

River basin planning in the context of federalism: Towards new approaches and alternative pathways

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Policy review and institutional analysis

Objective: Understand key challenges in Nepal's water resources management and potential ways forward

Four interrelated components:

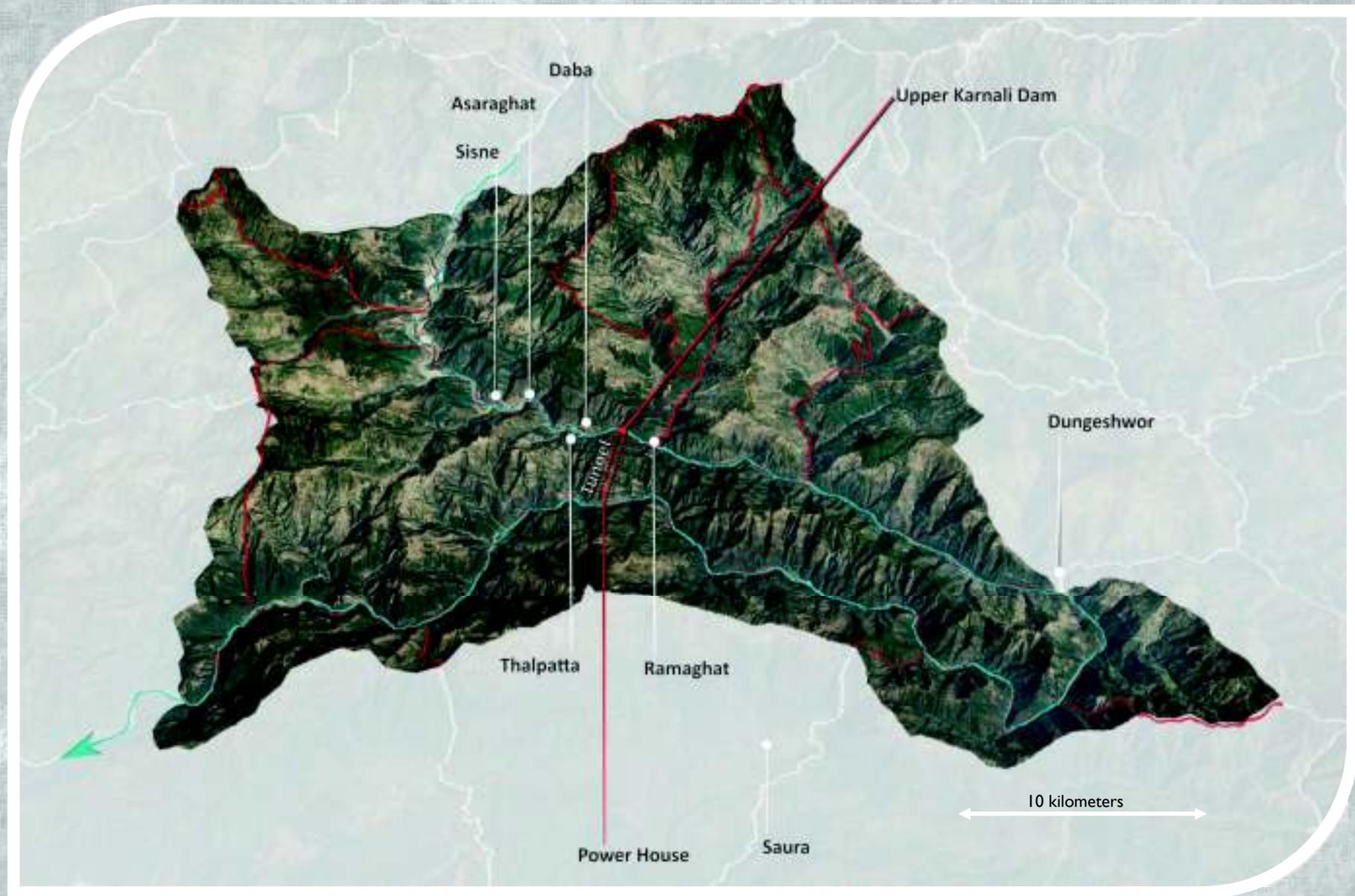
- Comprehensive review of policies and legal frameworks
- Institutional analysis
- Mapping power relationships
- Field research to unpack local communities' views

Hydropower development in Nepal

- The central positioning of hydropower as key means in the government's economic development strategies
- Hydropower development has been met with resistance from NGOs, environmentalist, international agencies
- Concerns on how hydropower decision making processes have been done through top-down approaches

The Upper Karnali hydropower project

- The largest hydroelectric power station with power generation capacity of 900MW
- Nepal receives 12% of generated electricity, with remaining 88% going to India and Bangladesh
- Located in Karnali river, flowing through three districts of Achham, Dailekh and Surkhet

