricity. However, national newspapers (such as *Kantipur*, *Annapoorna Post* and *Nepal Samacharpatra*) as well as local weeklies (such as *Sindhuyatra*, *Sindhuprabha*) are available in a remote village of Sindhupalchowk district. The Nala village in Kavrepalanchowk district has many more options for all kinds of newspapers and magazines available in nearby shops. The Hokse village in Kavrepalanchowk district is quite remote from any local shops where participants could access newspapers easily. Low literacy is one of the main reasons for avoiding print media by the focus group participants conducted in these villages. The internet is almost inaccessible to rural people although they have seen computers at some time in their life. Nevertheless, the urban participants have an added advantage compared to the rural groups since newspapers are easily available in the city as a media option. It is to be noted that nearly 50% of the total newspapers are published in Kathmandu valley (Kasajoo, 2003-2009).

10.1.1 Tuning into Radio Sagarmatha

In order to compare and contrast the listenership profile of Radio Sagarmatha and the *Batabaran Dabali* programme between the rural and urban⁶⁰ as well as lay and expert groups, a questionnaire was distributed during the focus group discussions which included a question on listenership of the station as well as the programme itself. Analysis of the questionnaire shows that less than half of the total participants (42.5%) listen to Radio Sagarmatha out of a far higher total radio listenership (89%). A wide discrepancy between rural and urban groups is noticed: 76% of the participants who listen to Radio Sagarmatha are from the urban groups. The relative popularity of Radio Sagarmatha among these urban groups suggests that its contents are more appealing to urban listeners. This finding is similar to

⁶⁰ The term 'urban' is used to indicate the participants from both the city professionals groups and expert groups from Kathmandu valley when the 'city' groups mentioned to this refers only to the groups of city professionals.

Shrestha's⁶¹ (2007) study on Radio Sagarmatha which found more urban audiences listening to Radio Sagarmatha than rural people.

10.1.2 Listening to the *Batabaran Dabali* Programme

In the focus group discussions, it is striking to note that only 2.5% of the total participants from all three groups (rural, city and expert) are regular listeners of *Batabaran Dabali* with 20% of the participants saying they listen to the programme sometimes. The fact that the vast majority of focus group participants (77.5%) do not listen to *Batabaran Dabali* suggests that the programme has failed to connect with audiences despite being run for more than a decade. It is also worth noting that *Batabaran Dabali* is found to be much more familiar among the urban groups: 77% of those who have heard of the programme are from urban groups.

In the same way, an analysis of lay persons and experts who have heard of the programme clearly reflect that the programme has not been popular among the lay groups. Only 24% of the lay participants have heard of it. However, among the experts, a majority of the participants (65%) are found to have heard of the programme. Thus, the programme reinforces the divide between urban elites and poor rural people as well as between the people having expertise and those with lay knowledge of the environment. In fact, the programme is “self-referential” (Luhmann, 2000) rather than a voice for ordinary citizens.

In summary, the analysis of the questionnaires distributed during the focus group discussions shows that television, followed by radio, is the most used media. While the urban groups have more choice over different forms of media, rural groups have less option in terms of media accessibility. Newspapers are less preferred than electronic media by rural participants as low literacy hinder them from reading newspapers. Although radio is almost equally preferred and used as television, it is interesting to note that fewer than half the participants listen to Radio Sagarmatha. Among the listeners of this station, the majority are from the urban groups. However, the vast majority of the participants (both rural and urban) do not listen to

⁶¹ No relation to the author of this PhD thesis.

Batabaran Dabali at all, suggesting that the programme is failing in terms of capturing audience attention.

10.2 Local Construction of the Role of the Media

This section illustrates how the focus group participants frame the role of the media in the Nepalese context as significant and also declining.

10.2.1 Media as Opinion-former?

The following section illustrates how the participants across all the groups construct the media as a whole as having an important role in communicating information about the environment. Moreover, it analyses how the participants across different groups, while constructing Radio Sagarmatha as being credible in the Nepalese media landscape, frame *Batabaran Dabali* as failing. It also outlines how these participants, most of them who do not listen to environment programmes, describe the media as being one of the many important sources of information in constructing a view of the environment. In other words, the media, while playing an important role among these participants, are not the primary source of knowledge of the environment.

10.2.1.1 The media as activist

The idea that environmental communication is a significant role for the media is highlighted by the majority of the participants from the lay (rural and city) groups. For example, in the excerpt below, several participants from the development professionals group credit the media for practising investigative journalism:

“Sometimes the media has a strong role. For example, Kantipur TV continuously followed up the case of illegal logging in Nawalparasi” (Mahesh/DP).

The depiction of the media’s dedication in environmental reporting suggests that the media have highlighted environmental coverage. A similar construction is evident in the discussions with the expert groups. A significant number of the experts credit the media for their important role in environmental communication:

“Some radio stations cover issues like a mission. They do continuous follow-ups ... Let’s take the example of Okharpauwa. There was a regular follow-up on this issue (garbage problem). Media should be like this.” (Ramchandra/EE-2)

The narrative acknowledges the endeavours of the media and implicitly calls for other media to learn from such dedication in reporting environmental issues. A similar perception of how the media have played an important role is apparent on several occasions. For example:

“We have talked a lot about the negative side of the media but the media indeed have a positive role too. A few days ago I met some community people in remote areas. It was interesting to note how they talk about biodiversity conservation. Where the projects have not reached, of course it is the media which have provided the knowledge.” (Biraj/EE-2)

The expert highlights the strength of the media in reaching inaccessible rural places in Nepal. In fact, “[f]or most people, particularly those living in the rural areas, the media are often the principal source of information beyond their communities and outside their own informal communication networks” (Deane, 2005: 183). In line with this, some of the experts also point out that a few dedicated journalists make a real effort in communicating environmental issues:

“I appreciate selected journalists like Abdullah Miyan. They write even though we don’t provide them any news feed. They do come regularly and collect information. I think we should appreciate it.” (Neema/EE-1)

Apart from the experts’ views of the utility of the media, the idea that the media cover useful information is recognised by a majority of participants in the rural groups:

“Radio is a good source of information for us. Radio Nepal has many useful programmes. If we listen to those programmes properly, indeed, we do not have to go anywhere to learn things.” (Srijana/LF)

“In terms of the sources, radio and TV are the important ones. Otherwise, we are not exposed to the external world so much. We mainly know things about the outer world from radio and TV.” (Nirmala/CFUG-2)

The excerpts above depict the media as being an important source of the information and a representation of the media as a knowledge provider is evident

here. In fact, these rural participants emphasise the media as one of the main sources of information.

10.2.1.2 The special status of 'Batabaran Dabali'

In order to understand how the focus group participants view Radio Sagarmatha and *Batabaran Dabali*, a discussion took place about listening patterns. The discussions reveal that the majority of the participants see Radio Sagarmatha as a popular and issue-oriented station. Although the station is credited for paying attention to pressing environmental issues, variable framings of *Batabaran Dabali* are evident. The extracts below illustrate how a significant number of the participants (who actually listen to Radio Sagarmatha) across all the groups evaluate it as a quality station and credit the station for its contribution to coverage of environmental issues:

“While other FM’s mostly play music and their questions are limited to ‘Have you had your lunch?’ or ‘What music would you like to listen to?’ Radio Sagarmatha raises some serious issues ... It covers the environment very well.”
(Parmananda/BP)

“I am a regular listener (Radio Sagarmatha). I personally like this station very much. I am always listening. Radio Sagarmatha airs a very interesting environment programme ... That programme (*Batabaran Dabali*) is in fact very effective.” (Bhojraj/CFUG-1)

As the audience of Radio Sagarmatha, the participants in the excerpts above not only praise the quality of the programmes on this station but also indicate that Radio Sagarmatha is distinct from other FM stations (as reflected in the first excerpt above). Here, Radio Sagarmatha is credited for setting an example in the Nepalese media landscape in terms of environmental coverage, and *Batabaran Dabali* is represented as a quality programme. However, less than 3% of the participants are regular listeners of *Batabaran Dabali*, which raises a question regarding the popularity of the programme. In contrast, there are also a large number of the participants from the city professionals group who are not only unsure of the programme but also cast doubt on the listenership of *Batabaran Dabali*. Consider the following example extracted from the discussions with the group of IT professionals:

Facilitator: Do you listen to the *Batabaran Dabali* programme on Radio Sagarmatha?

Mahesh/ITP: Have heard of this programme but I never listened to it.

Kavita/ITP: Yeah, exactly...only heard of it.

Manav/ITP: Only if the radio is on, then by chance we listen to the programme.

Facilitator: That means you don't remember listening to any *Batabaran Dabali* programmes?

Kavita/ITP: No, we don't remember.

Mahesh/ITP: Not really (...).

Jeevan/ITP: I don't think there would be anyone who would listen to this programme regularly.

The example above suggests that *Batabaran Dabali* has failed to secure audience attention, particularly among urban participants. In addition, a few of the participants describe the lack of quality content as the main reason for *Batabaran Dabali* being less popular. For example:

"But, I really feel that the content is still not up to standard. Everyone on it (*Batabaran Dabali*) is an expert (everyone laughs). Seems they look for experts where they can. Maybe they could not get access to the experts they want to interview. But, in my view I don't think journalists have any difficulty in accessing people in Nepal. Everybody wants to be in the media here."
(Ramchandra/EE-2)

The narrative suggests that *Batabaran Dabali* does not put much effort in selecting interviewees as the programme only includes interviews with people within their close circle. Here, the expert is critical of the programme for not doing sufficient research to find the right interviewees. He also questions whether the interviewees are really 'experts' at all. It could be the reason that *Batabaran Dabali* is not popular among the participants despite being aired for more than a decade.

10.2.1.3 Media as one of many sources

A significant number of the rural participants outline their own experiential knowledge as playing a major role in their understanding of the environment. For instance:

“We learn from the media as well but experiential learning is equally important for us.” (Kulchandra/LF)

“Many of us who have been to school too have studied no higher than class 10. We don’t have lots of exposure to the outside world. Though we get information from the media, the knowledge we have is from our own experience, the things we see around us.” (Gaurav/CFUG-1)

Here, the rural participants frame the media’s perspective on environment as distinct from their everyday experience. While the environment covered in the media is constructed as useful, a representation of their personal experience as playing a vital role in their constructions of the environment is evident in these extracts. A similar construction is apparent among a few participants from the city groups who consider the media as having a secondary role to their own experience. For example:

“I think in our case, the things that we see in our society are principally important because the knowledge we gain from what we see and experience will always be more than from studies or the media.” (Milan/ITP)

While the media are a primary source of information about the environment for them, they are not the only option. A large number of participants from the city and rural groups construct educational institutions as being an important source of environmental information:

“We come to know about the environment from school, college...these too are larger sources of information.” (Birendra/BP)

“Some of the information (on environment) we get is from educational institutions.” (Kavita/ITP)

“Also from the schools...we get information on using organic medicines for clean environment and knowledge about agricultural production from there (schools).” (Kamala/CFUG-1)

Moreover, several participants from the rural groups emphasise the role of the local organisations. Consider the following example:

“More than the media, I must say that the relevant organisations like the district development committee as well as agricultural networking organisations such as FECOFUN are useful.” (Bhojraj/CFUG-1)

The focus group discussions with the rural and the city groups thus suggest that the media are not the primary source of information about the environment for these participants although they believe that the media can play a significant role in sharing information about the environment. The analysis suggests that the participants’ construction of the environment is multiple with their own experiential learning and knowledge gained from the media as well as other diverse sources playing a role. This is a challenge to policy makers and experts, who persist with linear communication model.

10.2.2 The Media Quality in Decline

The analysis found that the quality of the media is generally held to have deteriorated. Complaints are made that it is business-oriented, biased and politicised, lacking impact and is corrupt.

