

ABSTRACT

Disaster Temporariness and Structural Urban Inequality: The Politics of Reforming the Post-Earthquake City of Bhuj in Gujarat

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The 2001 Kutch earthquake and its recovery is often popularised as a success story: an economic miracle and rebirth of Kutch as a popular tourism destination, but also a model for Indian disaster management architecture. This story was initially narrated by aid agencies as an exemplar of people- and owner-driven shelter recovery paradigm. At the BJP election campaign launch in Bhuj in November 2017 the prime minister Modi stated that he became who he is thanks to the lessons he learnt from governance in Kutch district. Yet, the city of Bhuj was recently described as “anarchic and dirty” (Khandol 2017), pointing towards a disappointment that the city has not been able to materialise its post-disaster full potential. In fact, according to recent estimates, over 30 per cent of the city’s population lives in slums (Virmani et al. 2017).

This paper focuses on the politics of post-disaster relocation and the contested notions of disaster temporariness. The analysis is anchored around a temporary shelter project that was implemented in the city’s one of the four relocation sites in 2001-2. The site has since then become one of the biggest slum sites in the city, the 2001-2 constructed temporary units partially in ruins, and partially occupied.

The focus in this paper is twofold. Firstly, it close reads the project correspondence between aid bureaucrats in Brussels, Delhi and Bhuj of a housing project in 2001 that completed nearly 2,000 temporary shelter units at the site. Secondly, it offers perspectives of former and current residents of the units 16-17 years later, and their understandings of what “disaster temporality” mean for them, and how in their eyes, the city is evolving.

Socio-political Impacts of the reconstruction post-earthquake Nepal: A case study of Majhi Community in Sindhupalchok

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Social Science Baha, Violent Sway Project

Disasters are not only natural and the technical phenomenon, they are also associated with social and political aspects. While impacts of the disasters have socio-political implications, dynamics of politics has implications for recovery and reconstruction as well (Abney and Hill, 1996, Hörhager, 2015; Oliver-Smith, 1996; Simpson, 2013). Much of the available literature on Nepal’s post-earthquake focus on physical and economic impacts of the earthquake and recovery and reconstruction of the same, as well as on disaster risks reductions and management. However, there is a lack of studies that looks at critical socio-cultural and political impacts of the earthquake. Based upon the case study of a reconstruction project in a Majhi community of Sindhupalchok district, the study attempts to unpack socio-political and

cultural impacts of the earthquake and reconstruction activities. Drawing from more than 70 semi-structured interviews and review of the literature, the paper tries to address some of the pertinent questions: *what and in what ways have the earthquake and reconstruction activities impacted socio-political dynamics and lives in the Majhi community? What has happened to the earthquake-affected people and the community in the short and long term, due to their interface with new institutions, actors and ideas? Whether, why and who have benefitted or lost due to the reconstruction activities, including due to delays or progress in reconstruction? Whether and to what extent is the reconstruction activities in the community driven by ownership?*

Definitions of disaster victimhood: Suffering, loss and framing categories of relief in the aftermath of the 1934 Bihar-Nepal earthquake

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The present paper engages with the question how disaster victimhood is framed in portraying and relieving victims in the aftermath of the 1934 Bihar-Nepal earthquake. By exploring depictions of victims in accounts by the local government, in photographs, images and texts in newspapers and magazines, publications by relief societies and in eye-witness accounts, I analyse how multiple constructions of victimhood emerged in strands that helped to argue political and social agendas transgressing the disaster experience. These portrayals and narratives of victims differed significantly depending on the position of the author, and whether or not the audience would be pitied at a distance. The particularity of the rare event, a major earthquake, and the material destruction of property and extraordinary land damages would create a narrative of the power of nature illustrated with photos of physical destruction but bereft of human beings. In a parallel narrative drawing upon the damaged landscape, the earth and the geo-political space Bihar underwent an anthropomorphization, drawing upon gendered imagery and nationalist discourses that depicted 'devastated Bihar' as a 'devastated' woman in need of rescue by civil society organisations representing the 'nation'. The latter discourse served to make the suffering of nature into the suffering of people, and created a vision of human devastation that transgressed the physical destruction of built environment in photographs. Contrary to many appeals for aid to homogenised groups of 'earthquake victims' or 'sufferers', financial compensation by relief organisations as well as the local colonial government was allocated according to victimhood defined by socio-economic background and material losses. Similar to in famine relief, social position played an important role in shaping victimhood, qualifying the victim for either charitable relief, loans or work-based relief programmes.



