1st Conference on Equitable Partnerships

"Enabling Equitable and Ethical Research Partnerships in Crisis Situations: Lessons Learned from Post-Disaster Heritage Protection Interventions Following Nepal's 2015 Earthquake"

Prof Robin Coningham
UNESCO Chair in Archaeological Ethics & Practice in Cultural Heritage, Archaeology, Durham University, UK

unesco Chair

UNESCO Chair on Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage

Durham University

British Academy, London
12th February 2025

Durham University

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Archaeological Ethics and
Practice in Cultural Heritage

DURHAM
World Heritage Site

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1. Introduction
2. The 2015 Gorkha Earthquake
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4. Lessons Learned
5. The TRUST Code
6. Prospect

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Why Does Heritage Matter?

The Potential of Heritage:

"Cultural heritage — both tangible and intangible — and creativity are resources that need to be protected and carefully managed. They can serve both as drivers for achieving the SDGs as well as enablers, when culture-forward solutions can ensure the success of interventions to achieve the SDGs"

(Jyoti Hosagrahar 2017)

https://en.unesco.org/courier/april-june-2017/culture-heart-sdgs

- **SDG 11**
- **SDG 17**

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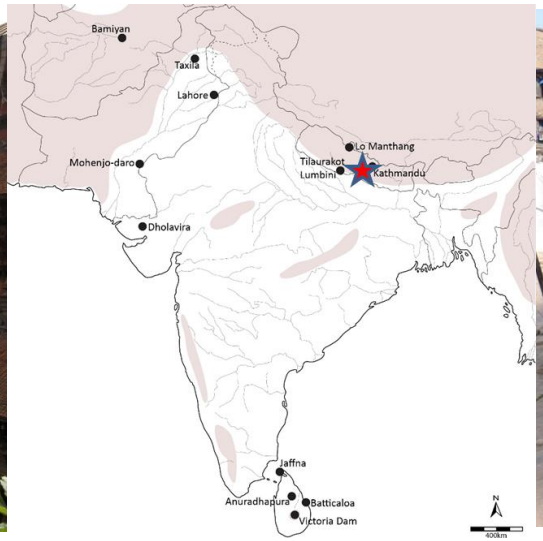
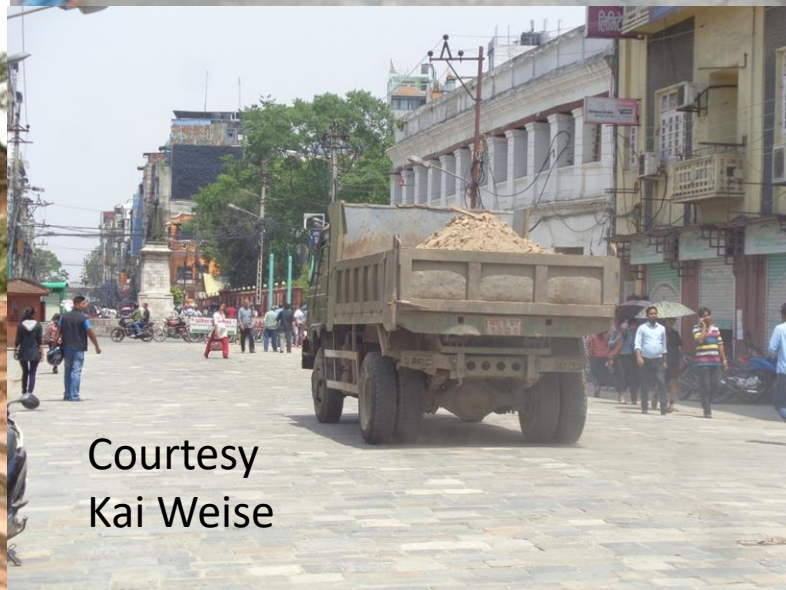
The 2015 Gorkha Earthquake

- A humanitarian catastrophe om 25th April 2015 – estimates of around 9000 fatalities within Nepal, 20,000 injured and destruction of almost 500,000 houses.
- But also a cultural catastrophe with damage and destruction of monuments throughout Nepal, including the Kathmandu Valley UNESCO World Heritage Property.
- The Gorkha Earthquake also caused damage to 691 cultural monuments within Nepal. Of these, 131 collapsed, including many located within the Kathmandu Valley UNESCO World Heritage Property.
- The financial cost of the damage and destruction of cultural heritage within Nepal was estimated at £129 million.



