

Dear Readers,

Thank you for taking the time to read this draft. Please do not circulate it. I welcome your suggestions, thoughts, and comments. I plan to submit it to a journal.

Foreign Aid and the Governance of Digital National Identification in Nepal

Harsha Man Maharjan, Institute for Advanced Study in the Global South, Northwestern University in Qatar

Abstract

In the Global South, sociotechnical systems such as digital national identification are expanding rapidly. States are using these systems to govern populations in the context of security and e-governance, with support from financial donors. As the debate about the promise of biometric identification intensified in the Global South, Nepal, a South Asian country, began considering introducing a digital national Identification system. This initiative was prompted by foreign aid from a multilateral bank through an e-governance project. During the project period (2008–2018), Nepal not only planned and designed the national ID system but also implemented it as smart cards. The government portrayed the system as a solution to inefficient governance and the lack of secure identification. This study investigates the situated and grounded nature of the digital ID system within the context of global impetuses. Using Nepal as a case study, this paper asks: How does foreign aid govern the development of digital identification systems in the Global South? The paper examines the assemblage of expertise, materiality, and interests, as well as the political economy, in the making of digital Identification.

1.Introduction

On November 22, 2018, the Asian Development Bank in Nepal posted the following message on its Facebook page: “Nepal’s first digital national ID card was issued in Panchthar this week. Hon. Minister for Home Affairs, Ram Bahadur Thapa, handed over the first ID card to 101-year old Bhagawati Devi Bhandari”. The post also included a link to the project titled “Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Development Project,” initiated in February 2006. This fact

raises the following questions: 1. How is this project related to digital national identification? How has foreign aid governed the development of digital National Identification in Nepal? What implications does Nepal's case have for scholarship on the role of foreign aid in developing digital IDs in the Global South or Majority World?

To discuss these questions, I draw from the debate in development studies regarding the role of foreign aid in partnerships between donors and recipients. Engaging with the concept of developmentality (Lie, 2015; Lie, 2015a; Lie, 2004) allows this paper to account for the complexities and contradictions that have evolved from the power asymmetry between the two actors. Foregrounding this unequal relationship moves the discussion beyond existing debates about the implications of foreign aid from the perspectives of data justice (Masiero, 2025; Masiero & Bailur, 2021) and political economy (Lyon & Topak, 2013). Through an analysis of project documents, interviews with key development and government officers and IT experts, as well as news media content, I argue that developmentality in the ID sector in the Global South emerges in four ways: support for pilot projects (pilot support), the promise of additional support that never materializes (non support), accountability mechanisms, and temporality.

Nepal's case is important because, although many scholars have examined one of the key actors in promoting digital IDs in the Global South — the World Bank (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, 2022; Banegas & Cutolo, 2024) — I mainly examine the implications of assistance provided by the Asian Development Bank. From 2006 onward, the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) international cooperation through a project aimed at digitizing government services, including national identification, played a significant role in establishing environments for digital IDs in Nepal. Consequently, in 2009, the Nepalese government announced that national identification would take the form of biometric smart cards to be used for elections and social services, and it began issuing cards in 2018 (Maharjan, 2021). To implement this identification system, the National ID Management Center was established under the Ministry of Home Affairs in June 2010. In 2019, the Center was merged with the Ministry of Local Development's vital registration work to establish the Department of National ID and Civil Registration (DoNIDCR). Initially scheduled to begin in 2008 and conclude in 2014, the project led by the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (OPMCM) completed only in 2018 (ADB, 2020).

However, Nepal is just one example. The development industry, through international cooperation, is promoting digital ID systems projects in the Global South. These projects are promoted by organizations such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (Adhikari, 2011), the African Bank, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, 2022), and humanitarian aid agencies, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (Coppi, 2024), are promoting digital identification projects in the Global South. The World Bank has provided financial assistance to several countries in the Global South, such as Bangladesh (World Bank, 2011), Nigeria (Eke et al., 2022), Côte d'Ivoire (Banégas & Cutolo, 2024), and Indonesia (World Bank, 2022).