10.2.2.1 Media as business oriented

A high number of the participants from the city groups consider the media to be largely commercial in nature. For example:

“The media do not pay much attention to quality contents and are turning more commercial ones.” (Savir/ITP)

“It (newspaper) is just full of ads from the very first page. You have to search for news among the advertisements.” (Asesh/DP)

“The media only exist to make money.” (Parmananda/BP)

Here, in these typical examples, the participants from IT, development and business professionals groups frame the media as consumer-oriented. A similar concern is apparent from a significant number of participants from the rural groups who see the media as a money-making tool:

“Mainly, they (media) are advertisement-oriented now.” (Bhojraj/CFUG-1)

“Full of ads ... there are fewer concerns of the rural people.” (Sunmaya/LF)

The narratives suggest that an increasing trend of commodification of the media is mainly “aimed at attracting advertisers” (Deane, 2005: 183). This echoes Habermas’ (1989) discussion of the changing role of the media from a vehicle of creating a public sphere towards the promotion of media interest at a real challenge to the publics. In fact, as Habermas (1989: 171) argues, the role of the media is constructed as degenerating since the media’s orientation is more commercial in nature. Habermas (1989) terms such domination of private interest in the public sphere as “refeudalization”. Moreover, a portrayal of the media as lacking contents relevant to rural people in the second excerpt suggests that the consumer-oriented nature of the media do not prioritise the “issues of concern to those in rural areas, the poor and other minorities” (Deane, 2005: 183). Although most of the Nepalese villages in rural areas have been “un-served or underserved by the mainstream media” (Banjade, 2006: 5), these rural participants in the focus group discussions have fairly good access to the media (for being close to Kathmandu valley). However, the participants consider themselves as neglected by the media and as such the media, one of the main sources of the information to these remote villages, have not been a part of their concerns.

10.2.2.2 Media bias and politicisation

Several participants across rural and city professional groups also construct the media as biased. Consider the following example:

“They (media) never cover our (rural) environment. They have their own programme format.” (Kamala/CFUG-1)

In fact, the majority of the rural participants are critical of the topics covered in the media which they do not see as their concern. In the excerpt above, by saying “they never cover *our* environment”, the participant presents a dichotomous view in which the environment is divided into the environment of educated people and the environment of less literate rural people. A construction of the media as biased is reflected in the discussions with the development professionals’ group as well. For example:

“The other thing ... when we talk about our media, they seem biased or influenced or political in some ways. The culture has not been developed where

the media independently report and analyse ... nothing is going to happen until this system changes.” (Anita/DP)

A significant number of the participants thus criticise how the media are dependent on other forces such as political power, as seen in the excerpt above. However, the construction of media bias differs here as compared to the rural groups since the focus of the discussions among the city professional groups remains in terms of political bias. Here, by saying “culture has not been developed”, the speaker gives emphasis to how the media has always been influenced by political power and as such demands a change in the media system. In addition, a significant majority of the participants criticise the media for being politicised. Consider the following examples:

“The media are not effective. They are politicised.” (Kavita/ITP)

“The media are party⁶² oriented in Nepal. Different media give different coverage. Their contents contradict each other.” (Milan/ITP)

While the excerpts above suggest politicisation of the media, they also suggest that the intensification of the partisan media has been a “big hindrance to the growth of the media credibility” in Nepal (Kharel, 2002: 6). The participants frame the media as lacking trustworthiness since “the very philosophy of public interest and common good” is being eroded in the media (Dahal, 2002a: 39). In addition, the second excerpt above suggests that the Nepalese media are divided into divergent political groups and as such different political parties manipulate the media for their own interests.

10.2.2.3 Media as lacking impact

The content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* (Chapter 6) showed that the programme is elite-centred, with interviews mainly focused on discussions with experts. The focus group participants also agree that the media are elitist in nature. The majority of the rural participants feel they are being cheated and thus are critical of how the media operate. For example:

“Yeah, you are the first one to talk to us about how we feel about the media we have been listening/watching. No one ever comes to us and talks like this. We

⁶² Political party of their choice.

feel very happy if someone comes and asks us about our life here.”
(Archana/CFUG-2)

“Being close to the city, there is ample flow of information but it is not practical. The media only give suggestions but none of the programmes are being implemented in the field. No one from the media has ever turned up to interview us until now ... they should interact with us too.” (Bhojraj/CFUG-1)

In fact, the Nepalese media are often criticised for being limited to urban areas especially Kathmandu (Dahal, 2002a). The narratives above reflect a similar understanding and suggest that the media in Nepal have not been inclusive enough but have been focused on preparing contents from easily available sources. These narratives also indicate that the media have not been successful in contributing to a vibrant public sphere in which the democratic participation of the publics takes place; the media are seen as an elite public communication system. In this regard, the participants in the excerpts above demand the media to be participatory in which “interaction among the senders, receivers and among the receivers through several networks” takes place (Narula, 2008: 66). These discussions also show that the expert constructions of the role of the media have similarities with the rural constructions of the media’s role since the experts also frame the media as lacking practical action in the field. A significant number of the experts not only frame the media as being insufficiently informed in its coverage, but also as superficial. Consider the following example:

“The media are not pro-active. They are more dependent on institutions (environmental organisations). They cover whatever we give to them. Whenever there is any special day such as World Environment Day or Earth Day, they (journalists) suddenly come and request us to provide them with news. They don’t do any homework.” (Saurya/EE-1)

This suggests that the journalistic role is “often one of *reacting* to news, rather than going out searching/scouting news” (Hansen, 2010: 84). The narrative above also suggests that the media are heavily reliant on information from environmental organisations. Further, it indicates the passive nature of media professionals who look for easily tailored information. While the role of sources cannot be underrated in shaping news and media coverage (Bell, 1991), the experts here suggest that environmental organisations are heavily accessed sources of the media.

10.2.2.4 Media and corruption

A representation of the media as a corrupt institution is evident on some occasions during the discussions with the urban groups. Several of the experts are of the view that corruption in the media is one of the reasons for it not being able to play a significant role in environmental communication in Nepal:

“There have been several such occasions. A media professional approached us. Let’s not take the name but you know what? They talked straightway about money matters. He demanded money for the coverage.” (Biraj/EE-2)

A construction of the degenerating role of the media is evident in the excerpt above. It shows how environmental coverage relies on journalists’ personal interests rather than the importance of the issue. This also suggests that maintaining a relationship between the journalists and the environmental organisations is a tough job. A similar construction of the media as a corrupt institution is apparent in the discussions with the city groups as well:

“If you can bribe the media, your news is there (in the media). If someone can pay them well, their coverage will be in the media” (Siddhi/ITP).

Here, the speaker is critical of widespread corruption in the media. He also stresses the fact that anyone who has the financial power can set the agenda in the media. It is evident that public opinion can be rendered invisible by narrow media interest.

In summary, various constructions of the media’s role are apparent in the focus group discussions. The majority of the participants emphasise the important role of the media in communicating information about the environment. On the other hand, a large number of the participants also construct the media as becoming increasingly profit-oriented. Similarly, a construction of the media as lacking impact is also prevalent among the high number of the rural participants and a view of environmental coverage as biased and politicised is present among some of the focus group participants. Several also frame the media as corrupt. Overall, the role of the media is constructed as declining by a large number of the focus group participants. Analysis of the responses to Radio Sagarmatha and the *Batabaran Dabali* programme by the focus group participants suggests that although the station is seen as a platform for raising environmental issues, *Batabaran Dabali* is

portrayed as having little audience interest. While the participants see the media as one of many sources of information, it is considered secondary to their day to day experience.

10.3 The Framing of Environmental Media Coverage

This section outlines how environmental coverage in the media is constructed in various ways. It will illustrate how the majority of the participants generally perceive environmental topics as technical. In addition, it will outline how several participants frame environmental coverage as increasing in volume and as such gaining more importance in the media. In contrast, it will also report how high numbers of participants construct environmental coverage in the media as unappealing and not newsworthy. It will also illustrate how these participants suggest repackaging the environmental coverage as a solution to greater audience attention.

10.3.1 The Environment as a Technical Subject

The issue of the environment as a difficult subject is repeated a number of times during the discussions with the rural groups. While the majority of participants do not use the term ‘technical’ in describing environmental stories, a representation of environmental topics as technical is apparent in their discourse. Consider the following examples from the rural groups of Pangretar and Hokse villages:

“It (the environmental story) is not easy to understand. They are not like agricultural programmes in Radio Nepal.” (Lila/LF)

“They (the media) talk about all the big things. Some we understand but we don’t understand many terms. We are not educated, so how can we understand what big people say.” (Archana/CFUG-2)

During the construction of the media coverage of the environment as a difficult topic, the majority of the rural participants separate the media and the experts in the media with the “outgroup” designator. While referring to the people in the media as “big people”, a clear contrast between the poor and less literate rural people and the rich and educated city people is apparent. A framing of the discussions in the media as the “big things” suggests that the participants exclude themselves from the expert

talks in the media. In fact, a clear dichotomy between rich and poor as well as educated and uneducated people is evident in their construction of the environmental media coverage. A similar view of media coverage on the environment as the coverage of the “big people” is evident among the discussions with the participants from the Nala village. For example:

“Lots of things are happening to the environment. The scientists are working to make it better. We know such things but we don’t know how all this actually happens. I’ve no idea how the earth’s temperature can be reduced or how to solve the problem of climate change. The media never say in detail. They only cover what big politicians are doing, like the meeting of Kalapathhar.” (Bhojraj/CFUG-1)

A high number of participants view the media as elite-centred and the environment programmes as science-based - the discourse of elite people. They also consider that the media are not mediators between the experts and ordinary citizens (who lack scientific knowledge). Rather, the media are seen as biased towards high-level officials. Similar to the rural construction of the environmental media coverage as technical, a significant number of the participants from the expert groups acknowledge that the “environment” is a difficult topic for the ordinary people. It is interesting to note that a number of the experts in the focus group discussions highlight how environmental coverage ends up complicated despite their efforts to simplify the coverage. For instance, consider the following narratives:

“It is too technical. We only know now. We used to think that we have simplified (the message). We try to simplify as far as possible and try to put it in lay person terms but still it goes technical.” (Ramchandra/EE-2)

“Environment is a highly technical subject. Without simplifying the message, it won’t be easy for the readers.” (Sameer/EE-2)

The experts not only construct the environment as a difficult subject but also as synonymous with environmental science. While the experts frame the media as lacking a mechanism to present environmental stories in a simplified way, they are also critical of how the media operate. They mainly criticise the media for mediating at the interface between technical and ordinary persons. In this regard, the experts raise a question about journalists’ ability to simplify technical subjects.

While the journalists play a “key role” in “simplifying complex ideas” of the experts “for the *lay* public[s]” (Anderson, 1997: 57), it is also interesting to note how these experts frame the environmental journalists as lacking environmental knowledge:

“The main thing is that the journalists have limited knowledge. They try to write technical things based on that limited knowledge. They are heavily dependent on what we provide.” (Biraj/EE-2)

“Exactly, I agree ... Without clearly understanding a technical subject, how does somebody (a journalist) writes about it?” (Sameer/EE-2)

Several of the experts who portray journalists as deficient in specialised knowledge on the environment, see this as a hindrance in communicating about the environment in Nepal. This is in contrast to journalists’ construction of their role as experts in *Batabaran Dabali*. While representing the environment as a technical subject, a knowledge gap between the journalists and the experts is clearly evident here.

10.3.2 Environmental Coverage

Several experts are of the opinion that there has been a significant improvement in media coverage of environmental issues. For instance, consider the following excerpts:

“Media coverage has increased from the past whether with the support from the projects, government initiation or the private sector. It’s not like in the past...the media are bringing environmental issues into their programmes nowadays.” (Pramesh/EE-2)

“Environmental journalism is flourishing. The media are increasing. Media coverage is increasing too. You see, there is a separate environment desk in the media these days.” (Ramchandra/EE-2)

In the first narrative above, the expert constructs increasing media coverage as a result of the efforts of different sectors in society. A framing of the media as becoming more institutional is apparent in the second excerpt. In addition, several of the experts credit the extended media world as well as new platforms and technologies in the media for increased coverage on the environment. For example:

“There is a vast increase in environmental media coverage. Use of internet among the educated circle is increasing. There is ample information on the net about the environment.” (Adarsa/EE-1)

The narrative suggests that technological intervention has facilitated more coverage on the environment and as such the internet has enabled the mass media to turn into the media of specific categories (Castells and Borja, 1997) i.e. the “educated circle” in the example above, indicating that inequality between the rural and urban spheres is increasing.

The urban population have access to more than 50% of the total media and also have access to massive international internet coverage, thus extending the gap between the rural and urban publics. In fact, all the narratives presented in this section suggest that the situation is changing and unlike in the past, environmental topics do not struggle much in getting ample coverage. It suggests the environment is a newsworthy topic to the media, which contradicts the construction of the environment as not newsworthy by the focus group participants (see Chapter 10.3.4).