Courtesy
Kai Weise



Courtesy
Kai Weise


Restoration of
Agamchen, Hanuman Gate &
the Associated Buildings
JICA


China Aid Restoration Project of Nine-Storeyed Basantapur Tower at
Durbar Square of Kathmandu, Nepal
CHINA AID


RESTORATION OF
THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY
GADDI BAITHAK
miyamoto
RELIEF

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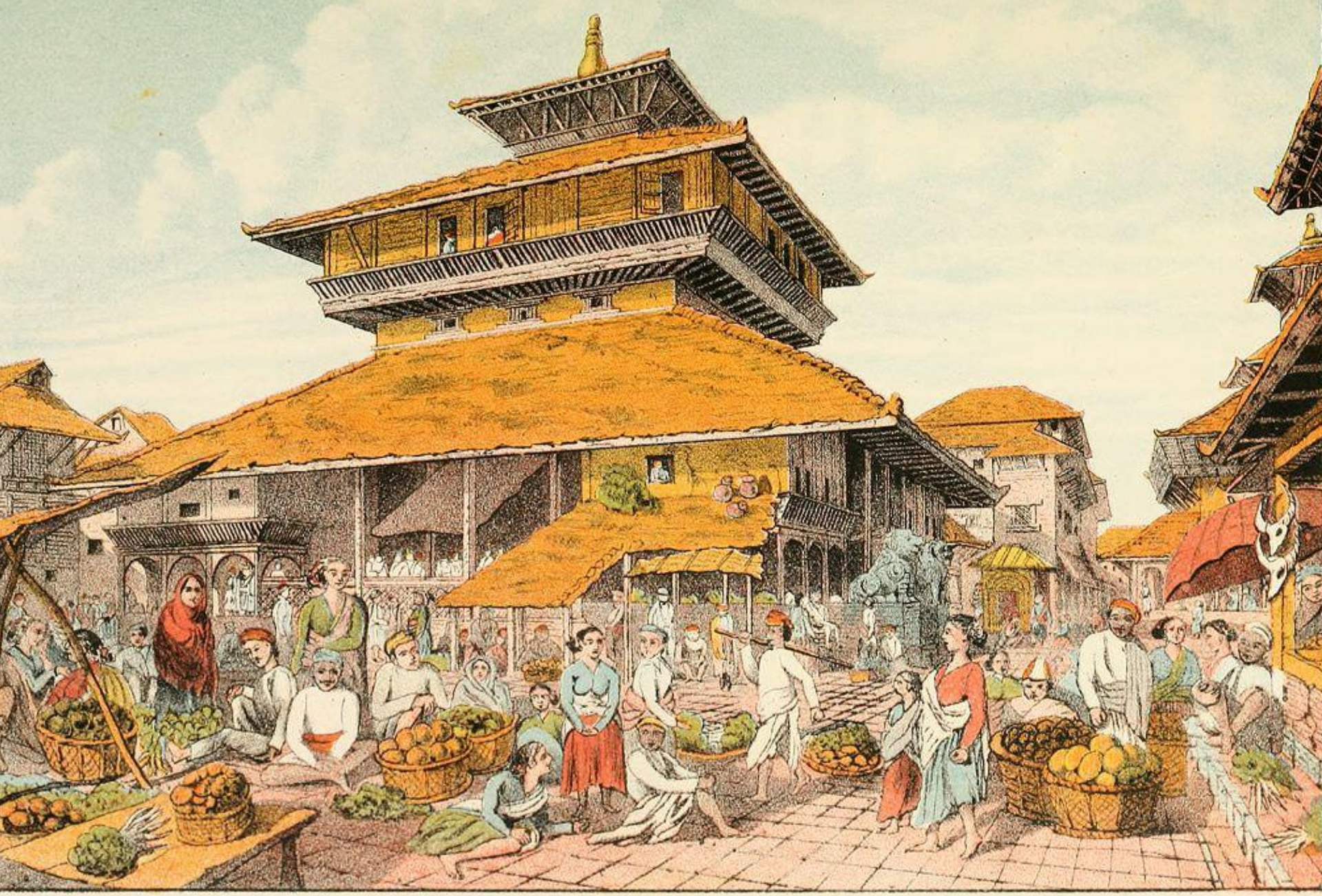

THE MARKET PLACE, KATHMANDU.