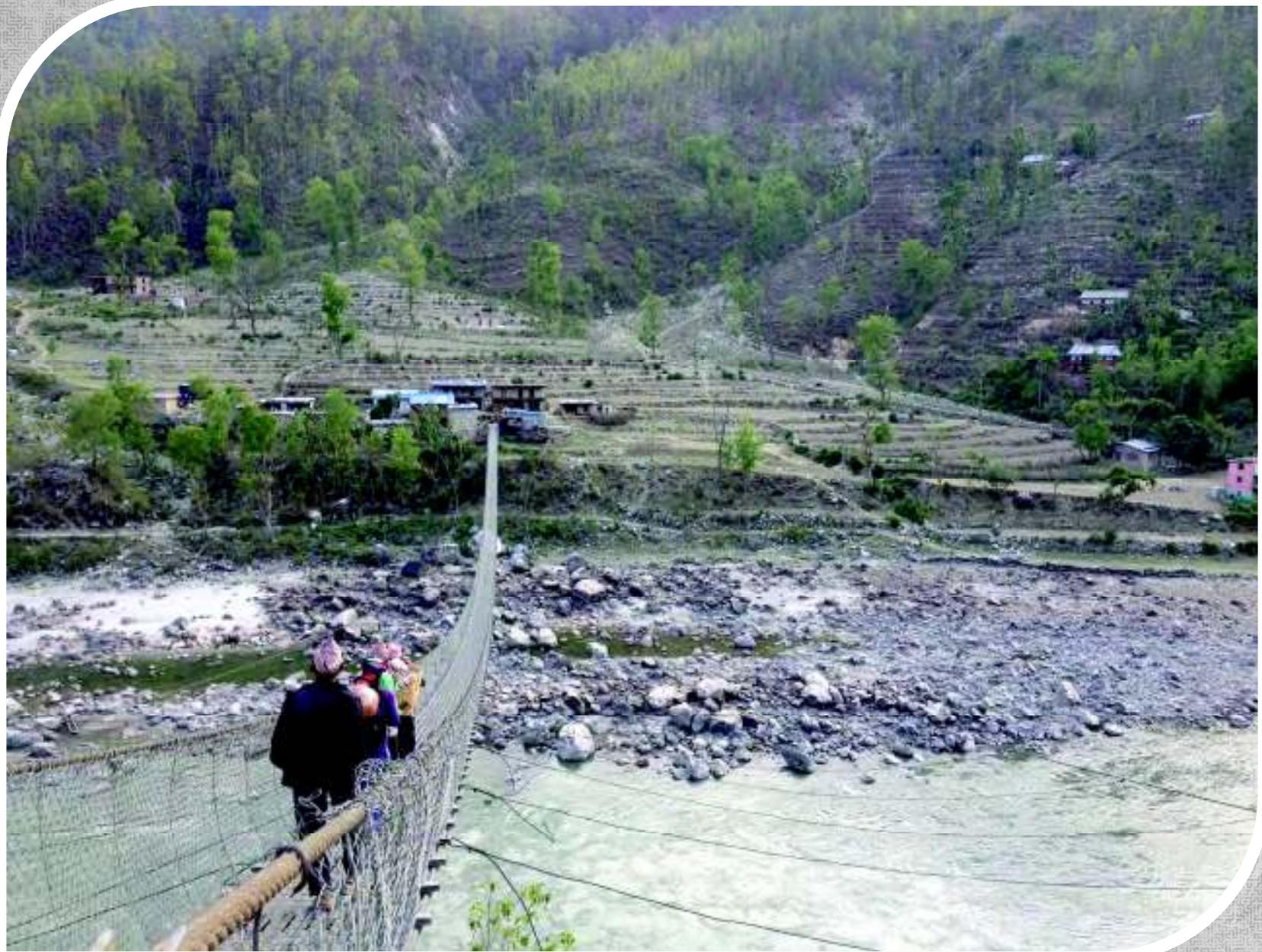


Upper Karnali Concerns Committee

- Formed in 2012 in each of the 12 VDCs that would be affected by the planned hydropower dam project
- The company's first point of contact to reach out to local community, especially pertaining to resettlement and compensation
- Local community's means to negotiate their conditions and needs in relation to the planned hydropower project

Key findings ^{1/3}

- Upstream UKCC view that the planned hydropower project should continue
- Downstream UKCC view that the planned hydropower project should be halted









Key findings 2/3

Rationales behind the different views

- Central in the shaping of upstream villages' view is the negotiated land compensation value
- The company agreed on the defined land compensation value (0.9 million NPR/ropani), which is very high compare to the government's compensation rate and the current land market value
- Upstream villagers view the land compensation payment as additional benefit

Farmer of Sisne Village, May 2018

“At present, we can rely on agricultural production to suffice our food consumption for 5-6 months in a year. Once part of our lowland farmland is inundated, we could only suffice for 2-3 months with regard to home consumption. But if you are poor, it does not really matter as to whether the dam will affect your livelihoods, you will still be poor. The most important thing is that I can now use the money from the land compensation payment to invest in my son’s education to become land surveyor so that he can work and earn money from the company later. Hence, I am willing to take the risk. Without the project, nothing will happen in the area and people will remain poor.”

