

# **Social capital as an element of adaptive capacity. A case study of two rural villages of Nepal**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis was a contribution to the novel academic discussion on the role of social capital in the adaptive capacity to environmental/climatic changes by investigating how the social capital present in two communities in Nepal (Ramche Village Development Committee (VDC) in Rasuwa district and Simjung VDC in Gorkha district) contributes to the adaptive capacity of these communities. The research took form of an exploratory case study and employed literature review, expert interviews, household interviews, field observations and statistical and meteorological data analysis as research methods.

First, through a comprehensive theoretical analysis the existing knowledge was reviewed and summarised on the concepts of social capital and adaptive capacity, their constituent elements and the attempts of linking the two, drawing from the fields of sociology, development and environmental management. Then, through the theoretical work overarching working definitions of the concepts of social capital and social networks were developed along with fourteen thematic questions to be addressed by the empirical analysis.

The case study followed with detailed thematic analysis of the thematic questions on the role of various elements of social capital (civic engagement, trust, reciprocity, network structures, information flows and cultural practices) in adaptive capacity formation and utilisation, as well as of the influencing factors (religion, education, demographics, marginalization, access to resources, development activities and effects of external actors) influence on social capital itself.