10.3.3 Environment Programmes as Unappealing

The majority of lay participants in the focus group discussions claim that environmental stories are not appealing to them compared to the coverage of other topics in the media. These participants are of the opinion that environment programmes, especially those aired by the radio, do not compel audience attention. This notion emerges strongly in the IT professionals group when asked whether they listen to radio in general and environmental programmes in particular. For example:

Manav/ITP: I think mainly the shopkeepers listen to the radio so that they don't fall asleep. (laughs)

Kavita/ITP: Nowadays even the shops have television.

Savir/ITP: But, I am sure they would definitely not listen to the environment programme. (Everyone laughs)

Kavita/ITP: Maybe people will listen to environment programmes if they feel lazy in changing stations/channels.

Manav/ITP: I think people will listen if the radio is on but don't think they would turn on the radio to listen to the environment programme.

It is interesting to note how these participants generalise that not only themselves but other people too do not find environment programmes appealing. Van Dijk (1998: 26) terms such "general group ideologies" and "specific group attitudes" which are often "expressed directly in discourse" as "models". He points out,

"Although such models as a whole are unique, personal and context-bound, large parts of them are of course social in the sense that the knowledge and opinions they embody are merely personal 'instantiations' of sociocultural knowledge and group opinions." (van Dijk, 1998: 27)

Moreover, a significant numbers of the participants from the IT professionals group construct urban people as being saturated with the daily news, indicating that the excessive growth of the media has created a challenge in the public sphere. Consider the following example:

Facilitator: Do you notice environmental news? For example, a rhino died in Chitwan?

Milan/ITP: Interested earlier but not now.

Siddhi/ITP: Now we feel it is the same old thing.

Milan/ITP: It (poaching of a rhino) is just like news of people dying. Earlier we used to be concerned by that kind of news but now news is not like news. We are not unaware. These all seem quite normal.

The narrative suggests that the extensive coverage of various topics has contributed to lessening interest towards the environmental news coverage in the media. Indeed, "in an information-rich global communication system, attention is limited and selection pressures unavoidable" (Grant, 2007: 167). This point is in accordance with Luhmann's (2000) notion of loss of "information value" in the communication system which is generated as a result of the explosion of the information in the media. A significant number of participants from the development professionals group also note the decreasing popularity of environmental programmes among the urban mass. Consider the following extract, for example:

“Yeah, it (NEFEJ) sometimes gives interesting ones but people do not watch that (Aankhijhyal). If it comes on, they turn off the television ... channel change actually (laughs).” (Asesh/DP)

The participants claim that environmental media programmes cannot secure audience attention. This implicitly suggests that other programmes in the media could be a challenge to environmental programmes. In addition, it suggests that active institutions such as NEFEJ are failing in terms of creating a long lasting impact as the programme is losing its viewers. A construction of participants having less interest in environmental topics covered in the media recurs several times during the discussions with the city and the rural groups.

“Environmental topics are not appealing.” (Mahesh/DP)

“We don’t pay much attention to environmental stories. Actually, these are not attractive.” (Samjhana/BP)

“I have not much interest in environmental media coverage now.” (Kavita/ITP)

“Yeah, we love that (TV serial). Umm ... environment programme, not really.” (Kamala/CFUG-1)

“We don’t find it (environmental coverage) interesting. Environmental stories do not hold attention.” (Lila/LF)

The construction of environmental topics as unattractive, uninteresting and unappealing all leads to the conclusion that environmental topics are not newsworthy to focus group participants although the environmental topics satisfy many news values as seen in the analysis of *Batabaran Dabali*. In other words, some of the news values which were given less importance in *Batabaran Dabali*, such as “personification”, “emotion” and those which were not applied, such as “visualness” are seen to be important for the environmental stories to be newsworthy to these participants.

10.3.4 Environmental Topics and Low Newsworthiness

The previous section explored how participants constructed environmental topics as not newsworthy to them. This section explores how these participants frame environmental topics as being less newsworthy to the media.

The majority of the participants (both lay and experts) are of the opinion that the media give less priority to environmental topics and as a result environmental coverage always suffers among competing social issues. For instance, consider the following two examples in which participants from the city groups describe the environment as not newsworthy to the media:

“I don’t think there is much coverage on the environment. They don’t give priority to environmental issues.” (Archana/BP)

“Political news always gets space on the front page. They (media) do not cover the environment in such a way.” (Anita/DP)

The narratives above suggest that environmental stories battle to be seen as newsworthy to the media. Similarly, a large majority of the experts are aware that environmental issues struggle to obtain media coverage:

“Environmental topics are not prioritised in the media.” (Sagar/EE-1)

“Until today environment is not a priority subject to the media.”
(Pramesh/EE-2)

“It is difficult to mainstream environmental agendas.” (Neesha/EE-1)

This aligns with Anderson (1997), Chapman et al (1997), Cox (2006) who viewed environmental stories as having difficulty in gaining prominence in the media (see Chapter 4.1.2). In addition, a framing of various other topics as having extensive news values in the media is evident on several occasions. For example:

“The media also have limitations. They have to sustain themselves. The main newsworthy topics for them are politics, human rights, and then crime.”
(Babita/EE-1)

The expert in the narrative above frames the media as devoted to practising journalistic rituals of selection and de-selection mechanisms according to preset criteria (Luhmann, 2000). A similar construction is apparent in the example below:

“Newsworthiness is the first thing but you don’t know the ways news is presented. You don’t understand how busy they are. They don’t have time to call and verify what you sent them. That is a part of the media operation and everyone has to understand that.” (Sameer/EE-2)

In this excerpt, the expert (an environment communicator who had previously worked in the media) reflects on his own experience and asserts that while news values are regarded as important during initial screening of the issues, the editorial desk retains influence in deciding which news to publish. In addition, a small number of the experts reflect on how environmental stories struggle to find space in the media:

“Even in those sorts of high level media there is no commitment and there is no interest at all about covering those (environmental) issues and giving priority to it ... Environmental issues are so sidelined. Just one small column somewhere, isn’t it?” (Sarina/EE-1)

An indication of a “shrinking news hole” (Friedman, 2004: 176 cited in Cox, 2006: 164) is apparent in the excerpt above. Previous literature (Anderson, 1997; Cox, 2006) suggests that environmental stories are less appealing to the media and always struggle for coverage. In fact, it is often not the newsworthiness of the topics but personal relationships which have most impact on coverage: “Yeah both issue-wise and through personal relations. But, 90% works on the basis of personal relations” (Sameer/EE-2). Several experts thus claim that the coverage mainly depends upon their regular interactions with journalists.

10.3.5 Media and Repackaging

The previous sections discussed how large numbers of participants constructed environmental stories as technical, not appealing and not newsworthy. This section shows how significant numbers of participants consider that the media needs changes in how stories are packaged. For example:

“Style of the media reporting on environment needs to be changed. They should target popular programmes (such as TV serials, songs).” (Mahesh/DP)

The participant suggests the integration of environmental issues into popular programmes in the media as the solution. A high number of the city professionals believe that such a combination would attract the listeners/audiences easily and as such delivering environmental messages would be much easier. Several participants in the rural groups also reflect the view that the media need to repackage their contents so as to secure viewers’ attention. For example:

“The media can be interesting if the programmes are in the form of songs or dramas.” (Sunmaya/LF)

“Yeah, we love songs, dramas...something related to us and our community.”
(Archana/CFUG-2)

As seen in the excerpts above, participants from rural groups suggest how technical information can be simplified. In fact, they emphasise the need to integrate environmental stories with popular entertainment programmes in the media. The narratives also indicate that by doing so the media could include their interest as well as community feelings in such genre which could turn their attention towards environmental programmes.

In summary, the analysis suggests that not only the rural participants frame the environment as a difficult subject, the experts too construct the environment as a highly technical subject. Moreover, a construction of the environment as an unappealing subject is prevalent among the city and rural groups. In addition, the majority of participants in the focus group discussions indicate that environmental topics have not gained much importance in the media and thus coverage is less than that given to other social issues. In this regard, a representation of environmental topics as not newsworthy is evident on several occasions. However, the fact that the subject of the environment has recently gained in coverage contradicts the views of some of the expert participants who claim the topic as having little news value. In addition, the rural groups highlight the increasing need of repackaging the media contents so as to grab audience (especially rural people) attention.

10.4 Media Coverage of Climate Change

A significant majority of participants from all three (rural, city and expert) groups consider that the media not only give extensive coverage to climate change issues but also discuss how the media play a significant role in constructing climate change as the most urgent environmental problem. “Climate change is arguably the most important issue of our time” (Kenix, 2008: 117) and as such, issues related to climate change are covered in the media as “big news, bigger news than ever before” (Doulton and Brown, 2009: 191). As noted in Chapter 6, the content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* programme also shows that the programme has

extensive coverage of climate change. Similarly, in the focus group discussions, several participants from the rural groups single out climate change as the most serious issue of all and show their concern for Nepal being the victim of a global environmental problem. A reference to the media is apparent in their framing of climate change concern. For example:

“We heard a lot from the media that there is no snow in the Himalayas due to the rise in temperature. This could bring a big challenge to Nepal. We have also heard that talks are going on that Nepal will face serious effects.”
(Gaurav/CFUG-1)

A participant from Pangretar village, Sindhupalchowk similarly recollects:

“I have heard (from the media) that the temperature of the earth is increasing due to climate change. I have also heard that the height of Mt. Everest has decreased ... something like from 8848m to 8846m. This is distressing.”
(Gyaan/LF)

However, several rural participants criticise the way climate change issues are covered in the media. Below, the same participant (as above) provides insight into the vague media coverage of climate change:

“After the conference (Copenhagen conference in 2009), there was no clear message on any action plan for balancing nature and the role of Nepal on climate change. None of the media were seen to be focusing on it. Even the television and radio never had messages on what we should be doing to mitigate climate change.” (Gyaan/LF)

Another participant shares a similar understanding:

“Yeah, we agree. No such messages from the media. We don’t know how to curb the problems brought by climate change.” (Lila/LF)

The excerpt above exemplifies how rural participants often see the media being unable to give a clear message on tackling the impacts of climate change. In fact, the participants are mainly critical of media inclination towards making the story newsworthy by focusing on elite people and elite nations rather than focusing on useful information for the ordinary people. A similar notion is apparent in the

evaluation of climate change coverage by a significant number of the participants in the city professionals groups.

“The high level officials take part in activities such as the climate change meeting in Kalapatthar just to create media hype. Isn’t it a shame? Except from increasing awareness about the meeting nothing else has been done at the local level. The meeting even got wide attention from international media but whether that has been effective at the local level is a big question.”
(Permananda/BP)

In the excerpt above, the participant from the business professional group highlights how climate change issues are extensively covered in the media. He portrays how policy people use the media as an agenda-setting tool. This clearly shows how the city participants are critical of using the media just to sensationalise the issue rather than to create any tangible solutions at the local level. This view of how the media exaggerate the issue of climate change is repeated across all the city groups. For instance:

“Indeed, there was a huge coverage on climate change in last December.”
(Siddhi/ITP)

“Too much of publicity on climate change ... my organisation too works for climate change issues but I am still critical.” (Anita/DP)

On the other hand, several participants from the expert group indicate how the issue of climate change has contributed to more extensive media coverage on the environment:

“They (media) do cover (on environmental topics), like the coverage of climate change in Copenhagen. It was such a hot topic then.” (Sarina/EE-1)

“In my experience, if you see the trend in the media in the past 5-6 years, coverage on the environment has increased. It may be partly due to climate change issues.” (Adarsha/EE-1)

In each of these extracts, climate change is represented as the most newsworthy environmental issue in the media. However, the same experts are critical of the media’s un-informed reporting of climate change. For instance:

“I just read the news which emphasised that the shortage of food supply in Karnali is due to climate change ... the coverage was not even content-specific. There is a high impact of climate change in the area. However, there is no relation between food supply and climate change ... Sometimes journalists over sensationalise the issue.” (Adarsha/EE-1)

Here, the expert frames the media as lacking investigative journalism as well as deficient in knowledge about climate change. Moreover, the media are also criticised for contriving climate change issues.