The developmentality perspective contributes to the literature on digital identification by foregrounding the reality of foreign aid, highlighting contradictions, diversity, and ambivalence (Weitzberg et al., 2021). This perspective illuminates aid relations within the context of donors and international development interests in the field of digital IDs (Gelb & Metz, 2018; Gelb & Clark, 2013; Hicks, 2023).

I begin this article by explaining developmentality, which was developed by incorporating ideas from postdevelopment theory and the actor-oriented approach. Then, I discuss the four types of developmentality that have emerged in the ID sector, using Nepal as a case study. Next, I discuss the importance of developmentality as a perspective in studying aid relations and the development of digital IDs in the Global South.

2.Foreign Aid, Developmentality, and Digital IDs

"Developmentality" is a concept that accounts for the asymmetrical power relationship between donors and recipients during a partnership. It was developed in the context of a new aid architecture that promotes the idea of handing power over to recipients. It reveals the disconnect between the rhetoric of equality and the "new aid modality, managerial routines, and governance mechanisms

that enable donors to maintain control in a more subtle manner" (Lie, 2015, p. 31). The focus is on policies and objectives that donors can establish for recipients.

Lie built the concept of "developmentality" by drawing from postdevelopment theory and the actor-oriented approach in development studies, using evidence from Uganda (Lie, 2015). Inspired by Foucault's conceptualization of governmentality, postdevelopment theory focuses on the role of discourses in imposing first-world knowledge on third-world countries. However, postdevelopment theory has been criticized for believing in hegemonic power relations and for ignoring the agency of actors in the Global South. Studies based on postdevelopment theory "fail to account for the relation between discursive representations, their modes of production, and their concrete operations in different contexts" (Jensen & Winthereik, 2012, p. 85). To mitigate this deterministic assumption, the actor-oriented approach is helpful. This approach emphasizes human agency, identifying the practices, strategies, and rationales of different actors. It explores how these practices interlock, assesses their effectiveness in solving specific problems, and considers their wider social ramifications (Long, 2001). Thus, developmentality analysis helps us understand the frictions and contestations that arise in the context of development projects funded by foreign aid, based on empirical analysis.

Developmentality was conceptualized to understand the conditionalities of the World Bank in Uganda. Here, I present the case of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), formed in the 1960s in response to dissatisfaction with the World Bank's prioritization of infrastructure over the needs of Asian countries (Wihtol, 1979). I also discuss Nepal's failed partnership with the World Bank from 2013 to 2015. Lie uses the shift in the World Bank's policies toward the Poverty Reduction and Strategy Paper (PRSP) model and its implementation in African contexts, replacing the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), to promote debate on partnership, ownership, and the participation of recipient organizations. Current research uses the developmentality framework to understand the configuration of aid relations (Lie, 2015a) in the context of digital ID development in Nepal, showing the power asymmetry between donors and recipient institutions that are contingent on different factors. Thus, I use the concept of "developmentality" to understand how donors govern recipients within the digital ID context. This concept captures the evolving

conditions in the context of support and control through tactics such as negotiations, calculations, mutual understanding.

I suggest that the developmentality in Nepal emerges in the ID sector in four ways: pilot support, non support, accountability, and temporality. While pilot support is often seen as funding the initial stages of larger projects, it can also be considered providing small grants that require additional loans. Non support refers to support that is promised but does not materialize. Accountability is measures that donors take to regulate recipients in the environment against good governance. Temporality refers to the conditions under which projects must be completed according to project logic, which may differ from political logic. I understand developmentality in the ID sector as calculations and actions that go beyond the deterministic interests of donors. This analysis is based on an examination of discourse and practices related to aid relations that evolved with two donors: The Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

3.Developmentality and the Governance of Digital NID in Nepal

The perspective of developmentality captures the complex conditions that evolved in the partnership between donors and recipients, showing the asymmetric relations between these actors. This means that, although there are negotiations and disputes between these actors, it is the donors who govern the development of digital IDs using financial capital and power. In case of Nepal, developmentality in the ID sector manifests in these four ways:

3.1.Pilot Support

In Nepal, developmentality is evident in the ADB's support of the NID pilot project. These pilot projects may become a governing mechanism to expand projects further, as financially resource-poor nations in the Global South usually rely more on donors.