The Papered Earthquake

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Why are reconstruction efforts so often delayed, and for so long? While studies frequently point towards state corruption, the inefficiencies of foreign aid, ethnic tensions, or lack of infrastructure, my paper examines a less-discussed but key dimension: the complexities of land and housing ownership among kin. Utilizing ethnographic research on the reconstruction effort in Kathmandu after the 2015 Great Nepali Earthquake, I trace how the Nepali state's attempts to verify household ownership ran afoul of informal family practices, creating a rift between household modalities of property management and its bureaucratic representations. This rift was not intentional; indeed, both states and families entered the reconstruction effort in good faith. Rather, as I show, the problems stemmed from the affordances of paperwork, and ideologies embedded in legal infrastructure.

At the center of this rift was the land title. Land in Nepal is owned by the family, not the individual, a legal technique meant to imitate agrarian household practices. Yet, despite its intent, land titles are notoriously out-of-date, due to families preferring informal management techniques so as to avoid intra-kin conflict. However, after the earthquake such practices became untenable. Though the Nepali state attempted to honor such informal practices, and to give credence to those who lacked documentation, nevertheless an updated land title became central to acquiring government aid on time and without hassle. My paper explores how this happened, despite the state's attempts to do otherwise. I also show how families anticipated this outcome, chasing every bit of government paperwork in order to make themselves "legible." Ultimately, I argue that this pursuit by families reflected a very different understanding of bureaucratic authority than that embraced by state actors, and one that may have been more accurate of how bureaucracy functions in post-disaster situations.

Post disaster recovery: A reflection on the development trajectory of Kutch district, post 2001 Bhuj earthquake.

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The Bhuj earthquake of Gujarat, India in 2001 affected a population of 15.9 million people (42.06% of the total affected population) in 7,904 villages of 5 districts in the region, damaging close to 1.2 billion homes (GSDMA¹). Post-disaster reconstruction efforts in shelter in Gujarat focused on strengthening traditional architecture with earthquake-resistant technology supported by the World Bank and seen as a "good practice". However aid in Kutch district did not bring any substantial changes in traditional belief systems and practices such as child marriages in many communities. New institutions and processes were funded and created to tackle challenges of development during post-disaster reconstruction – for instance, Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA) was set up to facilitate



humanitarian aid but structural barriers of access were not addressed. Therefore, despite a focused and integrated effort in post-disaster recovery, 17 years since, Anjar block in Kutch recurrently demonstrates stark socio-cultural and human development trends such as high corruption practices, sex ratio heavily biased towards males, high rate of school drop outs and diminishing public investment in traditional folk art and culture, contradicting the foundational principles of humanitarian aid and post-disaster recovery. The paper argues for the centrality of the need to focusing on issues of equity, social justice and ecological security in the recovery process.

In the case of Anjar block, specific groups experienced vulnerability differentially. In fact, development aid after the earthquake led to creation of new vulnerabilities. In this paper, the authors present findings from a historical and longitudinal study of development and education projects in Anjar block using triangulation where district and panchayat level data is corroborated with a baseline survey and FGDs that helps trace a development trajectory of marginalized groups of the Anjar block in the aftermath of the Bhuj earthquake. Regeneration and enhancement of livelihoods in post-disaster situations remains a fundamental challenge and the paper explains and critiques the dynamics against neo-liberal forms of framing the idea of recovery itself.

The Earthquake and Ideas Lying Around

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The Gorkha earthquake of April 2015 took hold of two ideas that had been “lying around” (Hyndman 2011) and propelled them into reality. An earthquake changes everything (Simpson 2013) and everyone in some way. What the Gorkha earthquake allowed to happen is explored through the lens of Bharatpur, a large city that had structural damage to buildings but no loss of life. Bharatpur is not located in one of the designated severely impacted earthquake-impacted districts of Nepal.

The Gorkha earthquake allowed ideas to come to life. The first idea lying around that the earthquake propelled into action is the combination of earthquake-resistant construction and urban planning in the form of land use plans. The central government pressured local authorities to implement the National Building Code and earthquake-resistant construction bylaws after the earthquake. The necessity to consider urban planning was also renewed. Responsibility for implementation has now been firmly placed with local authorities. This has occurred in an environment in which two thirds of municipalities in Nepal were created in the 12 months before the earthquake and as of 2018, they do not have the institutional, technical and financial capacity to meet this expectation. How municipalities will be able to cope is unclear.

The constitution is the second idea lying around that the earthquake propelled into action. The Nepalese government and the constituent assembly utilised the momentum created by a positive collective spirit after the Gorkha earthquake to attempt to transform the country by the creation of a new constitution. After seven years of debate, the constitution was promulgated in September 2015. The unexpected subsequent unofficial economic blockade on Indian border crossings through which 85% of international trade enters Nepal, was devastating. The impact from the Gorkha earthquake of 2015 will continue to unfold for years to come.



