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Nurturing consciousness for mobilization: Dynamics of land rights movements in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Conscious participant(s) is crucial in the organization and mobilization of social movements. It mediates the entire process of movement practices. Despite its importance, it is regarded merely as an autonomous internal dynamic, overlooking the role external factors play in building consciousness among marginalized communities. In-depth conversations with movement participants and activists in Nepal's land rights movements, evident that nurturing consciousness is a process predominantly shaped by external factors, particularly the individual and organizations. To transform marginalized communities' everyday experiences into collective realizations, external actors and organizations facilitate marginalized people to become conscious with the use of prevalent approaches and replicated strategies. Nepal's land rights movements provide insights: movement organization's internal efforts are necessary but not sufficient. For influential organizations of movements, marginalized communities adopt external national and international influences to convert their experiences into conscious and influential mobilization.

Keywords: Social movements, consciousness, land rights activism, mobilization

INTRODUCTION

Social movements are a shared means that influence the process of societal change. They have been an important area of scholarly research in both social and political sciences. The causative investigation is a primary concern, which predominantly includes reasons and outcomes of collective mobilization. Although both scientific studies and movement activism are occupied with diverse issues (Kolb, 2007:11-13), the topic and levels of analysis vary widely, encompassing issues

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raised in movement activism and emphasized in social movement studies (Bosi&Uba, 2009:409-10). Marginalization, or activism particularly against policy deprivation, has been a dominant issue incorporating diverse social injustices, while social movement analysis incorporates micro and macro levels of movement mobilizations.

It is difficult to draw a universal definition, as concepts of social movement contain a wide array of social phenomena. The indicators and measures used to define mobilization provide diverse bases of understanding for both process and events, which possibly convey standard definitions. However, different scholars include distinct measures and define social movements in different ways. Scholars, such as Melucci (1980), describe social movements as collective actions, conflicts in advanced capitalist societies. Those who define social movement as an existing social reality often involve collective actions and historical events. These social movement scholars have often been criticized for defining social movements in their own opinion. The critics point to the way scholars deal with the term 'reality' and relying highly historical social structures (Touraine, 1985:749), suggesting that social movements 'must' be defined as socially constructed rather than as a preexisting social entity. Despite exchanging disagreements, social movement scholars have a consensus that mobilization prevails as a process. Doug A. McAdam (1982) is one of them who defines social movements as a political process, which plays an important role in constructing alternative social reality by reforming unjust social values and practices.

Cognitive Liberation

Consciousness, often associated with psychological issues, refers to individuals' understanding or contextual evaluation of the social reality they live in. This understanding is known as cognitive liberation and is considered a central causal factor in the political process within social movement studies (McAdam, 2000:254). Since everything in social movement, Tilly (1997, 2003) writes, is created socially, cognitive liberation too regarding movement's organization is too constructed social (Tilly, 1978). In other words, it is understood as a mediating component through which aggrieved people find a basis for combining shared understandings. Their understanding is reflected in collective actions during movement mobilizations. Cognitive liberation is thus a combination of perceived injustice and collective efficacy (McAdam, 1982:2). Despite the significance of political opportunities and organizational strengths, cognitive liberation is a primary requirement that encourages individuals to convert their grievances into movement emergence.

McAdam (2000) argues that cognitive liberation bridges the organizational strengths of mobilizations and opportunities in existing political landscapes. In a simple sense, shared understanding facilitates people in adapting political

opportunities and harnessing organizational strengths to initiate or produce effective mobilizations. This is a 'structural potential,' according to McAdam, for collective action, mediating between opportunities and actions, notably reflecting organizational strengths. However, it is not an emotional dimension that inspires individuals for collective action, which remains crucial at all times, particularly for emergence, continuity, and effective mobilization (Futrell, 2003:361). It is important to acknowledge that, despite its emotional interpretations, consciousness is imperative for the conditions necessary for the origin and mobilizations, as well as for realizing them.