Summary

This chapter started with the analysis of the participants’ use of the media in general and listenership of Radio Sagarmatha and the *Batabaran Dabali* programme on this station in particular. In the focus group discussions, the role of the media is constructed as important by large numbers of participants. In contrast, the media’s role is also represented as degenerating; it is seen as business-oriented, corrupt, impractical, biased and politicised. Competing constructions of the media content and the media’s role recur amongst participants of all three groups. In fact, a dichotomous portrayal of the media and the media’s role is apparent; participants frame the media’s role as deteriorating yet also indicate that it could function as an agent of change. The majority of the participants see environmental topics as technical and abstract; they link the environment with environmental science. On the other hand, they also frame environmental topics as unappealing with inadequate news value to attract media attention. In this regard, a need for change in covering environmental stories in the media is evident in these discussions.

In addition to these findings, the analysis shows how some participants construct media coverage of the environment as increasing. Participants across all the groups identify increased media coverage of the environment as a result of climate change, a hot topic amongst environmental issues. In other words, environmental communication on many pressing issues is dominated by extensive coverage of climate change in the media. However, coverage of climate change is highly criticised for not being sufficiently practical, indicating that the issue, although excessively covered in the media, lacks connection with the people.

Chapter 11

Conclusions

This chapter draws on the insights gained from the conceptual frameworks drawn from literature review chapters and the five analysis chapters while exploring the connection between the media constructions of the environment and locally contextualised representations of the environment in mass-mediated contexts. This chapter also indicates the contribution this thesis makes to the existing literature and concludes with some recommendations especially for policy makers, environmental journalists and environmental organisations in Nepal which could enhance environmental communication through the media.

In order to understand the construction of the environment in the media, the data collected from Radio Sagarmatha (the *Batabaran Dabali* programme aired from May 2009 - April 2010) was analysed using content and discourse analysis methods. This explored the prominent agendas in the media, drawing attention to media sources and source contexts. In addition to illustrating how the media represent environmental stories, using discourse analysis the research investigated how these environmental stories are mediated. The focus group discussions with 80 participants from rural and urban areas were important in understanding how different groups of people (having a variety of educational background, occupational areas and living in different places) frame the environment and the role of the media in environmental communication in Nepal.

In terms of my research question on prominent issues and agendas in the media, the research found that the non-news environment programme also relies on news value criteria in its selection of environmental issues. The analysis found that climate change was not only the dominant headline topic but also the most prioritised issue in expert discourses. The analysis showed that the authorities (such as high-level government and non-government officials, academics and journalists) are the major sources, while the programme excludes marginalised groups (such as women and low caste people). Thus, regarding the question on mediation of

environmental stories, the analysis found the voices of experts to be influential in communicating environmental stories in the Nepalese media. The study also found that in this programme the environment is represented as the complex hub of a relation between constitutional, political, legal, economic and cultural entities. In other words, the environment is constructed as something abstract which can only be dealt with by those with expert knowledge. Similarly, analysis of responses to the research question which addressed how different groups construct the environment concluded that this varied widely among different groups, although experiential learning appeared as a common factor. The findings thus provide striking evidence of differing constructions of the environment in the media and in the local context. While *Batabaran Dabali* was found to construct the environment as an abstract entity, the representation of the environment at the local level revolved around local problems. The constructional variations in this study revealed that the social construction of the environment is a complex phenomenon. In terms of the social construction of risk, Strydom (2002: 114) similarly writes:

“The discursive construction of risk is a social process in which different social actors or collective agents compete and conflict with one another in the medium of public communication and discourse to define the risk in question in a way that resonates sufficiently with the public[s] to become accepted as collectively valid.”

Indeed, as Strydom points out, social actors compete and contest for knowledge legitimisation while framing risk. In this study, the role of the media appeared important in participants’ construction of global environmental issues such as climate change. However, the media were found to be disconnected from its audience due to over-reliance on expert sources who impart a “technical” model of risk communication (Cox, 2006). In this regard, rather than playing a role of a mediator between experts and ordinary people, the media were seen as part of the elite public sphere. The study showed that the elite “self-reference” of the media further contributed to widening the gap between experts and ordinary citizens. This in turn lowered relevance and faith in environmental coverage in the media, suggesting that environmental communication is failing in terms of grasping audience attention.

11.1 Newsworthiness, Agenda-setting and Media Framing of the Environment

As Lippmann (1922) had already suggested, the growth of the media intensifies competition among various media outlets as coverage relies on the news value of the stories in a multi-voiced world. Having an understanding of the theory of news values was important to understand how news criteria are considered in environmental coverage in the media. A review of literature on news values showed that different scholars listed different sets of news values. My analysis of news values, listed and proposed by Lippmann (1922), Galtung and Ruge (1965), Hall (1973), Bell (1991), Luhmann (2000) and McGregor (2002), clearly showed that there is a difficulty in reaching common agreement among scholars in terms of theoretical underpinning of news values.

Galtung and Ruge's classic twelve point criteria of news values was published in 1965 but the addition of news values still continues and there is a lack of a single set of news values to apply in understanding coverage in the media. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, news values are considered important in initial screening of the news. Application of the theory of news values (which is generally applied in the study of news) helped me to explore environmental media coverage in a predominantly non-news programme. In order to understand how news is mediated in *Batabaran Dabali*, different relevant news values from various established sources were selected (see Chapter 6). A list consisting of 13 criteria (i.e. "elite people", "national relevancy", "negativity (thematic framing)", "reference to elites (government)", "quantities", "elite nations", "predictability", "personification", "continuity", "prefabrication", "co-option", "conflict" and "emotion") was employed to analyse whether coverage in *Batabaran Dabali* was influenced by journalistic ritual of news selection criteria based on such newsworthy or other factors.

The analysis found that the programme does not follow a conventional news format, but heavily supported news criteria such as "elite people" (100%), "national relevancy" (100%), "negativity" (90%) and "reference to elites" (88%), among others. Content analysis showed that climate change is the dominant headline topic in *Batabaran Dabali*. Climate change is newsworthy to *Batabaran Dabali* as it

could satisfy several newsworthy criteria (such as “national relevancy”, “negativity” and “reference to elites”). The finding of this research confirms that news values play an important role in selecting environmental coverage in the media. This is in line with studies by Friedman et al (1986), Einsiedel and Coughlan (1993) and Hansen (1994), who found the application of news values in science stories. Greenberg et al (1989: 275) in their studies of environmental risks by network TV also found that “the networks are guided more by the traditional determinants of news”. Gregory and Miller (2000: 110) suggest that news values “apply in all media” as well as “to all types of news” while communicating about science. The finding also suggests that the news values which are generally applied in studying news have similarities in other genres of mass media (see also Braun, 2009). In this regard, this study has gone some way towards our understanding of a media framing of the environment beyond the conventional focus on news format.

The study showed how the media coverage depends upon elite, credible and reputed sources (Bell, 1991; Luhmann, 2000). It also explicated how social problems are “actively constructed, defined and contested in identifiable public arenas - notably the media” which are “governed by their own organisational and professional constraints and practices” (Hansen, 2010: 35). It was clear from the analysis that the environmental agenda in *Batabaran Dabali* is constructed by credible and authoritative sources. In fact, the ‘elite’ discourses in this programme mainly revolved around claims about ‘negative’ impacts of various environmental issues (predominantly climate change) in the context of “national relevancy”. This supports Bell (1991) and Luhmann (2000) in terms of source credentials in newsworthiness. Studies by Dunwoody and Griffin (1993) and Hansen (1993) also identified the role of claims-makers in the media framing of the environment. My findings agree with different scholars’ (Anderson, 1997; Cox, 2006; Hansen, 2010) claim that the media (under the influence of its own journalistic norms such as the practice of news values in de/selection mechanism) is one forum where sources compete and contest for environmental meaning construction.

In this study, McCombs and Shaw’s (1972) concept of the agenda-setting role of the media informed my focus on the significance of media emphasis on certain issues. The study found that the issues related to climate change were given

prominence in expert discourses, suggesting that climate change is the most newsworthy topic among various environmental problems. A significant observation was the extent to which, for *Batabaran Dabali*, the climate change agenda is clearly one of ‘constitutionalisation’. Watson (2008) suggests that gate-keeping and agenda-setting are interlinked. In fact, both play a role in framing coverage in *Batabaran Dabali*. As McCombs and Shaw state, the relation between the media framing of the story and the extent which people consider the same story as important is agenda-setting. In this context, although the media can be considered as an important tool in setting the agenda to some extent, as Cox (2006: 186) says, the agenda-setting theory does not take into account “what people think of the same issue”. An investigation of local construction of the environment was essential in this study to find out how framing of the environment at the local context is interlinked with the media framing of the environment.

This study has also explored and evaluated the definition of newsworthiness of environmental topics in *Batabaran Dabali*. The analysis also answered questions on the agendas and issues given significance in the media as well as the types of sources and source contexts in environmental reporting in this programme. A striking finding is that the pioneer environmental programme, running for more than a decade in Radio Sagarmatha, has not grabbed the attention of the publics either in the city or rural areas. In fact, while *Batabaran Dabali* clearly constructs the environment as newsworthy (in a number of ways), the participants in the focus groups (rural and city) frame the way in which the environment is covered in the media as lacking relevance to them. In other words, environmental stories are not newsworthy to focus group participants. This was clear from how the participants framed environmental coverage in the media as unappealing (for example they switched to other channel/station when environment programmes were on air from radio and television). An implication of this finding is the possibility that the time, effort and money being spent on communicating environmental issues via the Nepalese media may be in vain if there is continuation of such contents and formats in environmental reporting. Indeed, as Bell (1991: 107) says, “the audience has a power of choice” and it is obvious that the “dissatisfied audience members switch off or tune elsewhere”. The analysis of focus group discussions thus showed that

not only *Batabaran Dabali* but environmental coverage in general has not secured adequate audience attention in Nepal.

11.2 Multiple Constructions of the Environment

This study has presented complex constructions of the environment in the media as well as in the local context. The study has found that media constructions of environment and locally contextualised representations of the environment differed substantially. In the media, the environment was characterised as complex, linked not only to constitutional, political and legal processes but also to economic as well as cultural systems. In local contexts too, the environment was framed in a variety of ways: rural participants framed the environment as something concrete which they experience in their daily lives (for example, the local surroundings they see in front of their eyes); city groups constructed the environment as complex (i.e. linking the environment with social relations and social systems) and expert groups conceptualised the environment in terms of environmental science. Thus, the study revealed how the construction of the environment is multiple among members of a variety of public spheres that are not unified. The diverse constructions of the environment observed in this study align with Cox's (2006: 65) observation:

“The rhetorical shaping of the environment and our relation to it reminds us that, whatever else may be, *nature* and *environment* are powerful ideas whose meanings are always being defined and contested.”

This study demonstrates, in agreement with Cox, that the construction of the environment is contested among the members of the public spheres. However, within the multiple and contrasting constructions of the environment some common attributes, such as reference to immediate surroundings in framing the environment, was noticed among all the groups (rural, city and expert). In this study, while the rural lay groups constructed the environment by linking their environmental understanding with their experiential knowledge, the groups of city professionals referred to their educational background, experiential learning and, to some extent, to the media for their environmental understanding. Expert groups were found to invoke official as well as academic definitions while framing the environment. These expert interviewees also constructed their own role as being juggled between their work and everyday life.

Although the participants across three different groups differed in how they contextualised the environment, the analysis showed that their experiential learning is one of the key aspects in constructing the environment although the media played a role to some extent. In fact, the participants (rural and urban) made reference to the media while framing global environmental problems (such as climate change) more than in constructing local environmental issues (i.e. pollution, water shortages). This finding is in line with Chapman et al's (1997: 183) study of British television audiences in which both rural and urban groups used the media references so as to "justify statements made about global environment" more than local environmental issues.

Anderson (1997: 201) suggests that responses to representations of the environment in the media differ as "[p]eople make sense of media texts through drawing upon their own local knowledge, everyday experiences and cultural values". In this regard, the findings demonstrate how different groups of people make sense of the environment in different frames and contexts of knowledge legitimization. The analysis also showed that these participants, as active media users, filter in a particular way the environmental media discourses in their own local context. The analysis found that although the environment is constructed as multifaceted and complex, the level of complexity differed among these different groups. Exposure to more media content, formal education and knowledge of environmental science was seen to contribute to more complex constructions of the environment. The study thus suggests that framings of the environment vary by: people's position in society (i.e. powerful elites or ordinary people), the character of their knowledge about environmental issues, and the locations (rural or urban) in which they live (although there were some overlappings in these framings). This research thus argues that the construction of the environment is interwoven in multiple complexities in which the dynamics of the power, knowledge and experiences of the members of the public spheres play roles in framing the environmental meaning.

