

Educational patterns among slum youth in Kathmandu, Nepal

My research is based on 6 months ethnographic fieldwork in a slum settlement in Kathmandu, Nepal. The main material is life history interviews with youth (14-25 years) living in the slum, as well as interviews with their parents and siblings. The analysis also builds on observations in my informant family's houses, in the local community, in some of the schools my informants go to, of the work of NGOs in the community, as well as interviews with school teachers, NGO staff, local leaders, politicians, government officials in the ministry of education and relevant sub-departments, and other community people.

Through life history interviews with young people living in the slum area Saranghat in Kathmandu, I am tracing important events and trajectories in the lives of young people and their families, and in which ways poverty has affected ways in, and out, of education. The life-history approach can uncover these types of trajectories in a way that remains hidden to most other research methods (see for example Davis 2006, 2010, 2011a, 2011b). The method is particularly useful to detect "turning points", for example how repeatedly negative events, such as the loss of a parent's job or death in the family, defined by Davis as "repeated crisis", are determining poor children's educational trajectories. Likewise, positive turning points, such as prospects for long-term employment is likely to motivate parents to send their child to a more expensive school, and support from NGOs can able parents to send children to school in cases they otherwise would not.

Educational trajectories are narrative accounts of life, which represents and interprets an individual's educational experience (Hones 1999). I line up the educational narratives of around ten families living in the slum area Saranghat in Kathmandu, and I seek to place these educational experiences within important contexts of family, school, and social and cultural structures. Analysing the educational trajectories of young people living in slums in Kathmandu can add valuable information to the understanding of how life of poor people are structured by not only economical fluctuations but also social aspects such as caste, class, ethnicity, gender and social status.