The building (from which the City derives its name) was erected A.D. 1596.

H.A. Oldfield 1880

GUIDANCE NOTE
DEBRIS MANAGEMENT

CRISIS PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

United Nations Development Programme

Partners and Funders

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Department of Archaeology
Government of Nepal

UNESCO Kathmandu Office
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ICOMOS Nepal

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
From the People of Japan

GCRF
Global Challenges Research Fund

BRITISH ACADEMY
for the humanities and social sciences

Durham University
Department of Engineering

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Institute of Medieval & Early Modern Studies

Newcastle University

UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD
MAKING KNOWLEDGE WORK

UNIVERSITY of STIRLING

Arts & Humanities Research Council

पशुपति क्षेत्र विकास कोष
Pashupati Area Development Trust

THE MAHARAJA SAYAJIRAO UNIVERSITY OF BARODA
सत्यं शिवं सुन्दरम्

APPCA
OCHSPA
东方文化遗址保护联盟


METRIC 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

KASTHAMANDAP WOOD WORK DETAILS
Structural wooden components

FIVE STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS:

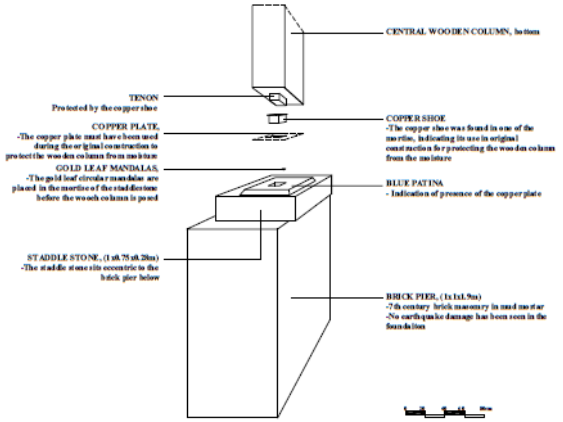
1. Beams- The load of the structure above is trnsmitted to the four main columns through these beams. The four beams are are tied together using tee lap joints, however they are not extended to the outer walls.

2. Wooden brackets-A pair of wooden brackets forming T at 4 corners transmit the load from the beam to the columns. It is the only structural component with intricate carving, lion face and floral patterns.

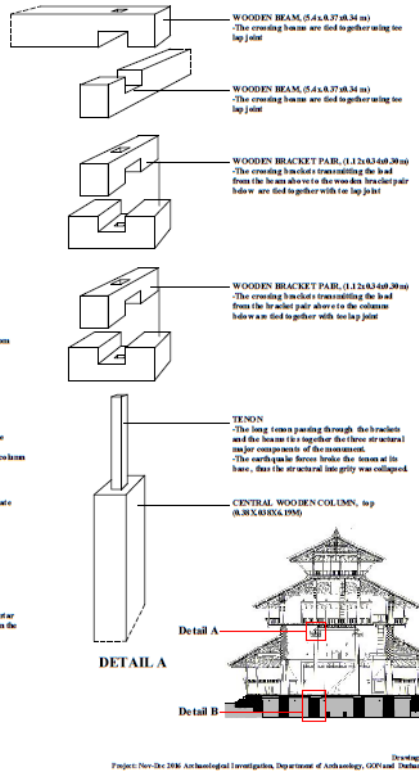
3. Wooden column- These massive columns more than 6m high forms the structural core.

4. Staddle stones- The staddle stone forms the base of the wodden column which is posed directly on the brick piers. The stone being resistance to capillary action prevents therotting of the wooden column.

5. Brick piers - The brick pier completely below the floor level forms the foundation of the structure. These brick piers are connected to the outer foundation walls with series of cross walls.