Key findings 3/3

Rationales behind the different views

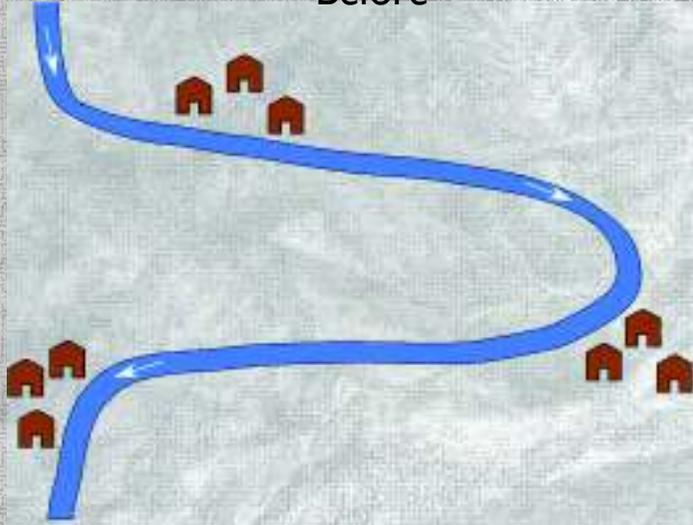
- Central in shaping downstream villages' view is the fact that the company was not able to offer any clarity on compensation
- Downstream UKCC were able to voice local community's concerns but lack any bargaining power to negotiate with the company

Farmer of Saura Village, May 2018

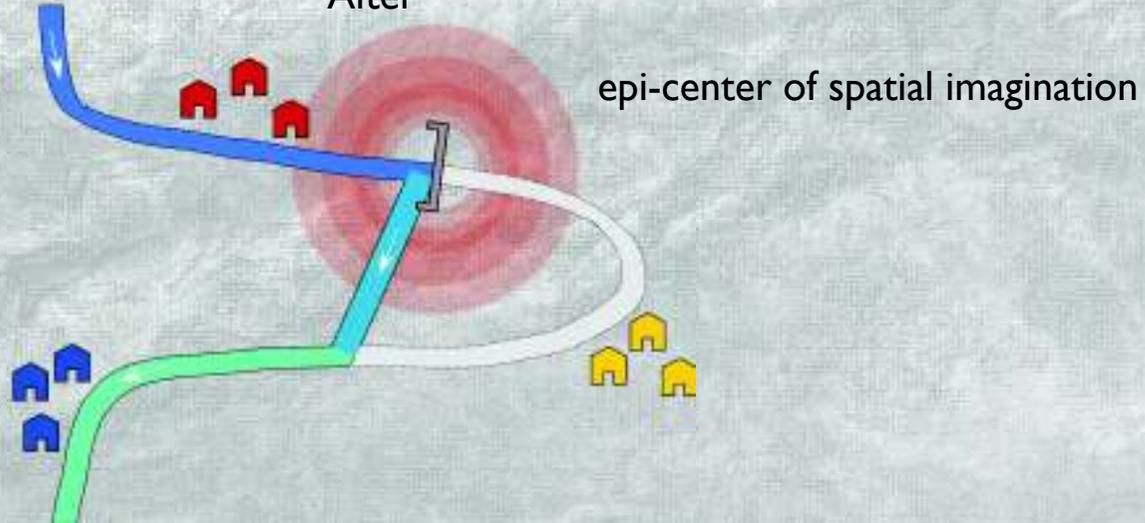
“We are food secured. We do not have cash but we are fine. When the dam project comes, perhaps we would get cash for compensation of our loss of livelihood options. But we do not know how much and whether it will be enough to secure our food needs for the long term.”

Key analysis

Before



After



Key analysis

- Local community's different views and how these views are partly predetermined by their village location in relation to the planned dam site
- How these views cannot be discussed in isolation with the overall notion of social justice

The importance of river basin planning within the context of federalism

- From a platform to coordinate cross-sectoral coordination to an institutional mechanism to prevent and resolve conflict
- River basin planning processes need to be fine-tuned with ongoing processes of federalism
- Incorporation of a bottom-up approach in river basin planning processes
- Capacity building of local governing bodies and putting water central in their work portfolio

Research output

Journal articles

- Suhardiman, D., Bastakoti, R., Karki, E., Bharati, L. 2018. River basin planning and state transformation processes in Nepal. *Geoforum*
- Suhardiman, D., Karki, E. Spatial politics and alliances shaping Nepal's hydropower. Under review in *World Development*
- Suhardiman, D., Karki, E., Bastakoti, R. Putting power and politics central in Nepal's water governance. Under review in *Water Alternatives*

Communication pieces

- Karki, E., Suhardiman, D., Drown, P., Swingle, C. The importance of local voices in Nepal's hydropower projects. *The Third Pole Network*, 8 August 2018
- Suhardiman, D. Nepal and socially just hydropower. *Asia Times*, 21 February 2019

thank you for your kind attention

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Maps by Google Earth 2018



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