Governing disaster risk in post-earthquake Nepal: reflections on humanitarianism, bureaucracy, philosophy and affect

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Landslides are a pervasive hazard in rural Nepal, where the impacts are manifest in very tangible ways: as a chronic threat to both lives and livelihoods; and via damage to or destruction of houses, farmland, roads and trails. Whilst people are very much aware of the causes and triggering mechanisms of landslides, and have developed their own ways of reducing the risks they face, gaps in local knowledge exist. This is particularly the case when the hazard context itself evolves, for example, following a high magnitude earthquake, which brings new behaviours to otherwise familiar landscapes. The 2015 Gorkha earthquake, which triggered over 22,000 landslides, the equivalent of more than 200 years of 'normal' landsliding, is a case in point. Some households were displaced, while others are unsure if the cracks that have appeared across their land present a real risk or not. Householders are rebuilding and are seeking definitive answers to their questions and concerns, but science remains some distance from being able to provide an answer, and government lacks technical capacity to respond. In this paper, we provide a critical overview of disaster risk governance in Nepal, including the role of science, technical expertise and local knowledge in risk management and decision-making. For this we draw on the findings from a long-term transdisciplinary collaboration which brings together natural and social scientists, policy makers and practitioners, with the aim of building societal resilience to disasters along the Alpine-Himalayan Belt.

Reinstatement: on the politics of state expansion in post-earthquake Nepal

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In the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake, the state entered into a crisis. Not only governmental buildings and the personnel of public offices had not been spared by tremors from ruination, but the quake revealed long-term fragilities of governance in the country. In the wake of the disaster, in fact, foreign governments, volunteers and NGOs had sprung up to action with an alacrity which could not be matched by the Nepal government. In less than two days, professional aid groups had come from everywhere, their uniforms and logos constituting a new landscape to be learned. Awe and anger intermingled. Resentment took the form of what Bin Xu (2014), in relation to the Sichuan earthquake, has termed a 'consensus crisis'. Citizens everywhere could be heard asking "hāmro sarkār kahā chha?" - 'where is our government?'

Yet, while an elite section of Kathmandu's civil society and almost the whole of international press endlessly reproduced standard narratives of government failing and corruption,



affected people slowly begun turning to the state for long-term compensation, rehabilitation and succour. For most, complaining about the state was just part of the story, good for gossip with friends at a tea stall or for searching a common ground of understanding with hungry journalists, but not the central component of what was going on. As weeks passed by, a vast array of policies were formulated with the aim of creating a resilient country, populated by resilient citizens. In the process, new ideas and frameworks came to parse everyday life and mould novel citizens and political subjects. Through these frameworks, the state was given the chance to re-enter into peoples' lives in a new attire and, for many, in an unprecedented way.

In this paper, I focus on the bureaucracy of post-earthquake reconstruction to show how an initial moment of mistrust has given way, in the long-term, to a movement of state expansion which is now unfolding within the novel contours of a federal state. In the aftermath of the earthquake, building codes, insurance schemes and the formalization of a fluid remittance economy were the answers given to people's need for recovery.

The politics of participatory disaster governance in Nepal's post-earthquake reconstruction

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There have been growing calls from disaster scholars and policymakers to make post-disaster reconstruction participatory and accountable to disaster-affected populations. Yet, little is known about the nature of politics and power dynamics that shape the policy and practical landscape of participatory governance in the context of post-disaster reconstruction. The aftermath of the 2015 Nepal Earthquake, in which the Government of Nepal committed to making housing reconstruction participatory and accountable serves as an opportune context to address this gap. The study draws on ethnographic fieldwork, comprising participant observation of various spaces of participatory governance, together with 21 semi-structured interviews with a mix of policy and local actors. Ethnographic fieldwork spanned two sites: Kathmandu, the centre of policy-making, and Sankhu, a peri-urban community in the outskirts of Kathmandu Valley, which is reeling from the Earthquake. The paper shows that the Government of Nepal to have instrumentalised the spaces of participatory governance with a narrow aim to legitimise and consolidate its decision of 'owner-led reconstruction', while also pursue its historically pending agenda of governance reforms in Nepal's aid sector. On the other hand, the paper also underscores the democratising potential of participatory governance in disaster-hit communities. Despite the government's effort to use locally-induced participatory spaces to advance its own interest, such spaces have served as 'interrogative encounters', enabling disaster-affected citizens to become vigilant of the governmental neglect produced under the banner of 'owner-led reconstruction'. The implication of post-disaster participatory politics in shaping longer-term state-society relations is highlighted.



KEYNOTE LECTURE

Restructuring Life: political, social, and material transformation in post - conflict, post-disaster Nepal.

Sara Shneiderman
University of British Columbia, Canada

This talk draws upon over 20 years of ethnographic research in Dolakha district, Nepal, to explore how political upheaval and natural disaster may be experienced as intertwined forces of social transformation. My narrative is anchored by a series of photographs that track how specific structural forms—homes, temples, schools, roads, and other elements of the built environment and landscape—have changed shape over time, through the twin processes of state restructuring and infrastructural reconstruction in the wake of Nepal's state-Maoist conflict (1996-2006), post-conflict constitutional process (2006-2015) and post-earthquake reconstruction program (2015-present). These material transformations provide the foundation for a broader anthropological consideration of how people conceptualize the very ideas of structure, transformation, and agency themselves as they negotiate the ever-changing terrain of the Nepali state.