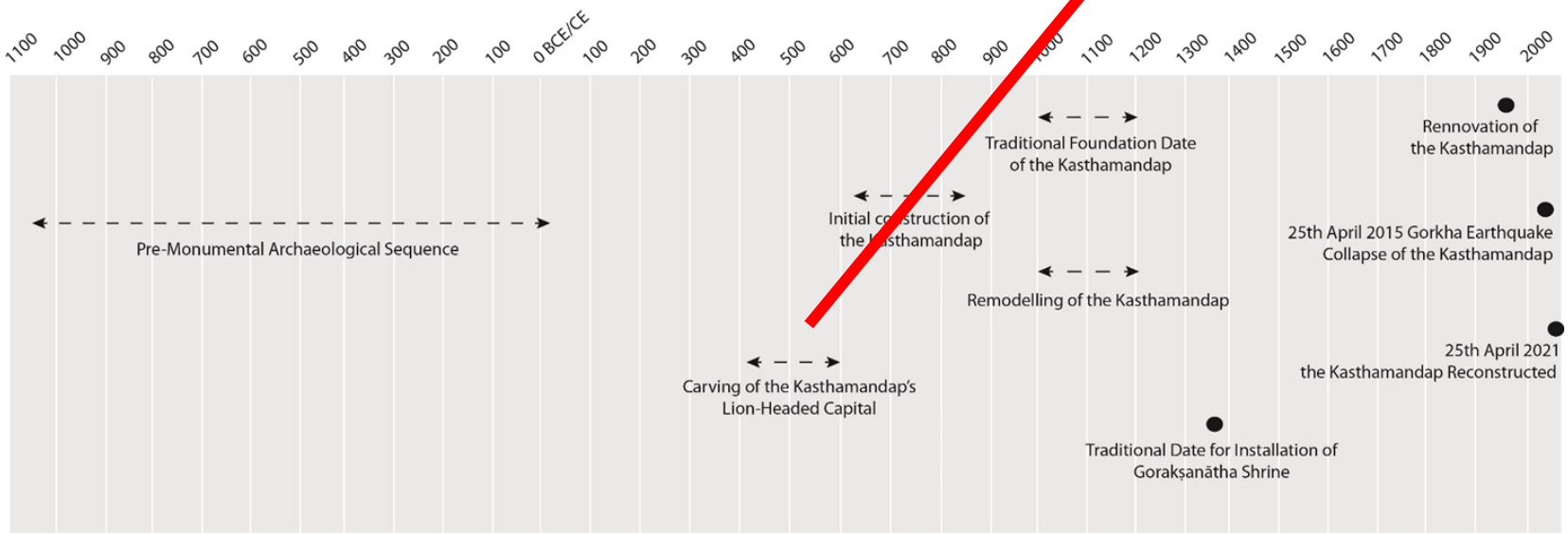


DETAIL B



DETAIL A

Drawings: Anil Joshi
Project: Nov-Dec 2016 Archaeological Investigation, Department of Archaeology, GON and Durham University



Communities and Artisans


हनुमानढोका दरबार क्षेत्र संरक्षण कार्यक्रम
काठमाडौं महानगरपालिकाको आर्थिक अनुदानमा
काष्ठमण्डप पुनःनिर्माण कार्य

Post-Disaster Heritage Response

PHASE 1 HANDBOOK

Methods and Protocols Developed for Post-Earthquake Emergency Archaeological Reponses to Collapsed and Damaged Monuments in Nepal

Prepared by the UNESCO Chair in Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage, Durham University (UK) the University of Stirling (UK) and the Department of Archaeology (Government of Nepal) with the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK)

Arts & Humanities Research Council

Department of Archaeology Government of Nepal

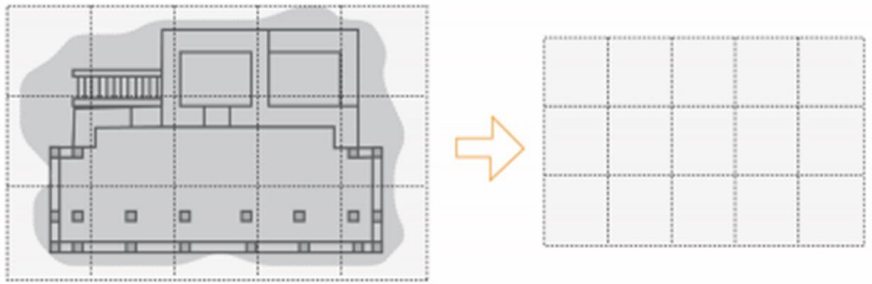
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

