

PROBLEMATICS OF FUNDING CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIC SPACE IN NEPAL

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Much attention is given by foreign donors to the funding of “civil society” in Nepal as a means to increase democracy. This paper attempts to problematize the international financing of civil society by analyzing the manner in which foreign aid impacts the structuring of institutions and spaces. In the context of a lack of alternative economic resources in an aid-dependent country, international funding inhibits the growth of horizontal ties and the norms of reciprocity among organizations – a key component to the building of civil society. Furthermore, the funding of “civil society” can and does lead to the legitimating if not widening of inegalitarian social structures at many different levels and vectors. More specifically, it is revealed that foreign aid has led to the strengthening of regional disparities between Kathmandu and the reinforcement of caste, ethnic and gender hierarchies and inequalities. All of this has consequences for the potential and actual structuring of democratic practices, structures and spaces in Nepal.

Keywords: Nepal, Civil society, Democracy, International aid