Art as participation, gift and resource: Nepalese artist's engagement in post- earthquake Kathmandu Valley

Christiane Brosius
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In the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, local artists were at the forefront to develop diverse strategies of coping as well as helping others in need. The paper seeks to zoom into some of the ways of coming to terms with the catastrophe through two initiatives: artist Sanjeev Maharjan's photographic, diary-like engagement with the urban landscape surrounding his home in Kathmandu in the weeks after the earthquake and the development of this work into an installation made up of oral histories and individual portraits at what is the second case-study of this paper: 12 Baisakh: Camp Hub in Thulo Byasi, Bhaktapur. This was an artist—driven community-based initiative in one of the worst affected neighbourhoods in the Kathmandu Valley. The research I conducted on the earthquake's aftermath – mostly from a long-distance, with some short field visits, tried to tend to these questions: How does one respond to a catastrophe from an art-driven perspective without simply aestheticizing tragedy? How does the artist-as-activist ensure a space for critical reflection and/or intervention in a dramatically changing reality?



Post-earthquake slum rehabilitation: an initiative in the city of Bhuj in India

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The paper analyzes a program of slum rehabilitation introduced in the city of Bhuj in Gujarat, India, to understand how earthquakes can be implicated in the production of urban models, notably in the rehabilitation of slum settlements. The initiative is rooted in a context deeply transformed by the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, in which the city and its region emerged as an exemplary case of resilience. Initially excluded from this process, the slum settlements of Bhuj are affected by a late stage of development in which innovative practices of planning, construction, and governance are introduced. The initiative addresses issues of inclusivity and sustainability recognized in the post-earthquake reconstruction and reformulates them into new solutions in the space of slums settlements. This transfer from the context of reconstruction to the slum rehabilitation indicates that the earthquake has produced long-term effects, inscribing the city and the region into geographies of innovation. The paper explores these main features: the initiative promotes participative slum rehabilitation instead of centralized and market-driven approaches; it produces architectural and urban forms which are regulated by principles of disaster-safety and sustainability, and which are inspired by traditional practices and knowledge; it creates social and politic changes like the spread of urban mentality and the strengthening of local claims of autonomy; it promotes a model of inclusive development for small cities by extending urban innovation into slum settlements.

The Role of Cultural Heritage Display after the Earthquake – The Architecture Galleries, Patan Museum

Katharina Weiler

Museum Angewandte Kunst

This paper will explore the shaping of the Patan Museum's approach to the display of Newar architecture in the aftermath of the earthquake of April 25, 2015, in Nepal. The museum is housed in the ancient Royal Palace flanking the Patan Darbar Square in the Northeast. The palace's Keshav Narayan Chowk complex survived the earthquake, however slightly damaged, whereas the East wing of the Sundari Chowk complex collapsed entirely. Immediately after the damage of these buildings and the collapse of several temples and two arcaded halls on the square, the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) coordinated the rescue of building fragments. In 2017 the rebuilding of the Sundari Chowk site was completed. It now houses an Architecture Gallery curated by KVPT.

In rethinking the role and function of current and future exhibits (e.g. rescued original building fragments that cannot be incorporated into the reconstruction of the buildings on the square) this paper will discuss the values (e.g. age value, memo value, spirit of place, authenticity) and identities (e.g. national/international heritage, memory, loss, disaster) affected by the earthquake and projected onto these cultural goods through different agents (local and international). Key questions will be: How is the earthquake being addressed in this latest exhibition of Nepali cultural heritage that is currently in the process of being revalued? And what are the key issues curators are confronted with? The observations will be based on fieldwork conducted in early September 2018 and will thus refer to current, first-hand observations made on site. With the opportunity to witness curatorial decision-making in times of crisis, and the formation of a museum that responds to an important period of

societal transition, the paper will explore some of the prevailing cross-disciplinary cultural-historical discussions around restoration, preservation, and museology in post-earthquake Nepal and their relationship to change.

Citizenship and Dependence on the State after the Earthquake: The Politics of Shelter Distribution in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan

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In this paper I examine the political implications of a prefabricated housing programme, announced and carried out by the government and state authorities after the 2005 earthquake in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-administrated Azad Kashmir, to provide families who had lost their home with a provisional house. However, despite the promises of “shelters for all”, many families were ignored in the distribution of the houses. With ethnographic case studies from Muzaffarabad I demonstrate how the programme was intertwined with the lives of families and their practices of making claims on state authorities after the earthquake, taking these practices as indications of altered notions of citizenship.