Movement mobilization

Paradoxically, mobilization in social movement studies comprises resources (Jenkins, 1983:528). Although this has been controversial, social movement scholars emphasize the importance of multifactorial approaches that catalyze social movements. Classical social movement scholars like McCarthy and Zald (1973) highlight collective action in terms of resources and their persuasion for mobilization. Extending Tilly (1978), specify mobilization as a concept of political alliances, which leads movements either to success or failure. It is necessary to establish a shared understanding among social movement theories, particularly among social movement scholars, that mobilization holds a much broader meaning and scope in social movement studies. Foremost, one should consider mobilization as a process of social movements that reflects and represents the entire social reality, constructed by challenging existing realities by marginalized groups. McAdam (1982) writes that it is an institutional arrangement to acquire power, crucial for reforming existing power relations.

The notion of mobilization in social movement studies, as defined by Tilly (1978), is a potential alliance that facilitates and encourages individuals to form and mobilize social movements. It occurs only if individuals find a shared social ground, such as coordination and strategic effort (Snow et al., 2004:3-4), and agree to form a collective actor – a movement organization. Mobilization, in this regard, is mostly about organization, which forms movements. What this implies is that mobilization, despite the political process theory (McAdam, 1982), refers to a process of constructing norms and values that challenge existing unjust social arrangements. 'New' social construction (McAdam, 2000p.254) includes individuals' shared identity, collective understanding of the situations, common problems, collective strategies to resist social injustices, and common voices for reformations.

Land rights movements

Land rights movements are conceptually linked to the development of concepts, manifested through various policies (Borras & Franco, 2012:35), property rights in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Feeny, 1984). The institutional

shifts and arrangements—from community to family and family to state—in occupying and (re)engineering the economic purposes of land have often been influential in the origin and mobilization of land rights. The rise and evolution of property rights have not only changed the way institutions interfere in land management or governance but have also introduced new forms of economic inequalities, shifting the paradigm of land and the institutions involved in land governance. In the post-twentieth century, the state took over land governance from communities and families (Feeny, 1984:4). The key driving element, in terms of incorporating economic inequalities in land rights movements, was the unwanted or inappropriate state engagement in land management, particularly in changing the definition of the relationship between people and land.

Primarily, in defining and determining the relationship between people and land, the state has become the most powerful and ultimate institution. Legal reforms are the major measures on which movements' participants have a mixed response, defining how people can access land and the legal requirements to become legally rightful persons to claim rights over land. Mostly, the legal limitations excluding social realities have been the most complex element fueling the origin and mobilization of land rights activism (Franco, 2008, p.995). The state's policy initiatives for land reform—though less accomplished—and their potential or prevailing impacts on people, both those with or without legal access to land, have been the most vibrant foundation for the emergence and mobilization of land rights movements. Rural, particularly the landless people, are primary entities of land rights movements. Emerging 'new' political opportunities, increasing strengths of movement organizations, and pacifying state land governance strategies have played a historical role in uniting people, organizing land rights activism, and mobilizing them.

National land rights forum (NLRF)

In Nepal's land rights movements, the National Land Rights Forum (NLRF) is known for its nationwide organizational presence, the number of movement participants, the period it dedicated to land rights activism, and the strategies it adopted to mobilize landless people. NLRF was established in Kathmandu in 2004 and has successfully associated more than 95,000 landless individuals in 59 out of 77 districts (CSRC, 2006). The primary participants of NLRF's movements include landless tenants (both of Birta land and Guthi land), bonded free laborers or Kamaiyas, squatters, and individuals in unsettled residential areas (CSRC, 2011,p.7). The central concerns raised by NLRF through land rights movements contain the redistribution of access to land and gender equality in land ownership, advocating for the rights to property for landless people.

NLRF's organizational stance incorporates diverse issues of landlessness. The central task it carries out is awareness campaigns involving shared problems such as

social mappings, dialogues, and group discussions, which focus entirely on landlessness and its policy linkages. Mobilizations related to land rights exist at different administrative levels, including village, district, provincial, and national levels (NLRF, 2009:3). Collaborations with other organizations dedicated to similar issues are dominant strategies NLRF adopts in nationwide land rights activism.

ARGUMENTS, SIGNIFICANCE, AND METHODOLOGY

In recent studies on social movements, the political process approach (McAdam, 1982) has become a widely used perspective. Among three main components—political opportunity structures, cognitive liberation, and organizational strengths—political opportunity structures are commonly employed to understand the dynamic process of movement mobilization. Conversely, cognitive liberation is often overlooked or merely seen as a mediating factor (McAdam, 2000,p.253). This aspect is examined in the field of social movements in Nepal, which is exceptional in the field.

