views. As a result we get a compilation of contradictory and opposing views. The views she puts forth on the decline of the tea industry are based on the statements of the managers (157). She has not looked at the living and working conditions of the workers. Though she is sympathetic to the women workers she does not look at their problems of defecating in the open because there are no toilets even though the PLA makes such toilets mandatory.

The author believes the managers when they say that labour unrest is a result of the male population: “Some suggested that ‘too many males’ on the garden created unrest, both in the plantation and in regional politics” (157). She has not verified if this is true. The fact is that a large section of the unemployed males in plantations have been recruited into the military and paramilitary forces.

Despite the contradictory views presented in the book, the author is clear about one view that she keeps reiterating, namely, the decline in tea production started after the British left and the natives took over the plantations. She has admitted that the British “ran their gardens like fiefdoms, but they kept the men under control” (195). Could such a system continue in a democracy? Her concluding sentence—“But workers are keenly aware that in a market for justice, the plantation is not going anywhere” (220)—contradicts what she has put forth in the earlier sections.

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The author of this book, Michele Ruth Gamburd, ploughs through a deep, rich and thick ethnographic study to highlight important aspects of Sri Lankan post-tsunami relief and rehabilitation such as the ambivalent impact of competitive humanitarianism, its limited outreach, the multiple dilemmas and ambiguities embedded in the recovery process, as well as the frustration of aid beneficiaries regarding paternalistic aid practices and the politics of housing, as well as new challenges for rehabilitation. The work thereby highlights that it is impossible to understand post-tsunami reconstruction without recognizing the wider political, cultural, social and cultural terrain of war, ethno-nationalism and uneven development in Sri Lanka.

The book is organized in three main parts focusing on different stages of the disaster relief efforts. First the book focuses in three chapters on the immediate aftermath of the disaster, illustrating how the natural event created a local solidarity overlooking class, politics and ethnic conflict issues. The ethnographic material also describes very vividly how people tried to make sense and give meaning to the outreach and magnitude of the devastation.
Here it becomes evident that class, religion, belief, and local politics related to gender and socio-political status started to regain momentum while power, personal politics, patronage and clientelism prevailed within the society. The second part of the book moves on to bring in the international dimension of post-tsunami aid, elaborating on the political economy of aid within the post-disaster housing sector and business recovery, especially looking into the tourist sector. The last part, again organized into three chapters, illustrates how people constructed their identity and that of others within the immediate and longer-term post-tsunami rehabilitation process. Here the stories the author has chosen clearly show that most of the people see themselves as ethical and generous while others tried to profit and gain personal advantages out of the post-tsunami aid situation. It further underlines that socio-economic and socio-political hierarchies as well as ethnic and class structures only disappeared for a short term in the immediate aftermath of the disaster as all Sri Lankans were under shock as well as due to the fact that nature did not distinguish between ethnicity, economic status, class or gender.

The strength of the book is definitely its rich and thick ethnographic description. The many stories presented make the various post-tsunami phenomena available and visible in a personalized manner. However in this strength I also see the weakness of the book. At one point reading the book and the many stories that are told, the personalized information that is provided confused and distracted my attention. I gained the feeling that many of these stories are not new to what is known of post-tsunami Sri Lanka or what has been written on post-disaster situations in general. What I miss in Michele Ruth Gamburds’ ethnographic achievements is the placement of these stories in a solid theoretical framing and interpretation. Furthermore, it misses an overview of the way in which these stories help to enlighten “how” tsunami aid and relief works and “how” aid affects the everyday life and social community of a Sri Lankan tsunami-affected village. The analysis that is provided at various places in the book, again not in a holistic and detailed manner, does not ground itself using a broad and in-depth understanding and discussion of the concepts referred to, such as Foucault’s concept of governmentality, Marcel Mauss’ theory of the gift or literature on post-disaster housing and brokerage. Similarly, there is no mention of relevant literature, also based on the ethnographic material Michele Ruth Gamburd refers to but that carries more theoretical depth and arguments, particularly those of Barenstein/Leemann (eds), *Post-Disaster Reconstruction and Change: Communities Perspectives*, Taylor and Francis CRS Press, 2012; Korf/Klem/Hasbullah/Hollenbach, “The gift of disaster: the commodification of good intentions in post-tsunami Sri Lanka,” *Disasters*, 2010; Hollenbach/Ruwanpura, “Symbolic Gestures: The Development Terrain of Post-Tsunami Villages in (Southern) Sri Lanka,” *Journal of Development Studies*, 2011; Mosse/Lewis, *Development Brokers and Translators: The Ethnography of Aid and Agencies*, Kumarian Press, 2006.
Overall the book provides a rich ethnographic insight into how the tsunami changed socio-political structures, identities and how national/international aid relates to and influences these formations. These ethnographic insights definitely add value to already existing literature. However, theoretically and analytically the book does not provide any further enhancement or innovation and fails to provide recommendations on how a future disaster should be managed or governed differently in order to avoid the repetition of existing inequalities, disaster and personal politics.

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Communicating soft power through cultural engagement has gained enormous prominence in contemporary academic discourse, underpinning the “constructivist” shift in the theoretical discussion of international relations that was long dominated by positivism. Rooted in neoliberal and constructivist visions of power, soft power, comprising “ideas” and culture, aims for “harmonizing international relations.”

Anglo-Saxon powers like the US and Europe, with large reservoirs of cultural capital, have traditionally employed “softer” resources for carving benign images. However, there have been disappointments in the scope and strategy of the exercises with desired strategic outcomes often remaining suboptimal. The West, and the US in particular, has been revisiting its soft power strategy post-9/11. In the meantime, major Asian powers like China have also been picking up the narrative on soft power. India, too, is becoming increasingly noticeable in this regard.

China has been pragmatic in honing its soft power wherewithal as a major tool of statecraft for opening new channels of communication and external engagement. Beijing’s economic and military rise has been complemented by commensurate increase in soft power efforts. India is yet to demonstrate a similar correlation. The backdrop urges wider scholarly discussions on India’s soft power. Daya K. Thussu’s Communicating India’s Soft Power: Buddha to Bollywood is a timely effort to portray and critically examine India’s communication with the world through its soft power.

The book provides an exhaustive and interesting catalogue of India’s cultural outreach, both ancient and contemporary. It traces the historical roots of India’s soft power and how such history can be harnessed in building and strengthening international relations in the contemporary world. The author cautions that possession of soft power is not a sufficient condition