The pilot project through which the ADB provided a grant for an ID project with an NID component was the first phase, which was supposed to lead to the second phase. Though no policy or project document mentions this fact, it is well-established knowledge in both the development and government sectors. Though the project began in 2008, planning began in 2004 when the

Nepalese government approached the ADB for support in implementing e-government programs. The political situation unfolded later, mainly due to the royal takeover in February 2005, which hindered the process. The movement against this political situation created an unsuitable time to consider this project. After the movement against the monarch succeeded in April 2006, bringing an end to a decade of Maoist conflict, the new government took further action. Documentary evidence shows that the design for preparing the project began in August 2006. The ADB agreed to provide the first grant of \$0.6 million for technical assistance, financed through Japan's Special Fund. This assistance aimed to prepare an e-government project detailing investment plans, a regulatory framework, and a feasibility study of different e-government applications. A team of twelve consultants prepared a project preparatory report, calculating an estimated budget of \$8 million for the NID component. The ADB then wanted to provide \$120 million. According to a government official who revealed this information to me during an interview in October 2023, two arguments were provided at that time to demonstrate that the substantial loan was not appropriate. First, this was a project related not only to technology but also to government reform, and government bureaucrats were not ready for such changes. Second, to mitigate this challenge, the government requested that the ABD provide a grant for the first phase as a foundational or pilot project. If the project succeeded, the government would take out a loan for the second phase.

After negotiations, it was agreed that the project's estimated cost would be \$31.2 million USD, consisting of a \$25 million grant from the ADB and \$6.2 million from the Government of Nepal (ADB, 2007). The project aimed to digitize government services, including vehicle registration, land records management, driver's licenses, and the national identification system. The NID was allocated \$3.4 million, which was inadequate. In fact, the NID was not prioritized in this project. Therefore, the evaluation report prepared by an independent team stated: "There was no clear scope and requirements planned for the NID implementation, considering this was a complex project entailing a wide-range of perspectives (i.e., technology, business process reengineering cost, and policy)".(P. 6). A development expert involved in the project informed me in a 2023 interview that the NID component did not begin until 2013. To expedite the NID component, perhaps a pilot project was developed around 2012, building the technological infrastructure required for issuing about 100,000 smart cards. The pilot phase of the NID system was completed in 2018 with NID cards issued. A development expert told me that some components of the plan prepared in 2006

became obsolete. This created an opportunity to shift funding to NID. The final report submitted by the Nepal government mentions this: “As a result of the midterm review mission in 2012, the design and monitoring framework (DMF) was revised to drop output 1 (rural connectivity), define the output indicator for the National Identification (NID) system under output 2 to be a pilot phase, and drop academic courses in e-governance as an output indicator under output 4.2”. However, the problem with the pilot project is that it is small; the coverage of NID needs to be expanded. Initially, it was understood that Nepal would receive loans if the project succeeded.

Pilot projects are often developed to mitigate risk and can be discontinued (Turner, 2005). Though this applies to Nepal, there are other aspects as well. If such projects succeed, they could lead to larger projects. These projects are supported through grants in the hope that they will expand and require loans. Often, such pilot projects contain small grants. We can view this as the first phase of the project, which may lead to subsequent phases involving loans. In this context, small grants for pilot projects or the first phase of support become a governing tool in aid relations in the field of digital IDs.

3.2. Non Support

While supporting pilot projects is a manifestation of developmentality in the ID sector, funding can sometimes be a tool of governance, such as when projects are not financed as promised. This is evident in the relationship between the World Bank and Nepal from 2013 and 2015 in expanding digital national ID.

Since the pilot project only financed a system that processed the data of about 100,000 users and purchased and distributed ID cards at no cost, it needed to expand its coverage. This required universal coverage, which Nepal did not have the financial resources to provide. According to a government official who worked on the project in 2012, they approached the World Bank, requesting that it take over the project after it ended in 2014. Not only did the World Bank agree to do so, but it also prepared an aide-memoire and a project description report (Giri, 2013). From 2013 on, this narrative was promoted in Nepal. For example, the state ID agency's website posted