The findings of this research add to a growing body of literature (Anderson, 1997; Cox, 2006; Hansen, 2010) on the complex construction of the environment which suggests that the meanings of the environment are diverse and often contested.

Thus, the study suggests that the multiplicity of the publics should be considered in communicating about the environment as the same programme or format may not suit people with diverse backgrounds. Similarly, the same programme may not be relevant to all.

11.2.1 Variations in Climate Change Constructions

Content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* showed that climate change is the key facet through which the media frame the environment. The analysis found that climate change was the most newsworthy topic in *Batabaran Dabali* as it could satisfy many news criteria. Climate change coverage was not only dominant in headlines but also in expert discourses. While climate change was constructed as the most pressing issue, it was also framed in a variety of ways (as “real and alarming”, “future problems”, “uncertain issue” and “solvable”) with expert discourses contesting one another. This finding provides additional evidence with respect to competing constructions of climate change in the media, suggesting that the constructions of climate change in developing countries are in line with the media framing of climate change issues in developed nations (see Ereaut and Segnit, 2006; Douulton and Brown, 2009). As Ereaut and Segnit (2006: 7) point out, an implication of such discourses is that they give an impression that “nobody knows!” about climate change and as such makes the publics even more confused. Although the constructions of climate change in both the developed and developing nations share similarities, the discourse of victimhood in climate change constructions was distinct in framing the impacts of climate change in Nepal.

It was not surprising media constructions featured prominently among the focus group participants since the publics learn “about climate change through the media” (Kenix, 2008: 117). In terms of the role of the media in communicating climate change, Carvalho states:

“In the social circulation of meanings associated with this issue, the media are a central arena and certainly play a part in shaping public[s] and political options.” (Carvalho, 2007: 223).

In fact, participants from all the groups, including the rural villages, had heard of environmental terms such as *global warming* and *climate change* and had some

knowledge about the issue. This is similar to Bell's research on public understanding of climate change in New Zealand in 1989. Bell (1991: 239) found that his respondents "knew something about climate change, although the degree of understanding was not high". In this study too, an important role of the media in constructing climate change was clearly evident in how all the participants referred to the media in framing the risks posed by climate change. In this regard, the analysis found that the media played a role in setting the agenda (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) for focus group participants in defining climate change as the most urgent environmental problem. As McCombs and Shaw (1972) state, the agenda-setting capacity of the media can generate public perceptions by intensifying the problem. However, a question arises whether media's role in setting climate change as the most serious issue of all has contributed to developing public concerns on this topic.

As discussed in Chapter 3.3 on the agenda-setting role of the media, repeated coverage of any issue in the media can develop concern among the media audiences. However, the study revealed that the focus group participants constructed climate change coverage in the media as a "sensationalist issue" (Kenix, 2008: 127). The majority of participants framed climate change not only as overly hyped (i.e. the problem is being treated and covered too extensively) but also framed media coverage on climate change as having little relevance to their lives. They were critical not only of how media discourses on climate change are shaped but also of the way in which high profile people are used to place climate change in the limelight rather than highlighting ways to mitigate or adapt to the impacts of climate change. This aligns with Wilson (2000: 201):

"Often what are portrayed in the media are not carefully worded scientific findings, but rather dramatic, eye-catching, entertaining stories that attract audiences but do little to enlighten them about the risks associated with climate change."

11.2.2 Polarities

This study found binary divisions constructed between different spheres of the publics (such as expert interviewees and ordinary people, rural and urban people) as

well as between different facets of the environment both in the media and at the local context. While people were dichotomised into ‘us’ and ‘them’, the environment was divided into ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’. The dichotomisation was noticed in terms of constructing a relation between the city and rural people, powerful elites and ordinary people, active and passive citizens and developed and developing nations. Van Dijk’s (1998) notion of “ingroup” and “outgroup” designators was clearly evident in the construction of such relationships. Data analysis clearly reflected contrasts in the construction of the environment in several aspects. The analysis showed that constructions of the environment often oscillated between two opposite spheres i.e. power and powerlessness; active and passive citizens; abstract and concrete issues; lay and expert knowledge; urban and rural residents; local and global issues; and the problems of developed and developing nations.

11.2.2.1 Abstract and concrete issues

In *Batabaran Dabali*, the environment was clearly a “contested discursive terrain” (Anderson, 1997: 204). In fact, by framing the environment as part of constitutional, political, legal as well as broader economic and cultural systems, the interviewees codify the environment as an abstract entity which cannot be achieved easily by the ordinary people. While framing the environment as a complex and abstract entity of macro- political and constitutional concern, the interviewees also constructed underlying environmental issues and problems as solvable via amendments to clauses in the new constitution (for example: inclusion of rights and responsibilities of the citizens). The experts thus linked ‘constitutionalisation’ with the political process and as such endorsed a view that the environment is beyond the horizons of ordinary citizens. Focus group discussions, in contrast, framed their immediate environmental problems as more concrete, focussing on local problems such as water shortages, pollution, chemical contamination and garbage problems.

Similar emphases were apparent in the 26 brief interviews with ordinary citizens in *Batabaran Dabali*. The findings of the study suggest that there are two different realities since the two different groups (i.e. experts and lay) codify the environment in fundamentally different ways (meaning that the scope for participation was restricted). An implication of such double codification is that unless there is a

change in how the media engage with the variety of the publics, the future of environmental communication in Nepal is likely to be the future of two different worlds (i.e. of experts and lay people).

11.2.2.2 Power and powerlessness

The construction of a binary divide between the powerful and powerless appeared repeatedly in this study, whether embedded within the expert discourses in *Batabaran Dabali* or in the discussions with focus group participants. The study showed that the experts (other than those affiliated with the government) were critical of how government systems are being operated in the country by framing the government as corrupt and irresponsible and one that “often chooses policies to serve partisan interests, not the general interests of the public[s]” (Dahal, 2002a: 26). In *Batabaran Dabali*, the government is not only constructed as a failed institution, it is also constructed as corrupt. In fact, interviewees framed the sole motive of government officials as aiming “to gain control of state power and resources” (Thapa and Sharma, 2009: 217) rather than serving the citizens. Weakness in power and policies in the government system is perhaps one of the main reasons that the environment in Nepal has not gained adequate attention.

Similarly, the majority of participants in the focus group discussions also framed the deep flaws in power, policies and laws as contributing to a deteriorating environmental situation in Nepal. These participants constructed Nepalese politics as being run by selfish politicians who are mainly interested in their “private gain” (Dahal, 2002b). Thus, a construction of a growing polarity between the powerful authorities and powerless citizens was evident numerous times in this study, reflecting a deepening divide that makes an inclusive framing of the environment difficult. Thapa and Sharma’s (2009: 217) observation that the people in Nepal are not “overly optimistic” about their own “political future” in the country was confirmed several times in *Batabaran Dabali* and focus group discussions. In fact, a framing of a tension between the citizens and the powerful elites was evident across all the groups, suggesting that establishing trust in “governance institutions” as well as “political leaders” in Nepal is not an easy task (Dahal, 2002a: 39).

11.2.2.3 Active and passive citizens

In *Batabaran Dabali*, uncertainty looms about the potential to achieve the environmental goals included in the constitution as there is seen to be a lack of actively engaged civil society in Nepal. Chapter 8 showed how expert interviewees constructed the government as burdened while framing the citizens as passive. Citizens were also framed as self-occupied people who have no interest in active participation in environmental conservation. By constructing the citizens as passive members of society, the majority of experts endorsed a view that the elites, people in power and experts are the active members who are doing their best to conserve the environment. Furthermore, several of the focus group participants also constructed themselves as passive identifying the lack of citizen involvement in conservation as one of the main reasons behind the deteriorating environmental situation in the country.

However, the analysis found that people are not passive recipients of the information (as seen in Chapter 10); they judge, filter and challenge in constructing their own environmental framing. It was clear from the testimonies of rural participants that many not only framed themselves as active (by giving examples of how they engaged themselves in community activities such as cleaning the village and plantation of trees in their localities) but also challenged urban people in terms of environmental awareness (such as in cleanliness, garbage management). Therefore, it seems that such framing of people as passive may discourage what could be termed micro- public spheres to actively continue their participation and contribute to conservation activities. Thus, it seems imperative that such success stories be highlighted in the media, which would not only encourage such active citizens but also be an inspiration to others.

11.2.2.4 Urban and rural divide

A preliminary result of 2011 National Population Census of Nepal shows that the urban population increased from 14% in 2001 to 17% in 2011 (Central Bureau of Statistics Nepal, 2011b). Although the trend for urbanisation is increasing, a great majority of the population of Nepal still lives in rural areas. However, Nepal's development is not only very 'Kathmandu-centric' but resource distribution and the

provision of assistance to remote areas is also unbalanced (Piper, 2008). It is thus not surprising that a construction of the disparity between the unequal distributions of resources is a contributor in creating a gap between the rural and urban populations in Nepal. This construction was very apparent amongst rural participants.

Chapter 9 on analysis of focus group discussions showed that the rural participants were critical of urban-focused development, elites from urban areas and experts from Kathmandu city. The rural participants, who feel isolated in the Nepalese mainstream public sphere (consisting of rich, educated and powerful elites who are policymakers or have access to policy level), framed a gap in terms of development and resource distribution. They also feel deprived of good colleges, healthcare or employment opportunities in the village and thus have no option other than to go to the city for even small things (for example, hospital health checks). In addition, they blamed elites from the city for threats to local environmental resources (e.g. chemical contamination of soil due to factories in Sindhupalchowk which led to heavy damage to crops and villagers' health). These rural participants also saw the media as in collusion with the elite publics and as such contributing to widening the gap between the urban elites and rural poor, as media contents are overwhelmingly urban-centred. This was also evident from the content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali*, which demonstrated the exclusion of rural participants; the majority of the interviews took place with experts from Kathmandu. Even among the briefly interviewed ordinary citizens, most of the interviewees were from Kathmandu. This suggests that if such inequalities driven by social exclusion continue, rural people (which represent the large majority of the population in Nepal) may be affected even more in terms of their democratic participation. Indeed, "[i]f the voice of the poor is not heard or not listened to, their interests are not included in policies or the policies will not match their specific needs or conditions" (United Nations, 2001: 23). This also indicates that environmental decisions taken without the concern and participation of rural people (such as in the discourse of establishment of citizen rights and responsibilities in the constitution), may not secure rural interest and consequently intensify further the disparity between urban and rural spheres.

11.2.2.5 *Lay and expert knowledge*

A binary divide between lay and expert knowledge about the environment recurred strongly in this study. The content analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* (see Chapter 6) showed how expert knowledge was given preference over lay knowledge by the marked inclusion of experts in the programmes. In contrast, Chapter 9, on analysis of focus group discussions, demonstrated the nature and extent of environmental knowledge gained experientially by rural participants. For instance, their knowledge about the chemical contamination in their farms not only made them worried about their own health, but led them to warn city people against consuming chemically contaminated vegetables being supplied from rural farmlands.

This aligns with Plough and Krimsky (1987: 8) who are of the opinion that lay people can “bring many more factors into a risk event than do scientists”. Corner and Richardson (1993: 226) similarly suggest: “Lay accounts can offer a density that scientific abstraction cannot match”. Gregory and Miller (2000: 228) depict such individuals as “*lay experts* - formally untrained but highly knowledgeable”. Ignoring lay people may also lead to a situation where experts miss an opportunity to document experiential knowledge of locals which sometimes is richer than that of the experts themselves (such as in the case of Cumbrian farmers as discussed in Chapter 4.2.3).

11.2.2.6 *Local and global issues*

Climate change was a highly cited problem amongst experts interviewed in *Batabaran Dabali*. However, the focus group participants across all the groups focused on immediate local problems more than the problems brought about by climate change. In contrast, experts in *Batabaran Dabali* most of the time reported local problems such as drought or flooding as climate change impacts. The analysis showed how media discourse moves quickly from discussions of local issues onto global challenges, while focus group participants always bring discussions back to local examples. This is similar to the finding of Burningham and Thrush (2001) who found focus group participants’ environmental concern focused mainly on the impact of local problems. This suggests that whatever “appear from outside to be

the most obvious environmental problems for a locality are not always the issues of most concern to the people who live there” (Burningham and Thrush, 2001: vi).