I understand the announcements of “shelters for all” as rituals of governments and state authorities that aimed to restore and assert the “myth of the state” (Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 2) as the main benefactor of society after the earthquake. Against this background and because the earthquake had increased the needs of people for food, shelter and money, citizenship turned into a question of dependence on the benefactor state. The promises of aid distribution enabled families to make new claims and assert entitlements to material benefits such as shelter houses. Their new positions as citizens, however, were continuously endangered by corruption and other political uncertainties of aid distribution. These uncertainties and the hope of material benefits kept families busy with asserting their entitlements and forcing them to make considerable efforts to be recognised as “a rightful and deserving dependent of the state” (Ferguson 2015: 262). Against this background, I warn in this paper against praising aid distribution after earthquakes as an achievement of “disaster citizenship” (Siddiqi 2013), by pointing to the contradictory implications of the dependence on a benefactor state that subordinates’ people to political power relations by means of its empty promises.

Lessons from Nepal - donor perspectives on reconstruction after the 2015 earthquakes

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DFID, Nepal

The 2015 earthquakes in Nepal led to a large-scale international response at the invitation of the Nepal Government. Some elements: the post-disaster needs assessment, a large donor conference, and fully mobilised humanitarian structures, have been considered to be a textbook response, yet three years after the earthquakes many important findings emerge.

This paper will review progress and offer a number of initial lessons. It will draw on the experience of three innovative approaches to gaining feedback from affected populations: the UN Common Feedback Programme, an embedded field office, and a cohort study.

The response has taken place in a time of considerable political change in Nepal. The earthquake created the political space for the passing of the Nepal Constitution (2015) new local government led by directly elected representatives. In many ways, this is a long-awaited political earthquake more profound than the physical shake.

The main lessons covered will include: limitations of the popular “Owner-Driven” approach to post-earthquake reconstruction; importance and limitations of dedicated reconstruction authorities, comparing with the experience in Pakistan; failures in settlement reconstruction planning; need for ongoing partner coordination; limitations of traditional approaches to technical assistance; and opportunities for reconstruction processes to make progress on long-standing mechanisms of exclusion, for example landlessness.

The paper will particularly focus on issues related to vulnerable households, noting that proactive measures are needed to avoid leaving the poorest till last. Different categories of marginalised households will be covered including those affected by new geo-hazard (landslide) risk since the earthquakes, poverty, land marginalisation, and those less able to engage with the formal procedures of the state, including the grievance mechanism. Finally, in a long-term and resource-constrained context how can vulnerable people be supported to rebuild their homes.

The paper will conclude with a discussion of implications for reconstruction programmes elsewhere.

The Earthquake and aid: The changing perspective of international aid in Nepal during the since the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake

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When the earthquake struck in 2015, Nepal opted towards relying heavily on foreign aid for immediate response and long-term restoration. A total of 4.4 Billion US dollars of aid was pledged by the international community. But, during the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, the government took some steps towards controlling the flow of aid into the country and established a single channel process for aid distribution through the Prime Minister Disaster Relief Fund. Three years in, there is increasing evidence that the state’s perspective towards international aid is changing considerably. The government’s intent towards asserting more control over the distribution of international aid seems to be very clear when considering the new National Integrity Policy drafted in 2018. This changed attitude towards aid in the country has reached the local government level too. In the case of Bhaktapur Municipality, the insistence of the Municipality on community involvement in the restoration process of heritage structures led to KfW disagreeing on the modality of providing the reconstruction grant and thus “pulling out” in effect. Subsequently, the municipality has shown intents towards self-funding the restoration of heritage structures. The bold step that has been taken in this respect may help towards the fiscal capacity building, but it is



uncertain whether the local government can fund the restoration projects itself without help from the federal government. With self-governed institution in the form of *Guthi* organizations having been side-lined and largely declining the Municipality has been utilizing local “user committees” in restoration projects. With these “user committees” not having the capability for self-funding, they must rely entirely on funds the municipality provides. This paper analyses the changing government perspective on aid and its implications while raising a question as to whether the self-funding principle of the indigenous *Guthi* institution can lead towards a viable alternative.