Even in McAdam's extensive work on the importance of cognitive liberation, it is typically viewed as an autonomous internal dynamics of movement organization and perception of individual movement participants, with minimal consideration for immediate external factors that influence the emergence and development of mobilization. The efforts of external organizations working on similar issues and in social locations are not thoroughly studied.

This paper adopts a qualitative methodology, utilizing interviews for primary data collection. The primary research participants were stakeholders of the National Land Rights Forum (NLRF), including leaders and landless people from Sindhupalchok and Rasuwa districts, although the composition of landless people includes approximately ninety-six thousand individuals from 59 districts. Informal conversations, accomplished from April to July 2022, with research participants were guided by two central research questions. However, the interviews were conducted within purposive sample by adapting judgmental approach of selecting research participants, landless people associated with land rights mobilization were selected under snowball sampling by approaching the gatekeepers.

In this article, I am focused on exploring how marginalized individuals, especially the landless, become conscious of their life conditions, particularly their landlessness. Landlessness is considered essential in the origin and mobilization of land rights movements. The article also explores how these landless negotiate the external forces that empower them in mobilizing movements. This article not only analyzes the process of nurturing consciousness among the landless but also identifies the predominant forces that make them aware of their landlessness, facilitating their role as a central element in the entire movement mobilization process.

Reconsidering social movements

The ongoing movements advocating for land rights, both globally and locally, are closely tied to individuals' claims to land property rights and their envisioned connections to it. These movements deal with the continual evolution or restructuring of laws and policies, aiming to address historical injustices while considering the current needs of landlords and the rights of original owners (Reibold, 2022,p.7).

In simpler terms, the challenges related to share land rights represent the individual struggles each person faces, forming the basis for organized mobilization efforts. However, the essence of these land rights issues, shared by personal experiences and collectively acknowledged, often becomes a source of contention within governmental policies. This tension arises because individuals seek a lasting reciprocity with the land, a relationship influenced by factors such as possession status and shifts in economic policies.

To promote initiation and progress of social movements, including those focusing on land rights, the involvement of intermediary organizations is crucial. These organizations play a pivotal role in establishing connections among individuals facing rights issues, operating on local, national, and even international levels. The women's land-use movements in Morocco (Berriane, 2016:357) exemplify a dynamic interplay between the social movement they initiated and the support garnered from national and international organizations committed to addressing their concerns. This external support manifests in various forms, such as transnational human rights networks.

It is evident that the genesis of any social movement at the local level significantly relies on the logistical and knowledge support provided by external national and international organizations. The common origins of social movements, considering factors influencing their emergence and mobilization, prominently involve the dissemination of key issues. It is not only individuals deprived of certain rights who depend on externally provided education. Rather, it is crucial to recognize that people seek reliable references to validate and resonate with their experiences of unjust situations embedded in their histories.

The nature of experiences and their contexts may change, yet the beginning of every local-level social movement, be it in urban or rural settings, necessitates a close partnership with NGOs and urban activists. A notable example is the Punjab Tenants Association (AMP) in India, originating in rural Punjabi villages and expanding nationally with the support of both domestic and international organizations (Rizvi, 2019:305). Whether acting as facilitators or external supporters, both types of organizations place a significant emphasis on educating individuals deprived of their rights. The prevailing approach adopted by these organizations involves awareness campaigns aimed at steering people away from accepting unjust

social practices fashioned by state policies and motivating them to organize for mobilization.

For instance, Bolivia's landless peasants leveraged indigeneity as a political tool to shape grassroots land politics, collaborating with Native people and non-governmental organizations focused on similar issues (Fabricant, 2012:13). This highlights the undeniable fact that no social movements, despite sharing prevalent issues, originate without external education on specific rights issues and individuals' adoption of knowledge about these problems, along with the cognitive skills to resonate with them.

Catalyst of land rights movements in Nepal

In Nepal's social movements, rural people play a crucial role, especially when state authorities and socially privileged groups take notice. Economic disparity, particularly landlessness, often drives them to engage in activist movements. However, the significance of their mobilization depends on broader external support.