The analysis showed that the majority of the lay participants were aware of the impact of climate change. They also constructed the media’s role as significant in framing climate change as the most pressing issue. However, the dangers were typically constructed as distant and remote by lay groups. This clearly showed that the media failed to connect with its audiences in terms of climate change communication. An implication of such communication is that the audiences may not link global environmental problems with their repercussions at local level and hence may ignore concerns relating to climate change as a distant problem.

11.2.2.7 Developed vs. developing nations

In an analysis of *Batabaran Dabali* (see Chapter 7), the expert interviewees framed Nepal as a victim of global environmental problems (such as climate change). The chapter also showed that the interviewees framed Nepal as a victim of developed nations. This construction of climate change as having a severe impact upon developing nations is similar to Doulton and Brown’s (2009: 191) description of “media perceptions of a rising sense of an impending catastrophe for the developing world that is defenceless without the help of the West”. A framing of donor states as selfish was also prevalent on many occasions. A portrayal of Nepal as a victim along with suggestions that western countries’ support to Nepal is “deeply shrouded in the veil of hypocrisy” (Shrestha, 1997: 32) reflects the construction of a growing polarity between developed and developing nations. This echoes Shrestha’s (1997) assessment of the relationship of Nepal with the developed countries. By giving an example of “*Aphai Boksi, Aphai Jhankri*”, a Nepali proverb to indicate a person playing a dual role, Shrestha argued that the western countries are playing the *Boksi* (witch) and *Jhankri* (exorcist) game in which Nepal suffers due to western interferences. One thing to note at this point is that an endorsement of such views in the media may be counter-productive as this may discourage donor states who have already realised the situation and are eager to support in minimising climate change impacts in developing nations.

11.3 Environmental Media Communication

Although the media were seen to have an important role in communications involving environmental risks, the majority of focus group participants across all the groups constructed environmental coverage in the media as difficult to understand (i.e. only suited to people with expert knowledge) and as such not interesting enough to command their attention. The responses of the majority of the participants from rural and city groups also indicated that environmental topics were viewed not only as unappealing but also as having little value in their lives as the coverage was not relevant to them. A portrayal of environmental radio programmes as irrelevant was also clearly evident in how they framed their increasing interest towards television programmes, particularly dramas and soap operas (see Chapter 10). Similarly, the construction of environmental media coverage by experts in focus group discussions also showed how environmental media reporting is more focused towards technical and scientific aspects of the issues. Cox (2006) terms this model of communication “technical risk communication”.

Therefore, an emphasis on the need for more consideration of the knowledge and experiences of locals (such as the rural groups) was evident in participants’ framing of environmental media coverage. According to Cox (2006: 218), “[t]echnical risk communication is defined as the translation of technical data about environmental or health risks for public consumption, with the goal of educating a target audience”. In this model of risk communication, transmission of information is usually one-way i.e. limited to the flow of information from experts to lay people. The analysis of focus group data suggests that participants were critical of this technical model of communication adopted in the Nepalese media. Indeed, as Plough and Krinsky (1987: 7) point out, “[c]asting the issues in a technical language reduces the possibility of a dialogue” between elite experts and ordinary people. This was clearly evident from participants’ construction of the media coverage on the environment in this study.

Analysis showed that the participants from rural groups perceived the media as focused on elites and experts from the city, and also as non-inclusive, as their

voices and stories were never included. Experts, too, had similar views and constructed the media as lacking, for example, coverage on community activities. In this they advocate a “cultural model” of risk communication where collaborative communication occurs between citizens, experts and agencies (Cox, 2006). This model of communication is collaborative in the sense that the main aim lies in informing the audiences by “recognizing social contexts of meaning” (Cox, 2006: 226).

However, it is possible that the media, despite adopting a cultural model of risk communication, only use ordinary voices to provide a “human face”⁶³ (Cottle, 2000) for stories rather than practicing “cultural rationality”⁶⁴, to borrow the term of Plough and Krinsky (1987). In his study of environmental news in British Television, Cottle (2000: 31) found that while ordinary voices were heard more than those of elites and experts in television news, they were used as a “human face” for stories and as such these voices “rarely find an opportunity to advance rational claims - whether ‘social’ or ‘scientific’ ”. This study indicates that ordinary people were severely restricted by being given very limited air time, and in addition ordinary voices were not given “opportunities to confront or challenge the objectivist claims of experts” (Cottle, 2000: 38). Such exclusion works against the development of “cultural rationality” in the existing mode of technical risk communication in *Batabaran Dabali*.

11.4 Citizenship, Political Power and Responsibility

Batabaran Dabali’s focus in environmental reporting during the data collection period centred on making policy-makers and ordinary citizens aware of the need for the inclusion of environmental rights in the constitution. The majority of the experts interviewed in this programme projected the view that inclusion of these rights and responsibilities in the constitution could solve various environmental problems. The

⁶³ This also aligns with McGregor’s (2002: 4) emphasis on “emotion” attached to the media contents involving “tragedy, human interest dilemmas, survivors, victims, children and animals” as discussed in Chapter 3.

⁶⁴ Referring to Plough and Krinsky (1987), Cox (2006: 234) points out that “cultural rationality” involves involvement of sources having “cultural experience, knowledge of local conditions, and impacts on families and communities”.

majority of the expert interviewees thus focused on embedding citizen rights and responsibilities in the constitution. Although the rights and responsibilities were constructed as two sides of the same coin, the expert interviewees failed to explain however how the rights and responsibilities included in the constitution would be applied practically in the future. An implication of this is that the citizen rights and responsibilities included in the constitution may just remain in a legal document without being of much use to the citizens.

In *Batabaran Dabali*, a lack of civic sense and citizen passivity were portrayed as the major hindrances in environmental conservation in Nepal. Although *Batabaran Dabali* criticises citizens as passive on several occasions, the need for public engagement as part of the co-responsibility between government and citizens in environmental conservation appeared repeatedly. In this regard, *Batabaran Dabali* advocates a change in citizen behaviour which somewhat aligns with the view of Giddens (2009: 199) on “ecological citizenship”, which demands “radical change” among the people themselves. An emergence of ecological citizenship linked to the “defence of the natural environment” is seen to be developing (Giddens, 2009: 198) in the expert discourses in *Batabaran Dabali*, where the notion of mutual responsibility between government and citizens is advocated.

This observation accounts with Dahal’s (2009: 5) assessment of citizenship in Nepal: “Modern citizenship involves not just the constitutional and human rights of citizens but also their duties towards the state”. Smith (1998) believes that the focal point of the development of ecological citizenship lies in the rights and responsibilities of the citizens. Similarly, the notion of citizen rights and responsibilities appeared across all the groups during the focus group discussions. Chapter 9, on the analysis of focus group discussions, showed how some of the participants from the city groups indicated that their environmental concern was not only growing but a sense of self mobilisation was emerging (for example, the city professionals gave the example of throwing chocolate wrappers into a bin as an indication of an improved behaviour at the personal level)⁶⁵. The majority of the

⁶⁵ Although it is very common in western countries, this habit is still not common in Nepal. Throwing of waste such as chocolate wrappers, crisp and snack packets and banana skins from the windows of houses or vehicles is easily visible on the streets.

urban participants were critical of their own behaviour towards the environment, and saw lack of civic sense and responsibility towards the environment as major challenges. On the other hand, it was interesting to note how a large majority of rural participants were actively involved in environmental conservation, both at the personal as well as the community level. A strong sense of community mobilisation was evident in how rural participants initiated efforts such as garbage management and plantation of the trees in the surrounding areas. In fact, the rural groups were seen to practise citizen responsibilities in various ways which challenge the experts' construction of ordinary citizens as passive and ignorant in *Batabaran Dabali*.

11.5 *Batabaran Dabali*: Part of the Elite Public Sphere?

As noted in Chapter 2, Nepal has witnessed unprecedented media growth since the restoration of democracy in 1990. However, the Nepalese media have remained Kathmandu centric (Kasajoo, 2003-2009; Onta, 2006). In addition, throughout its history, the operation of Nepalese media has experienced political interference (as seen in Chapter 2). The monopoly of elites and people in power in the Nepalese media ended with the establishment of Radio Sagarmatha in 1997. However, it still is questionable whether the media in Nepal are inclusive enough to accommodate the voices of ordinary citizens and be part of a more inclusive public sphere. Although Radio Sagarmatha identifies itself as “community radio”, the influence of people in power is still evident in the elitist nature of the *Batabaran Dabali* programme. The study showed that *Batabaran Dabali* privileges expert discourse as the overwhelming majority of the expert interviewees were high level officials (from the government and non-government organisations, constitution making bodies, universities and media institutions). This aligns with what Hansen (2010: 56) says about claim-makers in the media:

“[...] studies of environmental media coverage have virtually without exception shown that the sources who get to be quoted in the media coverage and who get to define environmental issues are - as in most types of news - predominantly those of public authorities, government representatives, industry and business, and independent scientists.”

In this programme, the experts not only acted as the “primary definers” of the environment in Nepal, but also promoted agendas of the elite public sphere and as

such undermined the “voice of the voiceless” (i.e. the voice of rural people, women and marginalised groups). In fact, in discussions about the environment, voices of ordinary people were overshadowed by expert interviewees in *Batabaran Dabali*. Thus, the study found that “[t]he environment, like other substantive areas of news reporting, is largely mediated through the voice of the *expert*” (Anderson, 1997: 171). In *Batabaran Dabali*, only 3% of the total time was given to ordinary citizens. In other words, being a part of the elite public sphere, the discourses in *Batabaran Dabali* operate by the exclusion (Foucault, 1984) of the voices of ordinary people and women. The analysis showed the programme as not only gender-biased (with 93% male interviewees) but also ethnically-biased, with the vast majority of the interviewees being from dominant high caste Brahmin and Chettri groups.

The exclusion of women and marginalised people in *Batabaran Dabali* is reminiscent of Habermas’ (1989) classical conception of the public sphere in terms of rational/critical debate of private people in public places. Habermas saw an important role played by the media in 18th century Europe when print media was the vehicle for carrying public opinion. According to Habermas, the media played a role in connecting private people in the public sphere. In this regard, Habermas claims that before the advent of the media, there was no public sphere. However, Habermas criticises the growth of the media, which he claims contributed to a loss of integrity of the critical public sphere. Although the notion of the public sphere is useful in understanding citizen participation in the media, the Habermasian conception has attracted criticism as it did not initially include women and people of lower class. Therefore, the legitimacy of *Batabaran Dabali* as a representative opinion-former might be open to some doubt as the analysis of the programme showed how it suffered from the lack of representation of women and people from lower social castes belatedly highlighted by Habermas. It also reinforces a partial public - the elite.

The study clearly showed that the elite experts used the media as the discursive terrain and overshadowed the other competing publics in constructing environmental agendas in Nepal. The exclusion of marginalised groups in this study is in line with the findings of other scholars (such as Bell, 1991; Cox et al.,

2008). Bell's (1991) study of climate change news in New Zealand revealed how alternative sources were less cited than local or national government. Similarly, Cox et al's (2008: 474) study of media coverage of natural disasters found media discourses were extremely reliant on experts, while the "locals' specific, contextual, and experiential knowledge was minimized". The analysis found that although the programme provides information about the ongoing activities in the constitution-making process and the inclusion of environmental agendas in the constitution, citizens do not get a chance to be part of the process through *Batabaran Dabali*. In this respect, *Batabaran Dabali* has not been a useful platform for citizens to express their views on environmental issues which have a prominence in the constitution. Since the programme had been advocating the rights and responsibilities of the citizens in environment conservation in its programmes, *Batabaran Dabali* could have played a role of a mediator in relaying views of the publics to the expert interviewees who are part of the constitution-making process. However, *Batabaran Dabali*, rather than linking the two different spheres of the publics (i.e. spheres of experts and ordinary people), places itself as the platform for legitimising expert discourses. Moreover, the interview formats (mainly one-to-one discussions) were a form of exclusion themselves which provided little opportunity for engaging in debate on the issue being discussed. Even multiple interviews failed to generate such debate as the interviews took place consecutively, much like single interviews. In addition, the government was the most heavily quoted source (in 88% of the programmes) in *Batabaran Dabali*. This again shows how elites refer to other elites in practising environmental discourses.