the following: “The World Bank is interested in supporting the National ID Programme. Project Identification Mission of the World Bank visited Nepal in January 2013 and prepared Aide Memoire. The team is working on pre-inception report of the main programme”. Similarly, the English-language newspaper *The Kathmandu Post* wrote that, “In 2015, the World Bank will take the helm of the project, and subsequently, over two million national ID cards will be printed and distributed. The WB has already prepared an aide-memoire and a project description report” (Giri, 2013). The news mentioned that the World Bank was going to provide a \$117 million loan. However, despite the preparation of policy documents such as the aide-memoire and project description report, the World Bank project did not materialize. What could be the reason? A representative of the World Bank in Kathmandu informed me via email that “WB was looking to support the roll out of the national id after the ADB supported pilot, however the pilot phase and procurement were extremely delayed, so the WB could not commit.” There were allegations of corruption and complaints filed at the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA). After the project ended in 2018, the government had to self-finance, but that did not go smoothly. The government could not provide smart cards (Sigdel, 2023) or pay maintenance fees to IDEMIA on time (Anuragi, 2023).

How should we view the World Bank's non support? I am not implying that Nepal needed to take out a loan from the World Bank to smoothly implement the NID program. Rather, I am suggesting that the funding mechanism could be a tool of developmentality that prevents the World Bank from providing financial support for the development of digital IDs. It seems that the ADB project's poor governance was presented as a reason for the World Bank's refusal to provide financial support, as the project was not completed by the stipulated deadline of 2014.

3.3.Accountability

Another way developmentality takes shape is through accountability, which donors demand from recipient countries. Donors do this to protect their reputation in the event of corruption in ID projects. Here, I present the interaction between the state ID agency and the ADB regarding the call for international bidding from 2013 to 2015.

In 2011, Nepal hired an international NID consultant to prepare bidding documents so that international tech companies could participate. However, the standards were set so high that, of the nine organizations that submitted sealed bids from April to June of 2013, only Gemalto and Morpho Safran (later renamed IDEMIA) received higher technical evaluation scores (Giri, 2013). Then, as reported in the media, about a dozen organizations filed complaints with the Prime Minister's Office, the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), claiming that "some specifications in the tender documents were manipulated to award the contract to one or two companies" (Giri, 2013). Despite these complaints, in July 2013, the state ID agency shortlisted Gemalto and Morpho Safran. The agency's director reportedly said, "We had set 242 conditions for the technical bidding and these two companies were up to the mark. We informed the disqualified firms about their shortcomings and how they could not meet the minimum requirement." The news also mentioned that the agency planned to declare a winner within ten days. This shows that the state ID authority did not want to scrap the bidding process.

The way this controversy was resolved shows the prominent role of the ADB. This is evident in news published in *The Kathmandu Post*. On January 14, 2014, the newspaper highlighted a few things. First, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) insisted that the government scrap the bidding process due to a clear conflict of interest between the bidder and the consultant who prepared the global tender document. Second, the government was negotiating with the ADB to find a valid reason to cancel the tender process instead of meeting the deadline to issue ID cards by the end of 2014. Third, government officials did not want to cancel the bidding process because the project was set to end in 2014. Fourth, the ADB wrote a letter to the Chief of the Foreign Aid Division of the Ministry of Finance suggesting that the ADB scrap the bidding process and offering support for a new one. The ADB stressed in the letter that the project must advance "in the most robust manner, free of allegations and corruption charges, given its critical importance for the country and the need to secure support from all political parties." Regarding the ADB's role, the final report to the ADB by the Nepal government stated that: "The government started procurement for the national identification (NID) package in April 2013 but stopped it after ADB declared the process to be anomalous on 14 November 2013 because of a conflict of interest of the consultant engaged by the Department of National ID and Civil Registration (DONIDCR). The government

cancelled the procurement and invited rebidding." This clearly shows that the bank, not the Nepal government, scrapped the bidding. In this context, the bidding process was restarted. According to a government official who worked in the ID agency at the time, the ADB took this matter very seriously and hired two consultants from a Swiss company to prepare new bidding documents. A new bid was called in 2015.