Heritage and its Discontents: Newar Urbanism and the Political Economy of Everyday Life

Sabin Ninglekhu, Patrick Daly (*Earth Observatory of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*) and Pia Ruth Hollenbach (*University of Zurich, Switzerland*)

The proposed paper draws on an ongoing ethnographic research project that investigates the politics of rebuilding taking place in the traditional Newar settlements in the Kathmandu Valley. The research takes up the ‘household’ as a primary unit of analysis to broach the issue of how claims of community for the right to rebuilding according to the heart’s desire come up against governmental programs seeking to institutionalize norms of ‘heritage’ that are coded into the rebuilding by-laws. While planning furnishes cultural preservation and economic revitalization as rationale for foregrounding ‘heritage’ in the rebuilding of private homes, such a mandate also creates economic challenges for ordinary households as heritage-centered design are expensive to build or restore. The research, as such, is located at the interface in which state- endorsed aspirational project of heritage confronts the everyday life of the ordinary filled with uncertainty. It is on this interface that this paper grapples with the following questions that may have normative implications for the field of planning, namely: What are the political-economic conditions of marginality that are reproduced through the cultural-spatial logic of ‘heritage’? How do local households and community reframe their identity and re-enact subjectivity in response to the state-endorsed heritage rebuilding by-laws? And finally, how do the preceding questions reveal the dynamics of exclusion to enable progressive politics of inclusion?

Gathering Absences and Presences: Collaborative Visual Ethnography and Memory Work in the Langtang Valley of Nepal in the Aftermath of the 2015 Earthquake

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“Photographs are not merely surrogates for the absent, but powerful actants in social space intertwined with a larger process of maintaining different forms of sociality and personhood.” Elizabeth Edwards, 2012, p. 229



Three years after the villages of the Langtang Valley were destroyed by a series of co-seismic avalanches, the people of Langtang continue working to rebuild their lives, forging new futures while coping with legacies of loss and absence. Interacting with and reorganizing images from before and after the disaster and making and sharing new photographs and videos has been a significant part of these processes. Drawing from over two years of community-engaged visual ethnographic work, conducted via a collaborative multi-media effort called the Langtang Memory Project (www.langtangmemoryproject.com) our paper asks: How do photographs and photographic practices articulate with and help shape different kinds of 'memory work' in the wake of disaster? In what ways do Langtangpa survivors use photographs to reorganize the temporalities of memory, aftermath, recovery, and rejuvenation? How does working with images and creating visual materials also co-create new forms of subjectivity, exposure, and agency for differently positioned Langtangpas?

More specifically, our paper reflects on our experiences working with Langtangpa community members on a) a collaborative documentary film project focused on the Drukpa Tse Chu festival of July 2018, tentatively called '*A Time for Singing Again*'; b) a major public exhibition at the Photo Kathmandu festival in October 2018 (www.photoktm.com) we are co-curating with a group of Langtangpa collaborators; and c) the ongoing archival work of the Langtang Memory Project, which will culminate in the construction of a Langtang Heritage Center in 2019-2020. Drawing insight from this work, we examine the ways these projects articulate with broader practices of memorialization and storytelling in Langtang and Nepal, produce new patterns of intergenerational dialogue, and relate to the reproduction and reconfiguration of Langtangpa identities. Our analysis is informed by existing scholarship focused on the roles that memory and affect play in the aftermath of disaster (Oliver-Smith 1986; Simpson 2014; Gordillo 2014; Barrios 2017); ethnographies focused on the making of alternative post-disaster archives (Creighton 2014; Liboiron 2015); and anthropological work on the layers of meaning and affect connected with everyday photographic objects and practices (Pinney 1997; McGrath 2001; Edwards 2012). What kind of stories are Langtangpas interested in telling about their pasts, presents, and futures, and for whom?

I/NGOs in humanitarian responses post-earthquake 2015: Empirical evidence from Gorkha, Sindhupalchok and Southern Lalitpur

Amrita Gurung & Jeevan Baniya
Social Science Baha

The critique of traditional modernist 'top-down' development approach for largely dismissing indigenous practices and collective knowledge and skills (Enns et al. 2014) have led scholars to propose participatory development approach as an alternative to humanitarian responses during the time of disaster (Regmi, 2016). In lieu of the growing interest and need to localize the humanitarian efforts in relation to 'comparative advantages and complementarities in different contexts' (Zyck and Krebs, 2015) partner organizations have worked in partnerships with local organizations in Nepal's humanitarian response to 2015 earthquake. Drawing on over 90 semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives of international/non-governmental organizations (I/NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs) and community leaders and politicians in three earthquake-affected districts of Nepal - Southern Lalitpur, Sindhupalchowk and Gorkha, the article explores the I/NGOs' strategies, roles and impacts in the communities. Preliminary findings suggest that I/NGOs' response strategies are varied and shaped by policy framework, priorities and their pre-existing networks, etc. In some cases, response from I/NGOs also could play potentially crucial role in local capacity building.



However, partnerships between I/NGOs and local organizations do not usually seem to translate into substantial changes at local level. Hence, people perceive I/NGOs' work performance as mere 'show-and-tell'.