Ghimire (2006) contends that Nepal, like Brazil and Egypt, confronts a crucial confrontation between impoverished rural people and dominant social groups for the emergence, development, and effective mobilization of social movements. Rural uprisings, Mkandawire (2002) argues, among peasants often hinge on the authorities' response to their shared problems. In this sense, the dominant number of Nepal's social movements emerge through the formation of collective identity, the exploration of new public spheres, and the adoption of new strategies. Although social movements often emerge locally, Sapkota (2014) argues that ideological leadership is largely influenced by those who provide education or initiate empowerment about shared problems. His study on the Tharu people in mid-western Tarai illustrates that ordinary Tharus generally tend to follow the leadership and their interpretation of shared problems (Sapkota, 2014:18).

In Nepal, mobilizations are essential for social movements, and they do not occur by chance or spontaneously. Each movement adjusts global strategies to address local issues and finds solutions. This adjustment involves the local leaders leveraging external political or ideological networks (Ismail, 2018,p.631), and navigating the complex dynamics of internal cooperation with international organizations and national elites. Similarly, Dahal (2004) observes that social movements in Nepal incorporate post-modern knowledge for effective movement mobilizations. This adaptation involves an educational component essential for people deprived of rights to comprehend their conditions and organize collective activism.

Land rights mobilizations

From a historical perspective, Nepal's land rights movement finds its roots in the political unification of autonomous indigenous territories in Nepal. This process

was not without resistance, as evidenced by the ethnic revolts of the 19th century in eastern Nepal. The involuntary displacement from traditional Kipat land, as documented by Caplan (1970), and its adverse cultural impacts on the indigenous community, such as the Limbus, served as catalysts for individual grievances, thus paving the way for the emergence of land rights movements. The conversion of Kipat land into Raikar land, as noted by Pandey (1985), further fueled collective discontent, particularly among marginalized groups like the Limbus, who found themselves deprived of access to their traditional land.

Besides the state's territorial occupation of traditionally managed indigenous land, the state's policy of private land registration also triggered indigenous people to realize the requirement of collective resistance. The 1960s Tharus land rights activism (Rose, 1977,p.47) in western Nepal is the most relevant example to point out Nepal's significant land rights movements. The policy caveats, serving dominant caste groups and state authorities to occupy indigenous territory, were dominant triggers of realization for mobilization. It resulted in firsthand experience of being landless or deprived of legal abolition of community ownership (Shrestha, 1987:374) over Tharus' territorial land because of systematic state policy marginalization. Although people's engagement in mobilization remained unlimited in caste and ethnic identity it encouraged other social groups. The state's policy commitments and lethargic implementation were the most triggering factors that sparked public outrage, such as the 1952 TamasukFattaAndolan and the 1970 JhodaAndolan, which are some of the remarkable land rights movements (Rose, 1977,p.47) in other geographic regions of Nepal.

Triggering mobilization

Shifting cultivation, or the way by which people access land, has been crucial in redefining the relationship between people and land in Nepal (Rasul &Thapa, 2003:498), leading to changes in the land use system and the evolution of land use policy. Besides broader changes in people-land relations, the reinterpretations of the legal basis for land access and policy reforms in land management have been significant triggers of collective discontent (Mishra&Sam, 2016,p.366-67) among landless people, promoting them to organize and mobilize land rights mobilization. Land-use policy, particularly in terms of landlessness, property rights, and associated opportunities (Nepali, 2016,p.461), has been the primary source of collective grievances. In addition to people-land relationships, frequent shifts in state policies have also caused public outrage, compelling landless people to participate in land rights movements. The abolition of practices such as the Haliya and Kamaiya systems, which provide agricultural labor, has highlighted the importance of movements, as people have no alternative means of maintaining basic requirements.

State policy, particularly the legal framework for land management, has had an unlimited impact on the emergence of land rights movements. Political resistance and the strategic mobilization of peasants have also influenced landless people. The peasants' movements in Dang in the 1960s (INSEC, 1995,p.11) exemplify the political parties' collaboration with landless people. Although political transitions have been crucial for these movements, whether, in the 1960s or 2990s, they emerged from a realization of deprivation of land rights due to changes in the political system, significantly democracy. Post-1990s land rights movements have been particularly aware of the relationship between people and land, reframed by the tenure system (CSRC, 2005,p.8) in Nepal. The empowerment campaigns were the most pertinent factors that elevated people's consciousness of landlessness and the potential collective efforts required to overcome the situation.