This case highlights the accountability measures that donors have established for good governance. The ADB's emphasis on being "free of allegations and corruption charges" shows that it cares more about its image than the cost. Hiring other consultants to revise the bidding documents was a step to remedy the corruption. One way to interpret this action is as part of the "zero tolerance for corruption" message that donors convey to domestic audiences in donor countries. As De Simone and Taxell (2014) argue, such actions convey the message that the misuse of development aid will not be tolerated. Such sanctions are also meant to deter others from engaging in similar behavior (Kohler and Bowra, 2020). It also highlights the power of donors to hold recipient countries accountable. Development agencies mainly care about the fact that due processes are taken.

Thus mechanisms of accountability can be tools of developmentality. This also demonstrates the influence that donors have over the development of digital IDs in the Global South. This development hinges on the good governance modality of the donor-recipient relationship.

3.4. Temporality

Temporality may become an instrument of developmentality as projects must be completed on time. In this way, time becomes a tool for governing recipient countries.

Though the project was supposed to be completed in 2014, its completion date was extended three times. The final report submitted by the Nepal Government to the ADB mentions this under the heading "Project Schedule": "The ADB approved the project on January 28, 2008, and signed the grant on May 23, 2008." The project became effective on July 25, 2008, with the grant closing scheduled for December 31, 2014. However, the project was extended three times until December 31, 2018, and was financially closed on November 11, 2019." The report also states that the project

was extended on March 26, 2014; March 21, 2016; and March 31, 2018. The reasons provided are external factors, including political instability, the 2015 earthquake, and India's trade and transit embargo from August 2015 to February 2016 (ADB, 2020).

Overall, the project was delayed by 48 months, and the ADB provided three extensions. Although the NID component was planned to complete the pilot phase by developing a central database by 2014, this goal was not achieved until December 31, 2018, through live enrollment, personalization, and issuance of NID cards. There are a few notable reasons for the delay. First, the need to rebid after canceling the initial bidding in 2013 delayed NID implementation. Even after the new bidding process was completed in 2015 and Morpho was selected, a new issue arose: since Morpho was involved in distributing Aadhaar numbers in India, it was deemed risky to use the same foreign tech company. This issue was resolved in 2016, when it was determined that the data should be stored securely. It was also argued that if the project was not completed by the deadline, the grant would be revoked.

However, another debate related to temporality arose: the project was ended in a hurry. This issue arose in the context of data enrollment and smart card issuance, despite the lack of legal governance of this system. For example, *Himal* magazine published an article titled "Journey in Hurry". The article highlighted that there was no legal basis for collecting data, nor any recourse if the data were misused. In fact, the National ID Management Center drafted a new national identity bill in 2011, but it was never submitted to Parliament because the Law Minister did not want to rush it (Gautam, 2011). A consensus could not be reached on this legislation during the project period, though, and the project could not be completed without issuing national ID cards. Nepal's findings align with those of other studies. For instance, Hosein and Nyst (2013) demonstrated that development agencies promote national identification systems as pilot projects in the Global South without the necessary legal and regulatory framework. This gives administrators discretion to use the data, raising serious questions about the system's transparency and accountability (Manby, 2020). The debate on the differences between political and project logics also sheds light on this issue. While political logic emphasizes change and flexibility, project logic prioritizes control (Fred, 2020). Projects focus on goals that prevent failure (Ika & Hodgson,

2014). The temporality of projects, in which the present is less important because the goal is to achieve the target, is related to neglecting context and future goals (Hodgson et al., 2019).

Nepal's case demonstrates how temporality can serve as a tool for governing the development of digital IDs in the Global South. Though the project was extended many times, it had its limitations. It needs to come to an end. However, when the project ended, there was still no law governing the NID.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper uses the framework of developmentality to understand the asymmetric relationship between donors and recipients through aid relations. It suggests that this relationship manifests as supporting pilot projects and providing grants in hopes of leading to large loans, not supporting projects in the face of weak governance, implementing accountability mechanisms in cases of potential corruption, and having the power to extend projects. The four conditions of developmentality result from the interaction between donors and recipients and are based on contingencies rather than donor strategies only.