Householder, Homeowner, or Landowner? Rethinking Ownership and Kinship through Nepal's Reconstruction Process

Co-authors: Sara Shneiderman, Jeevan Baniya, Bina Limbu, Nabin Rawal, Prakash Chandra Subedi, Manoj Suji, Cameron Warner

Nepal's post-earthquake reconstruction process has raised a series of critical social scientific questions about how the concepts of 'house', 'household' and 'home' are differentially defined. These definitions, in turn, undergird legal and policy approaches to property ownership. This paper considers how conceptions of 'ownership' are transforming through an examination of ethnographic data from three earthquake-affected districts (Bhaktapur, Dhading, and Sindhupalchok) generated through our collaborative research partnership, 'Expertise, Labour and Mobility in Nepal's Post-Conflict, Post-Disaster Reconstruction' (funded by Canada's Social Science and Humanities Research Council) over several months in 2018.

We ask: how were the relationships between 'house', 'home', 'household' and 'property' redefined from the perspective of earthquake-affected citizens as they came in contact with policies for relief, recovery and reconstruction? How did governmental and non-governmental actors understand these relationships, and what prior policies did they base their post-earthquake legal definitions upon? What shapes a sense of belonging to 'home' for those living through the reconstruction process (kinship ties, embodied relationships to territory and lineage through connections to ancestors and deities, livelihood activities, etc.)? Do such feelings vary from one generation to the next? How are concepts of 'ownership' transforming differentially in rural and urban areas, when the spatial relationships between land and the built structure of 'the house' itself are very different in each context – but have been treated uniformly by the National Reconstruction Authority?

We situate our discussion in relation to classical anthropological literature on the notion of 'the house' as a unit of kinship, as well as within more recent interdisciplinary discussions about the concept of 'home' in relation to ideas of identity, belonging, territory, and land relations. In so doing, we seek to bring empirical material from Nepal's post-disaster experience into conversation with broader social scientific concerns of global interest.

Disasters as betrayal: The Life that Niaz Invokes

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Natural disasters impact the very DNA of devotion; what we owe each other and to whom we owe. More simply put, disasters radically reconfigure how people are put together and the expectations they place on one another. In part, because disasters place overwhelming



limitations on everyday life, constraining people's capacities to fulfill shared obligations. But also because they can shift the very nature of these demands as life is no longer governed by the same boundaries. Understood this way, it is plausible to consider that disasters can catalyze conditions for letting each other down; *they create, nurture, and amplify betrayal*. Using the metaphor of betrayal, both as an embodied (lived and felt) experience as well as a shared (affective and material) social condition, I write about my interlocutor: Niaz, whose life in the *pahari* (mountainous) Northern Pakistan is further confounded by another form of betrayal, that of his body. As a result of an injury (permanent as judged by doctors but temporary as judged by Niaz), Niaz's bodily limitations placed significant constraints on his life much before the earthquake that devastated his Himalayan village. Niaz's failed body (a body that refuses to "recover"), presents an important counterpoint to the disaster of the earthquake, both life-altering events. But Niaz does not attribute his most profound dysphoria to either the accident or the earthquake, but to the disloyalty of his best friend. In my attempts to understand intersecting forms of violence (bodily injury, earthquake, social betrayal) as chronicity, I approach disasters as a catalysis for other forms of social let-downs as opposed to discrete temporal events. Furthermore, I attempt to understand social repair as a process governed by its own willful genres of life and disarticulated futurities.

Change is in the Eye of the Beholder: using the same facts as evidence for different consequences of the 2005 Kashmir earthquake

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On October 8th 2005 an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale struck northern Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, affecting the lives of more than 3.5 million people. Due to its epicentre and major devastation occurring in the latter, it came to be known as the 2005 Kashmir earthquake. Earthquakes can be moments of rupture in people's lives, critical events that allows them not only to rewrite their past (Das 1995), but also their future. The 2005 Kashmir earthquake and its aftermath was no different from other disasters. Depending on whose voice (and the date of the narrative), the earthquake had different kinds of impact and different consequences. We can see these differences within the discourses of international actors, national actors, as well as within local actors. In this paper, I focus on local actors' narratives to show not only that discourses on the impact of the earthquake change over time, but also that people create different discourses making use of the same facts. Despite agreeing with three facts of post-earthquake change – namely a drastic increase in the number of houses, an increase in women's physical mobility, and the decrease of agricultural output – local actors use them as evidence to justify different opinions on the extent, nature, and normative value of that change. All actors corroborate changes in housing patterns, women's social mobility, and agricultural work – how much change, what kind of change, and how good was this change though, was highly contested. In other words, local actors use the same facts to churn out different pieces of evidence to justify different outcomes of the same event. That the same facts can become different pieces of evidence can be problematic, particularly in today's dominant discourse of using evidence for policy in development work and disaster risk reduction.



The role of newspaper editorials in the aftermath of 2015 Gorkha Earthquake

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In Nepal, in any public programme attended by politicians and bureaucrats, they invariably never forget to mention their 'journalist friends' while addressing the gathering. One gets the impression that they have each other's ears, as indeed they do in terms of access and information. Journalists have easier time arranging meeting with influential and powerful politicians and bureaucrats, and the politicians and bureaucrats have to rely on the journalists to disseminate their policies and views. It is then worth asking if Nepali journalists, and media, can influence government policy making and whether the politicians and bureaucrats can sway over the journalists in defending their policy choices.