The study showed that the programme, which relies overly on experts and the high level officials, ignores alternative sources in communicating about the environment, and as such undermines public knowledge (such as the experiential knowledge of locals). According to Gregory and Miller (2000: 98), "public knowledge, which is sometimes called 'lay expertise', tends to be specific or concrete rather than general or abstract". Previous studies (Wynne, 1989; Irwin and Michael, 2003) also indicate that local knowledge is sometimes more useful than expert knowledge. However, a construction of the publics as lacking in environmental knowledge was noticed on several occasions during the interviews with experts in *Batabaran Dabali*. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 8, a significant proportion of interviewees in

Batabaran Dabali not only constructed citizens as passive but also as an ignorant mass. This construction is in line with the deficit model of “public understanding of science” which does not recognise knowledge that already exists among publics (Gregory and Miller, 2000). The model is criticised for not considering “pre-existing knowledge” of the publics and their individual situations (Gregory and Miller, 2000).

In addition, when the *Batabaran Dabali* interviewers’ enquiries were analysed it was found that they not only gave their views towards the issues being discussed, but on many occasions were found to position themselves as experts. Indeed, as Hansen (2010: 99) states, the media not only “play a key *gatekeeping* role through their control over *selection* of sources, information and arguments”, they are also involved in “further ‘ideological work’ by adding their own discursive spin or framing to the issues on which they report”. In this regard, *Batabaran Dabali* was not only found to endorse elite views but also acted as an agent of an elite public sphere. Analysis of focus group discussions also showed how a significant number of participants, by constructing the programme as lacking a connection with the ordinary people, framed *Batabaran Dabali* as part of the elite public sphere and therefore is partial. The analysis clearly indicates how *Batabaran Dabali* is failing to connect with mass audiences. The gap between the elite experts in the media and lay people seems to be increasing, posing a further challenge in environmental media communication in Nepal.

11.6 Recommendations

The findings of this research clearly show that the environmental media coverage in Nepal is urban (especially Kathmandu) centred, elitist, expert driven, abstract and technical, which contributed to widening the gap between rural and urban people, lay and expert groups, active and passive citizens as well as powerful and ordinary people. There is, therefore, a definite need for developing a mechanism which will help reduce such gaps. In terms of the “Kathmandu-centric nature of the media”, until and unless “Kathmandu’s monopoly over nationally significant media” is broken (Onta, 2006: 25), neither the rural-urban divide will be reduced, nor environmental communication through the media fostered. In this regard, the environmental radio programmes should consider rural interest (for example: developing issue-based dramas in rural settings) while developing its programmes. In addition, if the media are to connect better with rural populations, consideration should be given to the development of more interactive programmes with the involvement of rural people. In addition, there should be a mechanism for the development and distribution of localised programmes in local media. Strengthening the rural media landscape by promoting local media and supporting media professionals would be one option.

The findings of this study showed that *Batabaran Dabali* does not offer a space for a variety of publics to discuss complex environmental issues in lay terms. Rather, experts codify the environment as an abstract entity which is beyond the reach of ordinary citizens (by framing environmental problems as a complex hub of constitutional, political, legal as well as broader economic and cultural systems). The findings of focus group discussions reflected similar understanding, as the participants constructed environmental coverage in the media as technical and being difficult to understand. Thus, it is essential to ensure that the environmental coverage in the media be developed considering the local environmental issues which are closer to people’s lives. The media, rather than echoing expert voices, can play a role in clarifying expert environmental jargon and scientific terms so as to facilitate public understanding of environmental issues. Also, the media could make experts available in its programmes “to take part in debates where they have

useful expertise and to answer awkward questions of public concern” (Gregory and Miller, 2000: 9).

It is also essential that media bring the stories of citizens, who have direct experience of environmental change, to the fore. This would not only provide opportunities for lay people to share their “lay expertise” but audiences, too, would benefit from two-way communication between scientists and “lay experts”. Scientists could become acquainted with the people who are not only suffering from environmental problems but also having practical knowledge and suggestions to share. Thus, the gap between the experts and the lay people could be reduced by providing a “forum in which science and the public[s] meet” and the media is one such forum (Gregory and Miller, 2000: 132). As Gregory and Miller (2000: 103) point out:

“In a world divided up into laypeople and experts, each group needs some point of contact with the other if they are to see the whites of each other’s eyes. For the public[s] and science, the mass media are often the only point of contact.”

Therefore, the media should focus on considering diverse ways of conceptualising the environment when covering environmental issues. In order to improve existing environmental communication through the Nepalese media, it is thus imperative that the media carefully consider a “cultural model” of “risk communication”⁶⁶ in which collaboration between the citizens, experts and the agencies takes place. Indeed, the importance of “cultural rationality”⁶⁷ should not be ignored in communicating on environmental issues (as discussed in Chapter 11.3). In addition, in order to challenge the existing “technical model” of risk communication, it is imperative that journalists be made aware of problems created by such communication and encouraged to clarify technical terms. Moreover, *Batabaran Dabali* should re-evaluate its editorial policy in including relevant environmental issues.

⁶⁶ “*Risk communication* can refer to any public or private communication that informs individuals about the existence, nature, form, severity, or acceptability of risks” (Plough and Krinsky, 1987: 6).

⁶⁷ “Cultural rationality does not separate the context from the content of risk analysis. Technical rationality operates as if it can act independently of popular culture in constructing the risk analysis, whereas cultural rationality seeks technical knowledge but incorporates it within a broader decision framework” (Plough and Krinsky, 1987: 9).

Furthermore, the study found competing constructions of climate change in expert discourses, while the discourse on coping with the impacts of climate change was ignored. In this regard, the media, rather than being “mere conveyers of the ideologies of other actors” (Carvalho, 2007: 225) in climate change communication, can act as a mediator in conveying consequences of climate change at the local level and facilitate discourses on coping with the situation. Thus, until and unless people link local environmental problems with the globally-acknowledged problems of climate change, whatever the degree of climate change coverage in the media, it may not be practically useful at the local level as people may ignore such messages as irrelevant to their lives.

The study also found how climate change constructions were inclined towards framing Nepal as a victim by endorsing a strong view that developed countries are responsible for the situation and as such owe compensation. In addition, a distrust of support (funds) being received was repeated on many occasions. Pittock (2009: 234) points out that “[a]ny successful international effort to limit climate change and to cope with its impacts requires that both developed and developing countries play a significant role”. Indeed, this is the time for developed and developing countries to act jointly so as to minimise the impacts of climate change. Thus, it seems important that *Batabaran Dabali* enable more interactive discussions on climate change that highlight the role of both worlds in combating the problem.

The study also found that the expert interviewees were more focused on ‘constitutionalising’ the environment while the practical aspects of inclusion of such agendas in the constitution were undermined. Thus, it is essential that the programme provides platforms for both experts and ordinary citizens to discuss the practicality of inclusion of various environmental agendas in the constitution. One message to take from this is that the media might highlight people’s initiatives (such as the emerging community mobilisation in the rural villages) in terms of environmental conservation while at the same time advocating citizens’ rights and responsibilities at the policy level. This would provide acknowledgement of local efforts and some encouragement to rural people. This can ultimately be presented as an example to be replicated by the urban people, and such initiatives could also aid in reducing the existing gap between the lay and the expert, the powerful and

the powerless, the rural and urban divide and local and global problems. The media could play a useful role in the facilitation of “environmental governance” by connecting the two spheres of people (i.e. people in power and ordinary citizens). According to Belbase (2010: 1), environmental governance includes:

“Transparency, accountability, people’s participation, decentralisation up to the lowest level of community and the rule of law; making environment-related decisions publicly; making individuals and communities participate in environmental decision-making processes and discussions; representation of communities to be affected by environmental decisions; and holding decision makers accountable for the integrity of decision-making procedures and the result of decisions.”

Indeed, the media can act as an important space of interaction by making “government accountable to its actions and make it responsive to the diverse needs of society” (Dahal, 2002a: 42). In this regard, *Batabaran Dabali* should seek mechanisms so as to work in cooperation with policy people along with its ongoing commitment to be the “voice of the voiceless”.

Postscript

This research started with my keen interest in understanding how the media has been contributing (or whether the media is a contributor) to environmental communication in Nepal. Having worked for several years for various international non-government organisations (such as WWF in Nepal and the UNDP biodiversity project) as the main communications person, I always chose the media as one of the powerful means to reach mass audiences. Developing environmental programmes and communicating through the mass media was the quickest and the easiest way to spread conservation messages. However, I always wondered whether the media coverage made sense to a mass audience. My curiosity and concern regarding environmental communication through the mass media gave me the idea for this research.

In this PhD journey, I reviewed the literature on the media landscape in Nepal, environmental communication and theories on the media and public spheres, all of which were enlightening. In addition, the data collection in the field was an eye-opening experience to me. Although I had been into the field to report and cover environmental issues for organisational publications during my affiliation with environmental organisations, I had never had a chance to interact with media audiences and discuss in detail their views on media coverage of the environment. During that time, I too was part of the “self-referential” spheres of the communication system. I had never realised that environmental communication in the media could be disconnected from the audience to such an extent. The analysis showed that *Batabaran Dabali*, the first ever environment programme in Nepal, run by NEFEJ (which is considered as the initiator of environmental communication in Nepal) is rather “self-referential” (Luhmann, 2000) which prevents elite experts from understanding the problems beyond their own horizon. It is therefore essential that the environmental media programme developers (including environmental communicators who use the media as tools to reach people) come out of their own “self-referential” spheres and realise the difficulty in connecting with audience rather than assuming their own programme/coverage as achieving the desired goal. Thus, there should be further independent research on various aspects of

environmental communication in Nepal so as to understand different dimensions of problems in communicating the environment. Future studies should be made in different genres of the media (in the newspapers, television as well as online platforms) in order to compare models of participatory communication. The sample of the focus groups could also be diverse, and include the media professionals who design the environment programmes, to allow them to reflect upon their own work. Further research could analyse community-focused environmental programmes initiated by environmental organisations in the rural areas in order to compare and contrast programmes such as *Batabaran Dabali*, whose main focus had been the expert discourses.

This research is an outcome of my personal and professional interest in the field of environmental communication. I believe the findings of this research will be useful as a reference for policy makers and advisers, the media and environmental organisations in Nepal to re-think the existing communication patterns being adopted through the media in order to reach its target audience, and as such will serve as a basis for future studies in Nepal.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Content Analysis Coding Schedule

Batabaran Dabali Radio Programme

Programme number

Date-Month-Year

dd	mm	yyyy
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Genre(s)	Length of a programme (Minutes, seconds)					
	mins	sec				
1. Single Interview	mins	sec				
2. Group Interview	mins	sec				
3. Multiple Interviews	mins	sec	mins	sec	mins	sec
4. Investigative Report & Interview	mins	sec	mins	sec		
5. General News & Interview	mins	sec	mins	sec		

Name of a presenter/interviewer.....

Name of a reporter (s).....

Number of interviewee (s)

Interviewee name (s) and designation/occupation (s)

1.....

2.....

3.....

Organisational Affiliations of Interviewees

1. Government

5. Media

2. Non-government

6. Others.....

3. Constituent Assembly

7. Not specified

4. University

Headline (Translation)

.....

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.....

