

CORRESPONDENCE, ANNOUNCEMENTS, REPORTS

Call for Papers:

“Migration and Changes in the Himalayas”

Tristan Bruslé

Fifty years ago, Toni Hagen stated that a quarter of the Nepalese population was on the move in the winter months. Today, mobility in the Himalayas, in its different forms, seems to have taken on unprecedented proportions. The estimated number of Nepalese people living outside Nepal has reached six million, whereas, of the nine million Uttarakhandis, 30 per cent live outside their native state. Politicians and development workers often consider remittances, which represent between 17 and 25 per cent of the Nepalese GDP, to be the ultimate solution for the country's development and modernization. This is a subject for discussion.

Whether temporary or permanent, foreigners also head for the Indian and Nepalese mountains and piedmonts, whereas internal migrations to towns or to rural areas have induced a major shift in the distribution of populations. New places are colonised and created. The integration of highlanders in the national and international labour market has led to a change in the nature of these movements. Different kinds of mobility coexist in the same locality and even within the same family. The boundaries between internal and international migrations have become somewhat blurred: families use the geographical scattering of their members to minimize risks, thus enhancing new livelihood strategies. Everywhere migration is becoming a norm, and more and more youngsters wish to adhere to this. As a result, transnational communities and diasporas are now making their voice heard to influence politics at home, raising issues of development, citizenship and belonging.

In the Himalayas, mobility can thus be considered a key feature of rural and urban economies and societies, even though this is not a new phenomenon. Its characteristics have changed, migrants choose destinations that are more distant, and impacts in their places of origin are more visible. The link between migration and development should be the subject of an in-depth study, bearing in mind that development creates conditions for greater outward movement. Migration may also be regarded as an expression of social change, while at the same time upsetting local lifestyles.

Here are a few themes that might be discussed: the processes of internal and international migration in relation to family or individual

livelihood strategies; actors of international migration (migrants themselves, *dalal*, manpower companies and state policies); gender issues, in particular concerning certain gendered types of migration; migration and changes: changes in individual aspirations and changes at family and local levels; changes in dwelling places; migration and modernity; spatial mobility and social mobility; migration and development; economic and social remittances; hometown associations and development; the making of a diaspora and the role of the institutions; material and immaterial aspects of a “culture of migration”; associations and building of communities abroad: political, caste and ethnic issues; transnational ethnic movements; issues regarding forced migration, human trafficking and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The cases studied by authors should be linked to current sociological, spatial and political developments in Nepal and India.

Proposals should focus on the Indian and Nepalese Himalayas and their immediate lowlands. They should be based on extended fieldwork, and may be linked to migration and diaspora theories. Very general approaches are not recommended. Diachronic village studies would be of particular interest.

Proposal abstract (no more than 500 words) should be sent to tristan.brusle@vjf.cnrs.fr, before 30th April 2009. The deadline for articles is end of July 2009. Publication is scheduled for autumn 2009.