This means that we should not understand developmentality as the hegemonic power of structures, but rather as the contestations, negotiations, and calculations of different actors. In the case of a pilot project or the initial phase of support, the project may be abandoned or taken over by the government. However, when foreign grants are invested, it is less likely that such projects will be scrapped in the Global South. Instead, these states continue to receive funding from donors or use their own resources, which may slow the pace of digital ID development. Global South states also receive loans in different phases. In the case of non support, factors beyond the control of recipient actors, such as the need to rebid and extend the NID pilot project and not completing the project on time, became reasons why the World Bank did not provide support. Similarly, in the case of accountability, we see negotiation between donors and recipient actors. While the donors wanted to end the previous bidding process, the recipient actors tried to convince the donors to continue. It was this mutual understanding that led to the rebidding process. In the case of temporality, it is not different. We should not be deterministic in blaming the donors for not having a legal governance mechanism. As I demonstrated, the recipient actors prepared drafts of the National

Identity Card Act, but they were not submitted to parliament because a consensus could not be reached.

Further studies should focus on the developmentality in the context of South-South aid relationship. This is important as Southern donors have evolved in the Global South. For instance, India provided a grant in 2022 to support Sri Lanka's Unique Digital ID project, prompting a debate on digital sovereignty (Macdonald, 2022). This type of South-South cooperation (Maharjan, 2025; Martin, 2021) demonstrates the diversity of the Global South (Milan & Treré, 2022), as well as the hierarchical relationships within it. This is important because the landscape of foreign aid has changed. Many Global South recipient countries have become donors amid the rise of East Asia and the BRIC, which shows that there are gaps between richer and poorer Global South countries (Desai, Devarajan, & Tobin, 2024).

Thus, developmentality allows us to understand the complexities and contradictions that have emerged in aid relations within North-South and South-South partnerships in the Global South. In the ID sector, developmentality allows us to make sense of asymmetric aid relations in the context of non-hegemonic power of donors, which manifest from contestations, negotiations, and calculations that are contingent, and situated, grounded in contexts.

References

- Adhikari, G.P. (2011). National ID project of Nepal: Future challenges. In *Proceedings of the 5th international conference on theory and practice of electronic governance*, 379–80. ICEGOV '11. Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2072069.2072151>.
- Anuragi, A. (2023, September 21). Government Policy to profiter Foreign company. (In Nepali) . *Lokaantar*. https://lokaantar.com/story/235368/2023/9/21/main-news/french-company?fbclid=IwY2xjawGIePtleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHQNIPw4vLr7IiyKPmYQdNtOt4LyA81j9v8sG5WzONJhGBtlz4f765jB2Ng_aem_gVyg1TIOCdsNF_MsHy6wcg.
- Bailey, S., Hodgson, D. & Checkland, K. (2019). Pilots as projects: Policy making in a state of exception. In: Hodgson D, Fred M, Bailey S, & Hall, P. (eds). *The projectification of the public sector*. Routledge, pp. 130–148.

- Banégas, R. & Cutolo, A. (2024). *ID wars in Côte d'Ivoire: A political ethnography of identification and citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Center for Human Rights and Global Justice. (2022). *Paving a digital road to hell? A primer on the role of the world bank and global networks in promoting digital ID*. Center for Human Rights and Global Justice.
- De Simone F and Taxell N (2014). *Donors and "zero tolerance for corruption": From principle to practice*. Chr. Michelsen Institute.
- Desai, R. M., Devarajan, S., & Tobin, J. L. (2024) Introduction to the handbook of aid and development. In R,M. Desai, S Devarajan, and J L Tobin (eds) *Handbook of aid and development*. Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 1–15.
- Eke, D.O., R. , Ochang, P. , F., Borokini. (2022). Nigeria's Digital Identification (ID) Management Program: Ethical, Legal and Socio-Cultural concerns. *Journal of Responsible Technology* 11: 100039. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrt.2022.100039>
- Fred, M. (2020). Local government projectification in practice – a multiple institutional logic perspective. *Local Government Studies*, 16(3), 351–370.
- Gelb, A. & Clark, J. (2013). *Identification for development: The biometrics revolution*. Center for Global Development.
- Gelb, A. & Metz, A.D. (2018). *Identification revolution: Can digital ID be harnessed for development*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Hicks, J. (2023). The Geopolitical Shaping of Digital ID in Asia: Ten Years of Digital Asia. *Asiascape: Digital Asia*, 10(1–2), 208–225. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22142312-bja10048>
- Hodgson, D., Fred, M., Bailey, S., & Hall, P. (2019). *The Projectification of the public Sector*. Routledge.
- Hosein, G. & Nyst, C. (2013). *Aiding surveillance: An exploration of how development and humanitarian aid initiatives are enabling surveillance in developing countries*. London: Privacy International.
- Ika, L. A., & Hodgson, D. (2014). Learning from international development projects: Blending critical project studies and critical development studies. *International Journal of Project Management*, 32(7), 1182–1196.

