

Road Construction in the Solu region of Solukhumbu, Nepal: Conflict between transport infrastructure and trekking tourism

Fukachi Furukawa

Solukhumbu district, located at the southern foothills of the Mt. Everest, is famous for its trekking tourism. Every year, more than 30,000 foreign tourists visit this area. Many Sherpa people, all local residents, participate in the tourism industry as trekking guides, porters, and lodge owners. No transportation facility aside from mountain trails existed there until recently, although road construction is progressing rapidly in the Solu region of southern Solukhumbu.

This presentation reports the current situation of road construction and its effects on the Solu region from the following three perspectives: 1. local notions of roads and road construction; 2. economic activities appearing and disappearing along with the roadways; and 3. the practice and meaning of driving in mountainous terrain.

The related ethnographic resources revealed that people fundamentally regard the roadway as “development”. It has brought new job opportunities for construction workers and jeep drivers. Local people report that driving on mountain roads and walking on mountain trails are somewhat similar activities. They are also anxious about changes of tourist flows after road construction completion.