Dominant headline themes

1. Climate Change		4. Landscape Conservation	
A. Climate change conference	<input type="text"/>	A. Chure Conservation	<input type="text"/>
B. Climate change effects	<input type="text"/>	B. Lumbini conservation	<input type="text"/>
C. Carbon trading	<input type="text"/>		
D. Youth and climate change	<input type="text"/>	5. Environmental Impact	
		A. Impact on Himalayas	<input type="text"/>
		B. Impact on Chure	<input type="text"/>
2. Biodiversity Conservation		6. Environmental media coverage	<input type="text"/>
A. Wetland conservation	<input type="text"/>		
B. Community forest	<input type="text"/>	7. Interim Constitution	<input type="text"/>
C. Conservation (fauna)	<input type="text"/>		
D. Conservation (flora)	<input type="text"/>	8. Others	<input type="text"/>
E. Wildlife corridor	<input type="text"/>		
3. Environment and Citizen Rights	<input type="text"/>		

Newsworthy Criteria in the programme

1. Conflict	<input type="text"/>	8. Personification	<input type="text"/>
2. Quantities	<input type="text"/>	9. Negativity (Thematic Framing)	<input type="text"/>
3. National Relevancy	<input type="text"/>	10. Co-option	<input type="text"/>
4. Predictability	<input type="text"/>	11. Prefabrication	<input type="text"/>
5. Reference to Elites	<input type="text"/>	12. Emotion	<input type="text"/>
6. Elite Nations	<input type="text"/>	13. Continuity	<input type="text"/>
7. Elite People	<input type="text"/>	14. Others (Specify)	<input type="text"/>

Quoted Actors and Quoted Sources

1. Government	<input type="text"/>	4. Media	<input type="text"/>
2. Non-government	<input type="text"/>	5. Locals	<input type="text"/>
3. International	<input type="text"/>	6. Others (Specify)	<input type="text"/>

Environmental Problems or Risks Type Mentioned (list the key words e.g. disaster, landslide, flood, earthquake, climate change, waste, pollution etc)

.....

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Illustration/Referral in the programme

1. Government authority’s voice	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Citation from newspaper coverage	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Local voice	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. None	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Non government official’s voice	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Others	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 2: Topic Guide

1. No: Start 1 for the programme aired on 03 May 2009 and continue with codes 2-50 in a chronological order.

2. Date: The aired date of the programme

3. Genre(s):

1. *Single interview:* If there is only one interviewee.
2. *Multiple interviews:* More than one interview taking place one after the other.
3. *Group interview:* Interviewees of two or more than two discussing at the same time.
4. *Investigative report and interview:* Programme presented with report on a particular environmental topic (either with or without discussions with people) and the interview with the expert/s.
5. *General news and interview:* A programme having both news coverage and interview/s with expert/s.

4. Length of a Programme (in minutes and seconds)

The total time is the actual interview and report presentation time, not taking into account the regular introductory background information and ending notes.

5. Presenter/Interviewer

Interviewer: The person who interviews expert/s.

Presenter: The person who presents the programme.

6. Reporter

A journalist who reports from the field and also plays role as an expert is a reporter.

7. Number of Interviewees

The total number of experts interviewed. It does not include short interviews with the ordinary people.

8. Interviewee Name and Designation/Occupation(s)

Full name of interviewee/s and his/her position in an affiliated organisation.

9. Organisational Affiliations of Interviewees

This is the organisation interviewee/s work/s for.

1. *Government*: If an interviewee works in the government ministries, departments and offices in Nepal.
2. *Non-government*: If an interviewee works in national or international non-government organisation based in Nepal.
3. *Constituent Assembly*: Interviewees who are members of the Constituent Assembly.
4. *University*: Academics having association with universities in Nepal or abroad.
5. *Media*: If an interviewee is an environment journalist.
6. *Others*: Interviewees from various sectors (e.g. Hotel Association, Community Forest User Groups)
7. *Not Specified*: Interviewees organisational affiliations not specified in the programme.

10. Headline (Verbatim)

The headline set out by the presenter/interviewer. This is the main topic he/she mentions.

11. Dominant headline themes

1. *Climate Change*: Topics related to climate change are placed here, categorised into four sub categories i.e. Climate change conference, Climate change effects, Carbon trading, Youth and climate change. The theme is selected as per the coverage.
2. *Biodiversity Conservation*: A conservation-related theme is specified here, further sub-categorised into five more categories which include wetland conservation, community forest, wildlife conservation, wildlife corridor, plant conservation. The coverage is specified as per the theme listed.
3. *Environment and Citizen Rights*: Topics which fall into the categories of environmental rights and citizen rights are listed here.
4. *Landscape Conservation*: If there is a wider landscape level conservation such as Chure conservation, it is specified here.
5. *Environmental Impact*: The coverage of environmental impact is listed here.

6. *Environmental media coverage*: If the programme covers issues already in the media, for example, when *Batabaran Dabali* covers exactly the same topics as other media (such as in print media). The covered topic is listed here.
7. *Interim Constitution*: Topics which mainly cover interim constitution are specified here.
8. *Others*: Topics other than 1-7 listed above will be listed here. These may include coverage on tourism, nature, natural resources, empowerment of women, reports by the legislative parliament and ministry-related coverage.

12. Newsworthy Criteria in the Programme

1. *Conflict*: If the coverage is about conflicts over environmental issues.
2. *Quantities*: Where there is coverage of increased value to quantity such as comparative figures, figures, percentages.
3. *National Relevancy*: If the programme content is relevant to Nepal.
4. *Predictability*: An event that could be predicted, for e.g. high profile visits, scheduled high level conferences.
5. *Reference to Elites*: If an interviewee refers to elites (such as high level government or non-government officials in Nepal) in the programme.
6. *Elite Nation*: If there is coverage of and reference to elite nations.
7. *Elite People*: Expert interviewee affiliated to government, non-government organisations, media institutions, universities etc.
8. *Personification*: Coverage of a reporter in an event or a reporter's direct involvement in an incident.
9. *Negativity (Thematic Framing)*: If the programme carries negative framing of the environment, for example problems or risks. Also, if the programme lacks positive stories or coverage, it will be included in the *Negativity* category.
10. *Co-option*: When a simple story is linked to highly newsworthy topics, such as associating aircraft turbulence with the greenhouse gas effect or simple issues involving climate change.
11. *Prefabrication*: If there is use of readymade newspaper texts and it is covered with little modification.
12. *Emotion*: If the events cover emotional topics such as tragedy, survivors, victims etc.

13. *Continuity*: If the same topic is covered for more than a week, the topic is considered as having continuity news value.
14. *Others*: If there is coverage of newsworthy criteria other than 1-13, it is specified here.

13. Quoted Actors and Quoted Sources

Quoted actors and sources are coded when the interviewee refers to a person, organisation or country.

1. *Government*: If the interviewee mentions government or government-affiliated people (Nepalese) either directly or indirectly.
2. *Non-government*: If the interviewee mentions a non-government organisation or people (Nepalese).
3. *International*: If there is a reference to foreign government, non-government organisations or persons affiliated to these organisations, including universities other than in Nepal.
4. *Media*: If there is direct or indirect reference to media both of Nepal and abroad.
5. *Locals*: If there is direct or indirect reference to local people other than experts.
6. *Others*: If there is a reference to actors/sources other than codes 1-5, it is specified as code 6.

14. Environmental Problems or Risks Type Mentioned

Environmental risks (such as disaster, landslide, flood, earthquake etc) mentioned by the interviewer, interviewee or others in the programme.

15. Illustration/referral in the programme

If the programme contains additional citation by people other than expert (s), codes from 1-6 are specified.

1. *Government authority's voice*: If there is coverage of the voice of a government authority other than an interviewee.
2. *Local voice*: If there is coverage of voices of locals and non-experts, victims etc.

3. *Non government official's voice:* If there are voices of non-government officials other than an interviewee.
4. *Citation from newspaper coverage:* If there is direct quotation and reading from the newspapers.
5. *None:* If the programme is based only interviews and no other additional voices are heard.
6. *Others:* If not from codes 1-5, the citation is specified here.

Appendix 3: Invitation Letter to Expert Groups

Date:

To,

Subject - Media and the Environment: A Focus Group Discussion with
Environment Experts

Dear.....

I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group discussion of Environment Experts to be held on.....The purpose of this focus group discussion is to gain your view of the role of the media in environmental communication in Nepal (Please see the Information Sheet below for further information about the study).

The programme details

Date:

Time:

Lunch:

Location:

The two hour discussion session will include 10-12 participants and will be audio-taped. The results of the study may be presented at academic seminars and conferences or published but your identity will not be revealed. Thank you in advance for participating in this endeavour. If you have any questions, please email me S.Shrestha@surrey.ac.uk

Sincerely,

Sangita Shrestha

PhD Candidate, Culture, Identity and Communication,
Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts & Human Sciences
University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7XH, UK



RSVP

Yes, I can participate in a research group discussion ☐

No, I cannot participate in this research group discussion. ☐

No, I am not interested in participating in any research group discussion. ☐

Appendix 4: Information Sheet for Expert Participants

Constructions of the Environment in Nepal: Environmental Discourses on Air and on the Ground

Coverage of the environment has increased in recent years with the growth of various forms of media. However, there are relatively less studies done on media coverage on environmental issues, particularly focussing on the linkage between the environmental discourses in the media and its interpretation by the audiences. In this regard, it is important to understand the ways in which the media collect and contextualize environmental reports and exactly how this shapes public perceptions - and indeed, whether these 'public' perceptions are actually 'public'. In other words, it is equally important to compare these constructions with the representations of mediated and unmediated local contexts.

In view of the important connection between the media, media audiences and other, perhaps less mediated, social constructions, this study investigates representations of the environment, media audience perceptions on the environmental issues and also relatively unmediated constructions in the Nepalese context. While it will try to contrast media constructions and public opinion with community constructions outside the mainstream public sphere, it will also seek answer to the nature of the interface between mediated and unmediated constructions of the environment in elite urban and more rural settings. Furthermore, it will also investigate the news sources, source contexts and examine how these sources act as claims-makers.

Researcher

Sangita Shrestha, Department of Sociology, University of Surrey

Supervisors

Professor Colin B. Grant and Dr. Kate Burningham, Department of Sociology, University of Surrey

Funding: ORSAS (Overseas Research Students Award Scheme) England & URS (University Research Scholarship) of University of Surrey, UK

Appendix 5: Invitation Letter to City Groups

Date:

To,

Subject - A Focus Group Discussion with City Professionals

Dear.....

I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group discussion of IT Professionals to be held on..... We will mainly talk about what we consider an 'environment' and the role media plays in shaping our knowledge about the environment (Please see the Information Sheet attached for further information about the research).

The programme details

Date:

Time:

Lunch:

Location:

The two hour discussion session will include 10-12 participants from Everest Net and will be audio-taped. The results of the study may be presented at academic seminars and conferences or published but your identity will not be revealed.

Thank you in advance for participating in this endeavour. If you have any questions, please email me S.Shrestha@surrey.ac.uk

Sincerely,

Sangita Shrestha

Culture, Identity and Communication,

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts & Human Sciences

University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7XH, UK



RSVP

Yes, I can participate in a research group discussion ☐

No, I cannot participate in this research group discussion. ☐

No, I am not interested in participating in any research group discussion. ☐

Appendix 6: Information Sheet for City Professionals

Constructions of the Environment in Nepal: Environmental Discourses on Air and on the Ground

Coverage of the environment has increased in recent years with the growth of various forms of media. However, there are relatively less studies done on media coverage on environmental issues, particularly focussing on the linkage between the environmental coverage in the media and its interpretation by the audiences. In this regard, it is important to understand the ways in which the media collect and contextualize environmental reports and exactly how this shapes public perceptions.

In view of the important connection between the media and media audiences, this research aims to investigate environmental media, environmental communication and audiences in Nepal. It will also examine the way media represent environmental stories and explore environmental issues or agendas which have significance in media. Similarly, it will look at environmental news sources and source contexts. Furthermore, it will also try to find out if there is a linkage between environmental media stories and public interpretation of the media generated meanings.

Researcher

Sangita Shrestha, Culture, Department of Sociology, University of Surrey

Supervisors

Prof. Colin B. Grant, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dr. Kate Burningham, Department of Sociology, University of Surrey

Funding: ORSAS (Overseas Research Students Award Scheme) England & URS (University Research Scholarship) of University of Surrey, UK

Appendix 7: Questionnaire for City and Expert Groups

Name.....

Organisation

Age

20 - 30 ☐

30 - 40 ☐

40 - 50 ☐

50 - 60 ☐

60 + ☐

Which media do you use the most? Give the number 1-4 as per your use (in highest to lowest order)

TV ☐

Newspaper ☐

Radio ☐

Internet ☐

Which media do you think have more coverage on the environment?

.....

Do you remember coverage on the environment in any of the media mentioned above in the past few months?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, in which media?

.....

.....

What is the topic about?

.....

Do you listen to Radio Sagarmatha?

Yes ☐

No ☐

In which programme?

.....

Have you heard of *Batabaran Dabali* programme in Radio Sagarmatha?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Do you listen to *Batabaran Dabali* programme?

Yes, sometimes ☐

Yes, regularly ☐

No ☐

If yes, do you remember any of the discussion topics in this programme?

.....