Actors and organizations

Land rights movements represent collaborative efforts between landless people and development organizations. Local activists, landless individuals, and national and international development organizations (both NGOs and INGOs) have joined forces to address land rights issues. Their primary concern is to raise awareness among people and facilitate them to mobilize for change. Among these organizations, ActionAid Nepal has been a pioneer, focusing on empowering people to claim their rights, which they have been cultivating for decades (S.W. Nepal Pvt. Ltd. [Scott Wilson Nepal], 2021). Tenure governance and agrarian policy reforms have consistently been at the center of their advocacy efforts, aiming to economically empower landless peasants. ActionAid Nepal has made significant efforts to mitigate landlessness in collaboration with local and national development organizations like the Community Self Reliance Center (CSRC). These organizations work together to identify land-related problems and assist landless people in challenging all legal and policy injustices.

The Community Self Reliance Center (CSRC), founded in Sindhupalchok in 1996, has emerged as a prominent organization addressing landlessness, with a particular focus on tenants' issues. CSRC's primary aim is to educate and facilitate landless people in forming and mobilizing collective actions (CSRC, 2011,p.17). Similarly, the National Land Rights Forum (NLRF), formed by leaders and activists from CSRC in Kathmandu in 2004, has played a crucial role in uniting Nepal's landless, collaborating with other local NGOs (NLRF, 2011). Hunger strikes, tenants' rights case registration campaigns, cycle rallies, and mass protests in the capital city of Nepal were some of the fundamental strategies NLRF employed to mobilize land rights activism (CSRC, 2005,p.8). Although they were short-lived, the Bagdari and Pitmari movements in the 1990s, and the Kamaiya Concern Group's movements in 2000, were other significant examples of mobilizing landless people's movements in Nepal.

From experiences to empowerments: A journey of realization

The foundation of the National Land Rights Forum (NLRF), socially and administratively, is located in Kiul, Sindhupalchok. Landlessness and the everyday confrontation of the rural farming community, particularly local tenants, were central to its organizational emergence. These tenants, facing suppression from local landlords, played a central role in its emergence. A key factor was the landlords' refusal to accept the tenants' schedule for cultivating and harvesting crops on the Birta land, which the tenants had been cultivating for decades.

In 1994, three significant incidents occurred in Kiul and Talamalang villages in Sindhupalchowk. Initially, local farmers requested receipts for the levies they had paid to state authorities for their decades-long engagement with Birta land, but the landlords harshly declined. Farmers sought these receipts to claim proportional land ownership on Birta land.

According to a research participant from Talamalang, Sindhupalchok, the government officially appealed the tenants nationwide for the land to be claimed with receipts of levies paid to landlords. Most of the tenants in the village failed to provide receipts for their rights over the Birta land. Another research participant, who used to be an elected ward member from the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxists and Leninists) in Kiul and was a tenant himself, consulted with state authorities mobilized for the Birta land registration campaign. He was suggested to get a receipt from his landlord living in Kathmandu. However, the landlords refused to comply with the government's announcements. This tension forced tenants to think critically about their relationship with land and the key barriers they faced in accessing land ownership, which nurtured obstacles to independent practices of crop planting and harvesting.

Tenants resisted the landlords' refusals and continued their practices of crop plantation and harvesting. This defiance resulted in physical suppressions, including assaults and police interventions. The continuous and intensified suppression forced tenants to organize at the local level, although the formation and organization of collective actions were more informal and non-institutionalized in structure.

In the same village, there existed a local development organization known as the Community Self Reliance Center (CSRC), established in 1993 by a group of local youths. The organization focused on addressing local agricultural issues, including the construction of irrigation canals, providing fertilizers and seeds, conducting agricultural training, and offering other related orientations to local farmers. CSRC collaborated with ActionAid Nepal, an international non-governmental organization (INGO), to support local peasants relying on Birta land.

The local peasants, experiencing administrative suppressions and physical tortures from landlords, accepted the organizational support CSRC offered in fighting against these oppressions. CSRC's local campaigns facilitated tenants in

intensifying their understanding of the situations they faced through confrontations with local landlords. CSRC facilitated particularly to invite legal experts of Birta land and tenants' rights. A research participant from CSRC reported that the primary tasks legal experts carried out included educational campaigns on legal arrangements and policies that favor tenants to claim their rights over Birta land.