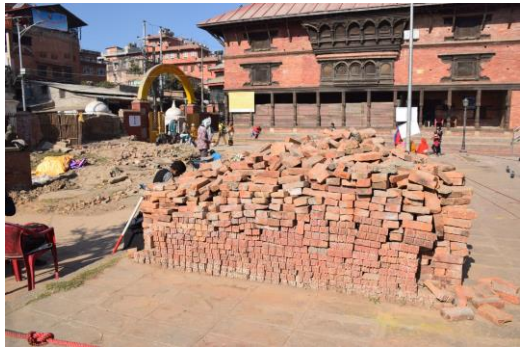
UNESCO Chair on Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage, Durham University, United Kingdom

uniTwin

Durham University

UNIVERSITY of STIRLING



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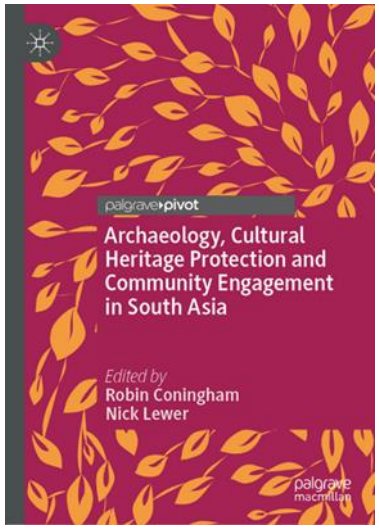
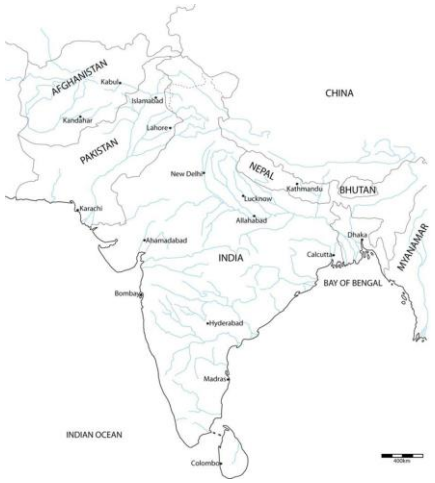


Heritage at Risk 2017
Pathways to the Protection and Rehabilitation of Cultural Heritage in South Asia



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Kathmandu Office

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Policy Engagement (and Impact…)

ONE OF 13 GLOBAL CASE STUDIES AND ONE KEY MESSAGE FOR UNESCO-ICOMOS-IPCC REPORT

"Disasters, human or natural, overwhelm planned responses, compromising heritage research and protection agendas and result in compromised mitigations and interventions alienating communities and indigenous practitioners.

In such environments, although infrequently mobilised, archaeology and heritage science are uniquely placed to assist fuller understand the impact of climate change, disaster and risk on urban infrastructure in the past, as well as facilitating reflection on lessons of adaptation and resilience for modern cities and their inhabitants."

Morel, Hana, et al. 2022. *Global research and action agenda on culture, heritage and climate change: scientific outcome of the International Co-Sponsored Meeting on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change*. ICOMOS: Paris. https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2716/

Capacity Challenges

HEIs seldom have capacity to release staff at short notice to participate in crises research, and notifications of the award of grants often give little notice before start dates, creating challenges for delivery of core duties at home HEIs.

Negotiating partnerships with local colleagues already involved in crises settings is challenging, as research is not always recognised as a priority by their own line managers and coordinators

Colleagues already involved in crises settings often find Intellectual Property agreement contracts issued by UK HEIs intimidating and confusing.

Logistics, such as accommodation, transport, food, and power are often restricted in crises settings and organising in a manner that does not detract/distract resources from humanitarian priorities is complex.

Financial Challenges

Most funding for HEIs is held by national research agencies with time-consuming processes of peer review and primacy placed on excellence rather than crises responses, public utility or agility/expediency

UK HEI focus on closed UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment cycles leaves UK researchers with ongoing research partner legacy obligations without funding or time

Research funding cycles are short term, which is problematic for research continuity within protracted crises

HEI financial controls are not readily compatible with dynamic field demands for receipting and the use of cash in crisis contexts

Practitioners and custodians of traditional/intangible knowledge systems have fewer formalised qualifications and frequently find their relationships with formally educated colleagues, such as engineers and architects, asymmetric, and struggle to demonstrate the financial basis to engage with donors and procurement procedures

Formal permission for post-disaster interventions need to be obtained in advance, and visas need to be obtained for foreigners, both potentially time-consuming processes.