In the aftermath of the 2015 Gorkha earthquake, media in their news reporting were instrumental in highlighting rescue and relief efforts as well as pointing out the unreached areas and shortcomings of these efforts. Therefore, in a way, journalists spurred the government and other institutions into more concerted efforts at rescue and relief. As the rescue phase gave way to relief and recovery work, news media started highlighting the relief effort as well as the need to start reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure and private houses. Commentators and experts also joined the chorus for better relief distribution and reconstruction strategy. The government bodies and development partners in Nepal hired experts and consultants to assist in their work in planning for relief and reconstruction work. Numerous reports and research articles have been generated in the meantime by researchers and academicians. I defer to and leave it to the experts, consultants, and academicians to reflect on whether their advice were heeded by the government and to what extent. However, this is not the purpose of the paper and besides it would not be fair to them to hold them accountable for their professional output while disregarding political and policy contexts.

This paper looks at the editorials of two major Nepali language newspapers as the sum total of their focus and agenda following the earthquake, especially on relief distribution and recovery/reconstruction policies. By comparing the government policy formulation around these issues, it would hopefully provide a glimpse of the agenda-setting/influencing capacities of the news media and the government's disposition to listen to the media and ultimately assess the extent and limits of that relationship.

Relief funds and earthquake politics in colonial South Asia **Daniel Haines**

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Major disasters in the present day provoke predictable international responses, which feature large-scale charitable fundraising drives alongside intervention in the disaster zones by humanitarian organisations and UN agencies. In the case of South Asia, this pattern has roots in practices that date back at least to the early twentieth century. Despite the appearance of apolitical, humanitarian relief of sufferers that such interventions portray, recent scholarship in the history of global humanitarianism, and longstanding work on famine relief in colonial India, point the way towards a more sceptical and nuanced reading of the politics of disaster relief.



In this paper I chart the development of relief funds in response to several major South Asian earthquakes between the 1890s and 1930s. The funds drew on charitable giving from publics in India, Britain and elsewhere, but the allocation of relief was controlled by officials representing the colonial state in India and the Rana government in Nepal. I show that the distribution of relief fund resources was thoroughly political. It aimed to prove that the authorities were taking action to ameliorate the suffering of earthquake victims, while preserving the stability of governance by reclaiming pre-earthquake social and political status quos. I will also examine the international politics of relief funds, particularly the reasons for – and consequences of – Nepal’s refusal to receive money from the Viceroy’s Relief Fund in 1934.

I will suggest why the apparently revolutionary potential of major natural disasters, which Mark Pelling and others have argued for, was noticeably absent in the case of South Asian earthquakes. The paper therefore uses archival history methodology, drawing on material from the UK, India, Pakistan, Myanmar and Nepal, to address cross-disciplinary concerns.

Accelerating a Status Quo? The 2015 earthquakes and Nepal’s new constitution

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Two national-level institutional developments occurred within months of the earthquakes that struck Nepal in April and May 2015. These were: (a) the drafting and promulgation of a new national constitution; and (b) the establishment of a National Reconstruction Authority (NRA). The urgency felt by the leaders of Nepal’s three largest parties to reach a constitutional settlement was plainly apparent. They signed a Sixteen-Point Agreement on the basic principles of the new constitution on 8 June, just 45 days after the Gorkha earthquake, and the constitution was promulgated on 20 September 2015. Although a Constituent Assembly had been elected in April 2008 with the task of producing a new constitution within two years, Nepal’s government and state institutions had been functioning under an Interim Constitution since January 2007. Thus, a constitution that had been promised but not delivered for over seven years was eventually completed and promulgated within a timeframe of just a little over 100 days.

In contrast to this, the Bill to establish the NRA was not passed in parliament until 16 December 2015 and no staff (other than its CEO) were appointed to it until January 2016. When these developments are viewed in outline—from a distance, as it were—there would seem to be a direct causal relationship between the earthquake of 25 April 2015 and the prioritisation and ‘fast-tracking’ of what was in certain respects a relatively conservative constitution. As such, this Nepali case would appear to be a classic example of the reinstatement of an ‘accelerated status quo’, described by Pelling and Dill (2010) as one of the possible political outcomes of a natural disaster.

Drawing upon conversations and interviews conducted in Nepal over the winter of 2017-18 and a close reading of media discourse and political analysis from 2015, this paper will examine and assess the extent of this supposed causality in some detail. Given that the most radical change ushered in by the new constitution is the introduction of a federal structure, particular attention will be paid to the evolution of the debate on this key issue.