CSRC expedited tenants by providing legal experts in land rights and inviting leftist political leaders to educate them about the importance of organized resistance in demanding an end to inequality in accessing Birta land. The official publications (CSRC, 2005, 2006, 2008) illustrate that the number of political leaders engaged in facilitating tenants was composed of prominent political figures of the Communist Party of Nepal.

Political leaders, as male founding members of the BirtaSarokarSamiti (Committee for Birta Concerns), which later converted to NLRF, reported that they explained legal provisions in simplistic terms by relating them to the tenants' conditions of access to Birta land. According to them, workshops and education classes conducted by political leaders helped tenants raise their collective voice.

One of the significant changes or strengths tenants experienced or built up was that they realized why they must be organized and struggle collectively to gain legal association with Birta land. Formation of collective efforts and expand its organizational strengths and its social scope, local leaders of tenants' movement realized necessity of national organization, as mentioned in previous paragraph, took initiation to build a national land rights organization, NLRF.

NLRF, with the support of CSRC, facilitated tenants in identifying influential causes to their life conditions. NLRF established community learning centers in local areas and conducted empowerment campaigns using strategies like storytelling, dialogues, and social mapping among landless people, drawing upon the Paulo Freireian approach (1982). These campaigns effectively enhanced tenants' level of consciousness and prepared them for collective actions.

The social coordinators of CSRC working in the local community were the primary facilitators of people who played a significant role in organizing tenants in community learning centers. According to a female social coordinator working in Sindhupalchok, her primary responsibility was to inform people about each upcoming program of CSRC and distribute educational materials such as books, pamphlets, magazines, and other printed materials about land rights. Besides facilitation, she was also assigned to stay in frequent touch with tenants and convey news and messages about government policy updates provided through CSRC.

The community centers, integral to educating landless people, relied on CSRC's internal bureaucracy for implementation. CSRC's social mobilizers played a crucial role in connecting landless people with NLRF's land rights movements. It's noteworthy that NLRF and CSRC recruited their employees similarly, emphasizing the importance of grassroots involvement in their movements.

Roots and practices: Uniting Around various triggers

The intertwined dynamics of mobilizing, which contain the origin of movement practices, depend on the way individuals build their consciousness of life conditions. Although the research findings illustrate the process of awareness building as autonomous and integrated with various other external factors, unnoticed in social movement studies, particularly from a political process perspective. Frequent local confrontations are essential for the development of individual consciousness, which inspires people to be organized for systematic resistance. Despite being a necessary condition, the realization of individuals constituted through local confrontation remains insufficient and requires other external factors such as organizational support to integrate marginalized people into movement activism.

Power of shared identity

The formation of shared realization is the cornerstone of any movement mobilization. Individuals, deprived of rights and opportunities, play a pivotal role in shaping collective understandings through their interpretation of life conditions. There is no fixed formula for what constitutes collective consciousness.

However, McAdam (1982) emphasizes the importance of a combination of perceived social injustices and engagement in mediating people to organize movements. This social construction of consciousness, referred to by McAdam as cognitive liberation, involves a process that helps people build collective action—a fundamental element (Goodwin, et al., 1999,p.28) of effective movement mobilization. Although McAdam acknowledges the mediating role of collective understanding of the situation, he overlooks the importance of coexisting local privileged opponents.

The dynamic interaction between the assertive demand for rights and the privileged refusal to acknowledge them often plays a crucial role in fueling local confrontation. This interplay occurs spontaneously, yet the act of claiming rights and denying them is an imperative factor that breeds discontent between marginalized and privileged groups within the same social landscape. Paradoxically, it is through these persistent clashes that social movements, such as local land rights mobilization, find fertile ground for emergence and mobilization.

The National Land Rights Forum (NLRFF) provides a significant example of this phenomenon, as it leveraged local confrontations to spearhead its land rights advocacy efforts. The foundation's genesis can be traced back to the routine clashes between tenants, groups of landless people dependent on Birta land for survival, and landlords of Sindhupalchok district of Nepal. In the mid-1990s, for instance, local farmers cultivating Birta land refused to comply with the landlords' instructions regarding the timing of paddy rice harvesting. While initially limited to individual acts of defiance, the landlords' attempts to suppress these dissenting voices ultimately galvanized other landless tenants to join forces in collective resistance.