UK HEIs require additional ethics approval, as well as health and safety approvals, if engaging with local research participants.

Research Ethics, and Health and Safety Challenges

Research agencies require detailed ethics and risk mitigation strategies to be submitted with grant applications prior to deployment of HEI-based teams.

Broader Challenges

Most UK HEI staff lack experience of research in post-disaster Contexts and many experts and practitioners deployed during disaster and post-disaster interventions are unaware of local cultural sensitivities and values.

Incoming research groups frequently do not embed ethical and equitable partnerships, mapping/recording is frequently duplicated and seldom articulated with management tools, and researchers seldom engage with policy and decision-makers.

International research groups often find it difficult to extract themselves and hand over legacy and custodianship to local partners.

The sharing of lessons learned, including approaches/successes and challenges/ performance is too little, too late.

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Session 1: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY IN DISASTER RESPONSES
GENERAL ASSEMBLY of ALLEA (The European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities)

22/06/2023

allea | All European Academies

Previously known as:
Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings

The *TRUST Code* is a reference document on the Participant Portal for Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe

FAIRNESS

ARTICLE 1
Local relevance of research is essential and should be determined in collaboration with local partners. Research that is not relevant in the location where it is undertaken imposes burdens without benefits.

ARTICLE 2
Local communities and research participants should be included throughout the research process, wherever possible, from planning through to post-study feedback and evaluation, to ensure that their perspectives are fairly represented. This approach represents Good Participatory Practice.

ARTICLE 3
Feedback about the findings of the research must be given to local communities and research participants. It should be provided in a way that is meaningful, appropriate and readily comprehended.

ARTICLE 4
Local researchers should be included, wherever possible, throughout the research process, including in study design, study implementation, data ownership, intellectual property and authorship of publications.

ARTICLE 5
Access by researchers to any biological or agricultural resources, human biological materials, traditional knowledge, cultural artefacts or non-renewable resources such as minerals should be subject to the free and prior informed consent of the owners or custodians. Formal agreements should govern the transfer of any material or knowledge to researchers, on terms that are co-developed with resource custodians or knowledge holders.

ARTICLE 6
Any research that uses biological materials and associated information such as traditional knowledge or genetic sequence data should clarify to participants the potential monetary and non-monetary benefits that might arise. A culturally appropriate plan to share benefits should be agreed to by all relevant stakeholders, and reviewed regularly as the research evolves. Researchers from high-income settings need to be aware of the power and resource differentials in benefit-sharing discussions, with sustained efforts to bring lower-capacity parties into the dialogue.

ARTICLE 7
It is essential to compensate local research support systems, for instance translators, interpreters or local coordinators, fairly for their contribution to research projects.

CARE

ARTICLE 12
Informed consent procedures should be tailored to local requirements to achieve genuine understanding and well-founded decision-making.

ARTICLE 13
A clear procedure for feedback, complaints or allegations of misconduct must be offered that gives genuine and appropriate access to all research participants and local partners to express any concerns they may have with the research process. This procedure must be agreed with local partners at the outset of the research.

ARTICLE 14
Research that would be severely restricted or prohibited in a high-income setting should not be carried out in a lower-income setting. Exceptions might be permissible in the context of specific local conditions (e.g. diseases not prevalent in high-income countries). If and when such exceptions are dealt with, the internationally acknowledged compliance commandment "comply or explain" must be used, i.e. exceptions agreed upon by the local stakeholders and researchers must be explicitly and transparently justified and made easily accessible to interested parties.

ARTICLE 15
Where research involvement could lead to stigmatization (e.g. research on sexually transmitted diseases), incrimination (e.g. sex work), discrimination or indeterminate personal risk (e.g. research on political beliefs), special measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of research participants need to be agreed with local partners.

ARTICLE 16
Ahead of the research it should be determined whether local resources will be depleted to provide staff or other resources for the new project (e.g. nurses or laboratory staff). If so, the implications should be discussed in detail with local communities, partners and authorities and monitored during the study.

ARTICLE 17
In situations where animal welfare regulations are inadequate or non-existent in the local setting compared with the country of origin of the researcher, animal experimentation should always be undertaken in line with the higher standards of protection for animals.