- Jensen, C. B. & Winthereik, B. R. (2012). 'Recursive Partnerships in Global Development Aid', in Soumhya Venketesan and Thomas Yarrow (eds), *Differentiating Development: Beyond an Anthropology of Critique*. Berghahn Books, pp. 84–106.
- Kohler J C and Bowra A (2020) Exploring anti-corruption, transparency, and accountability in the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank Group, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. *Globalization and Health*, 16(1), 101. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-020-00629-5>.
- Lie , J. H. S. (2004). 'Discursive Development Order and Local Informal Practices: A Development Project in Northern Ethiopia', MA Thesis, Oslo: University of Oslo.
- Lie, J. H. S. (2015). *Developmentality: An Ethnography of the World Bank-Uganda Partnership*. Berghahn Books.
- Lie, J. H. S. (2015a). Developmentality: Indirect governance in the World Bank–Uganda partnership. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(4), 723–740. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1024435>
- Long, N. (2003). *Development Sociology: Actor Perspectives*. Routledge.
- Lyon, D. & Tokap, O. E. (2013). Promoting global Identification: Corporations, IGOs and ID card systems. In K. Ball & L. Snider (Eds.), *The Surveillance-Industrial Complex: A Political Economy of Surveillance* (1st edition, pp. 27–43). Routledge.
- Macdonald, A. (2022). Sri Lanka seals deal with India for national digital ID support, opposition MP concerned. *Biometricupdate*, 31 March. <https://www.biometricupdate.com/202203/sri-lanka-seals-deal-with-india-for-national-digital-id-support-opposition-mp-concerned>.
- Maharjan, H. M. (2021). Privacy, security issues of national ID card. *The Rising Nepal*, 6 March, 4.
- Maharjan H M (2025) An InterAsian digitalities framework: A proposal for digital identification systems studies. *First Monday*, 30(10). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v30i10.14575>
- Manby, B. (2021). The Sustainable Development Goals and 'legal identity for all': 'First, do no harm.' *World Development*, 139, 105343. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105343>
- Martin, A. (2021). Aadhaar in a box? Legitimizing digital identity in times of crisis. *Surveillance & Society* 19(1): 104–108. <https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v19i1.14547>

- Masiero, S., & Bailur, S. (2021). Digital identity for development: The quest for justice and a research agenda. *Information Technology for Development* 27(1): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02681102.2021.1859669>
- Masiero, S. (2025). *Unfair ID*. London: Sage.
- Milan S and Treré E (2019) Big Data from the South(s): Beyond Data Universalism. *Television & New Media*, 20(4): 319–335.
- Rodney Turner, J. (2005). The role of pilot studies in reducing risk on projects and programmes. *International Journal of Project Management*, 23(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2004.01.003>
- Sapkota, R. (2018). National ID: A journey in a hurry (In Nepali). *Himal*, 27 November. Available at: <https://www.himalkhabar.com/news/9899> (accessed 2 March 2025).
- Weitzberg, K., Cheesma, M., Martin, A., et al (2021) Between surveillance and recognition: Rethinking digital identity in aid. *Big Data & Society* 8(1) : 20539517211006744.
- World Bank (2011) *Project signing: World Bank financing to help 90 million Bangladeshis to get national identification cards*. 21 July. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2011/07/21/project-signing-world-bank-financing-to-help-90-million-bangladeshis-to-get-national-identification-cards>.
- World Bank (2022) *Improved population and civil registration and digital identification for better and more inclusive service delivery in Indonesia*. 15 May. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/05/15/improved-population-and-civil-registration-and-digital-identification-for-better-and-more-inclusive-service-delivery-in>.