This collective resistance transcended individual grievances and fostered solidarity among tenants sharing the same caste and ethnic backgrounds within the villages of Kiul, Sindhupalchok. The events in Kiul underscore the notion that shared understanding and collective action can arise from confrontations, thereby engendering a sense of shared consciousness.

To withstand local confrontation effectively, individuals deprived of their rights must cultivate a common social identity rooted in shared ancestry or geographical proximity. This shared identity serves as a resilient foundation upon which collective resistance can be built, ultimately challenging entrenched systems of privilege and injustice.

Intervention for and refusal to policy reform

Despite the undeniable necessity of local confrontations, mere clashes alone fall short of institutionalizing a shared understanding of deprivation among individuals. What individuals truly need are absolute institutional norms, such as state policies, which are often rejected by privileged social groups, in order to systematically cultivate their awareness.

External intervention, particularly in the form of state policies or regulations aimed at reforming societal realities, is imperative for the genesis and organized mobilization of any social movement. McAdam (1996) convincingly argues that individuals must reflect on their life history and compare their past and present conditions with those of others in similar social settings to construct a shared understanding. This assertion holds true, especially when other external factors that could influence the process of building common awareness are controlled.

However, it's crucial to consider external institutional factors to fully comprehend the dynamics of the origin and mobilization of movements, such as the land rights movement. For example, in the confrontations between tenants and landlords in Kiul, Sindhupalchok, the groundwork for realizing suppression and identifying prerequisites, particularly shared social identity, was laid. Yet, this realization remained largely insignificant until tenants faced the landlords' refusals to provide receipts for levies paid on Birta land.

Anecdotes from research participants highlight this point vividly. As the Government of Nepal reformed Birta land management policy in 1994 (Upreti, 2008:18), and mandated the registration of certain amounts of Birta land in the names of tenants (CSRC, 2006), tenants were forced to request receipts for the levies they had paid. However, when landlords refused to issue these receipts—a necessary document for providing evidence of their long-standing engagement in cultivating Birta land—the tenants, lacking such receipts, decided to form a local organization of landless people in Kiul, Sindhupalchok, to pressure local landlords.

This serves as evidence that, in addition to locals realizing their deprivation through local confrontations, state policy intervention and privileged resistance to

compliance play pivotal roles. State policies aimed at social reform, such as those attempting to register Birta land in tenants' names, are essential external components that provide a logical foundation for institutionalizing a shared understanding of the life conditions among people deprived of particular rights issues.

Menu for awareness

To effectively mobilize a results-oriented movement, participants must develop their reasoning skills through collective realization. This process involves individuals comparing their life conditions and demands for reform with state policies. McAdam (1982) argues that this occurs as individuals interpret their own life circumstances, sometimes overlooking external influences. However, if local confrontations and state interventions remain unchanged, locally organized individuals need the collective efforts of organizations to connect their understanding with broader social contexts and identify others facing similar challenges.

Despite potential contradictions with McAdam's notion of cognitive liberation, organizations serving as facilitators or partners in mobilization provide a crucial range of tasks for participants to understand their life conditions and the steps needed to address them. This menu, as participants described, may include forming mobilization groups, establishing community learning centers, providing training for marginalized groups, and developing frameworks for expanding collective understanding.

Despite attempts to find local relevance, evident from participant interviews, external supporting organizations often adhere to particular theoretical approaches, potentially enhancing individuals' ability to challenge their existing circumstances. NLRF, for instance, prioritizes the establishment of community learning centers to educate people on their life conditions, recognizing the significance of their relationship with land. These centers facilitate tasks such as social mapping and dialogue generation, drawing from the conscientization process (Freire, 2017, p.13).

This adaptation of external methodologies underscores the local community's commitment to strengthening their understanding of their conditions—a prerequisite for organizing and mobilizing a movement. However, it's important to note that marginalized people may require or follow an institutionalized orientation to fully grasp their shared understanding, underscoring the need for certain tools and techniques facilitated by organizations.