ARTICLE 18
In situations where environmental protection and biorisk-related regulations are inadequate or non-existent in the local setting compared with the country of origin of the researcher, research should always be undertaken in line with the higher standards of environmental protection.

ARTICLE 19
Where research may involve health, safety or security risks for researchers or expose researchers to conflicts of conscience, tailored risk management plans should be agreed in advance of the research between the research team, local partners and employers.

RESPECT

ARTICLE 8
Potential cultural sensitivities should be explored in advance of research with local communities, research participants and local researchers to avoid violating customary practices. Research is a voluntary exercise for research participants. It is not a mission-driven exercise to impose different ethical values. If researchers from high-income settings cannot agree on a way of undertaking the research that is acceptable to local stakeholders, it should not take place.

ARTICLE 9
Community assent should be obtained through recognized local structures, if required locally. While individual consent must not be compromised, assent from the community may be an ethical prerequisite and a sign of respect for the entire community. It is the responsibility of the researcher to find out local requirements.

ARTICLE 10
Local ethics review should be sought wherever possible. It is of vital importance that research projects are approved by a research ethics committee in the host country, wherever this exists, even if ethics approval has already been obtained in the high-income setting.

ARTICLE 11
Researchers from high-income settings should show respect to host country research ethics committees.

HONESTY

ARTICLE 20
A clear understanding should be reached among collaborators with regard to their roles, responsibilities and conduct throughout the research cycle, from study design through to study implementation, review and dissemination. Capacity-building plans for local researchers should be part of these discussions.

ARTICLE 21
Lower educational standards, illiteracy or language barriers can never be an excuse for hiding information or providing it incompletely. Information must always be presented honestly and as clearly as possible. Plain language and a non-patronising style in the appropriate local languages should be adopted in communication with research participants who may have difficulties comprehending the research process and requirements.

ARTICLE 22
Corruption and bribery of any kind cannot be accepted or supported by researchers from any countries.

ARTICLE 23
Lower local data protection standards or compliance procedures can never be an excuse to tolerate the potential for privacy breaches. Special attention must be paid to research participants who are at risk of stigmatization, discrimination or incrimination through the research participation.

TRUST (2018) The TRUST Code – A Global Code of Conduct for Equitable Research Partnerships,
DOI: https://doi.org/10.48508/GCC/2018.05

Fairness

TRUST article	What worked well	Traffic light
A1: Research is locally relevant	• The Kasthamandap was selected as our key focus through discussions between UK and Nepali partners.	**Green**
A2: Local communities and research participants are included	• Local residents, elected legislators, craftspeople, tour operators, businesses and tourists were consulted, and field teams included local heritage experts, heritage managers, HEI staff and students.	**Green**
A3: Meaningful feedback on results is provided	• Feedback was provided during oral briefing meetings from Nepali partners and UK-based staff, and through papers, report and online dual lingual exhibitions: https://stories.durham.ac.uk/resilience/	**Green**
Art 4: Local researchers are included throughout the research process	• Co-publication with Nepali partners was core practice, from reporting the pilot through to the final report. Co-publications included international Open Access journals as well as easily accessible publications in Nepal. • The project was co-directed by one named lead from the UK and one from Nepal.	**Green**
Art 5: Material transfer agreements are signed	• Scientific samples were exported to the UK. This was approved by Nepal's Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation as there were no facilities available in Nepal. Results were shared with Nepali-based partners.	**Green**
Art 6: Culturally appropriate benefit sharing plan for traditional knowledge	• Traditional systems of seismic adaptation and termite control were recorded, and integrated with scientific analysis, before being consolidated into the local reconstruction plan.	**Amber**
Art 7: Local support staff are remunerated fairly	• Nepali translators and coordinators were fairly compensated for their participation at local rates.	**Green**

LATER...