Integrating campaign with personal needs

McAdam (1982, 1996) suggests that individuals' introspection is a key catalyst for organized collective action, particularly in overcoming deprivation. He argues that this self-reflection, whether achieved individually or through collective

understanding, forms the basis from which people recognize the importance of organized collective action to improve their circumstances. McAdam highlights cognitive liberation as a crucial component of social movement mobilization, involving contextual interpretation, comparison of life circumstances, personal anecdotes, and the search for solutions.

However, McAdam's framework overlooks the role of external factors in integrating marginalized individuals' needs with mobilization campaigns and state policies. While he emphasizes the significance of individual awareness in driving activism, he fails to acknowledge the influences of policy exclusion, social normative marginalization, and daily encounters with these factors in promoting marginalized individuals to become conscious of their circumstances.

NLRF's experiences provide evidence of how external campaigns, often initiated and organized by outside entities, mediate the awareness of individuals deprived of rights and access to opportunities available to others within the same society. Despite the necessity of addressing individual exclusion, such as landlessness, external organizations play a significant role in empowering the cognitive strengths of marginalized individuals and integrating their personal struggles with broader movement objectives.

Anecdotes from NLRF's female participants illustrate how personal struggles, such as difficulties accessing bank loans due to landlessness, become intertwined with the objectives of the land rights movement. For example, one research participant shares her experiences of being approached by NLRF leaders and social coordinators, who explained the importance of joining the movement. Her involvement eventually led to her becoming the first female president of her village and a prominent leader in the land rights forum.

This demonstrates the integration of personal problems with defined movement objectives, highlighting the role of external organizations in providing a platform for marginalized individuals to address their issues collectively. Thus, while individual awareness is crucial, realization often depends on external organizations offering a space for marginalized people to integrate their problems, leading to a shared understanding of their particular situations.

CONCLUSION

Conscious landless individuals are crucial to land rights mobilization at all scales, as their awareness not only creates social and political space for movements but also empower them to challenge and negotiate change. While nurturing consciousness is key to this mobilization, various forces that shape how landless become aware of their situation and its consequences. In land rights movements, it is crucial to understand this process and the forces involved in becoming landless aware for effective mobilization, yet this is often overlooked in most of the studies in land rights movements.

The National Land Rights Forum (NLRF) was founded in Kiul and Talamarang villages in Sindhupalchowk district, Nepal as a cornerstone of land rights movements. NLRF played a crucial role in raising consciousness among the landless, especially Birta tenants, to resist the suppression of local landlords. The catalyst for their resistance was the government's requirement for documents providing their agricultural engagements on Birta land to claim ownership, which forced them to move against oppression.

Empowering the landless were Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like the Community Self Reliance Center (CSRC) and ActionAid Nepal, with whom NLRF collaborated extensively for conscious mobilization landless in land rights movements. Alongside organizational supports, the landless received education from experts and professionals like the Lawyers in land rights, facilitated by local social mobilizers who played noteworthy role in nurturing consciousness among them.

Realization, whether individual or collective, plays a crucial role in the birth and advancement of social movements. However, it is not just internal factors that are important; external factors, such as local confrontations between privileged and marginalized groups, as well as the role of external organizations in empowering individuals' consciousness, often go unnoticed. While individuals deprived of rights and opportunities are pivotal in fostering collective understanding and sparking movement activism, the ongoing interaction between oppressed and privileged groups is equally vital for shaping collective realization.

For marginalized individuals to translate their personal realization into actionable collective advocacy, external support is often necessary. This support may manifest in state policies aimed at social reform or efforts to integrate individual needs into broader social mobilization endeavors. Notably, the reluctance of privileged groups to adhere to state interventions or acknowledge the demands of marginalized communities serves as a crucial precondition in this process.

McAdam's concept of cognitive liberation is essential in understanding how marginalized groups coalesce into collective resistance. However, his emphasis on internal dynamics overlooks the contextual intricacies of empowerment campaigns and the institutionalization of shared understanding, as seen in movements like Nepal's land rights struggles. The integration of personal circumstances with local confrontations, educational initiatives led by movement organizations, and resistance to state policies by both privileged groups and marginalized communities all significantly contribute to the realization process, which is central to the origin and mobilization of social movements.

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