Traditional knowledge systems, such as seismic adaptation and termite control, were recorded, and integrated with scientific analysis, before being consolidated into local reconstruction plans

Open access | Research article | First published online March 4, 2024

Enabling equitable and ethical research partnerships in crisis situations: Lessons learned from post-disaster heritage protection interventions following Nepal's 2015 earthquake

Robin Coningham, Nick Lewer, [...], and Sandhya Parajuli Khanal +4 View all authors and affiliations

OnlineFirst | https://doi.org/10.1177/17470161241234502

RESEARCH ETHICS
The international journal of Research Ethics & Research Integrity

Respect

TRUST article	What worked well	Traffic light
Art 8: Cultural sensitivities are explored in advance	• The Nepali-UK team partnership was well-established, having worked collaboratively in Kathmandu, and elsewhere in Nepal, for a number of years. • The nature of the partnership allowed the embedding of cultural awareness within the project design as well as regular informal adjustments to practice.	**Green**
Art 9: Community assent is sought	• Briefing meetings with local elected legislators and their communities were regularly held during fieldwork. • The team ensured that the site remained open and accessible to local communities and encouraged informal and formal visits, particularly for them to undertake their intangible practices.	**Green**
Art 10: Local ethics review is sought	• Approval for fieldwork was provided by the Director-General of Archaeology, Government of Nepal through a formal MoU, following submission of the proposed activities.	**Green**
Art 11: Respect for local research ethics committees	• No Nepalese research ethics committee was involved in the approval.	Nil

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RESEARCH ETHICS
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Care

TRUST article	What worked well	Traffic light
Art12: Locally adapted informed consent procedures	• Consent forms for community participants were co-designed between Nepali partners and the UK-based team. • Pilot evaluation of the forms resulted in enhanced local adaptations. • Informed consent was obtained from illiterate members of the community via oral briefings offered by local partners.	Green
Art13: Possibilities to raise complaints about the research	• Regular meetings with research participants and local partners ensured that any concerns with the research process could be raised. • Community participants were informed of the process for feedback and complaints on the consent forms.	Green
Art14: Research that would be severely restricted in a high-income setting should not be carried out in a lower-income setting.	• Not applicable.	Nil
Art15: Avoid research participant stigmatization, incrimination and discrimination	• Not applicable.	Nil
Art16: Determining in advance whether local resources will be depleted because of the research	• Deployment was subject to the formal approval of the Director-General of Archaeology, Government of Nepal, and UNESCO's field office.	Green
Art17: Animal experimentation should always be undertaken in line with the higher standards of protection	• Not applicable.	Nil
Art18: Research should always be undertaken in line with higher standards of environmental protection.	• Standards and compliance remained at the level agreed in the co-design stage by the Durham University approvals process.	Green
Art19: Tailored risk management plans should be agreed between the research team and local partners.	• Tailored risk assessments for UK-based staff were approved prior to leaving the UK. These risk assessments were shared with Nepali partners and volunteers. • Insurance cover was not provided for Nepali partners.	Amber

Insurance cover was not provided for Nepali partners but risk assessments were shared as was accommodation

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Honesty

TRUST article	What worked well	Traffic light
Art20: Roles and responsibilities are agreed in advance, including the potential for capacity building	• UK-based staff and Nepali partners were engaged in co-design from the outset, with clarity concerning responsibilities and roles. • Capacity-building plans for local researchers were *implicitly* rather than explicitly stated.	**Amber**
Art21: Relevant information is given in local languages and without jargon	• Information was provided in Nepali and English. • Information was shared with illiterate members of the community via oral briefings offered by local partners. • Text was co-authored by UK-based staff and Nepali partners, including temporary and online exhibitions.	**Green**
Art22: No corruption and bribery	• All field financial transactions and payments for staff and materials were scrutinised by independent UK-based accounts staff.	**Green**
Art23: Data protection standards and compliance procedures did not lead to privacy breaches.	• Standards and compliance remained at the UK level agreed in the co-design stage by the Durham University approvals process. • There were no privacy breaches.	**Green**

LATER…

Capacity strengthening exchanges to the UK were arranged and a fully funded PhD at Durham. Additional funds were raised to involve colleagues from India, Myanmar and Sri Lanka to strengthen South-South networks

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6. Prospect

- ODA Eligibility Criteria
- Gender Equality
- Research Ethics
- Risk Management
- Code of Practice

How to assess the success of Equitable Partnerships…

Do we need new guidelines or codes?

Grades, scores or threshold?

…or a mechanism of enhancing effectiveness prior to submission?

Further Information

Coningham, R., Lewer, N., Acharya, K. P., Weise, K., Kunwar, R. B., Joshi, A., & Parajuli Khanal, S. 2024. Enabling equitable and ethical research partnerships in crisis situations: Lessons learned from post-disaster heritage protection interventions following Nepal's 2015 earthquake. **Research Ethics**, 20(4), 835-846.

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