

When the shaking stops: an evaluation of post-earthquake heritage rehabilitation in Hanuman Dhoka's Durbar Square

Project Background Information/Introduction:

The Gorkha Earthquake that struck central Nepal on 25th April 2015 caused extensive damage to the historic centre of Kathmandu, much of which is inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The main palace that houses Hanuman Dhoka's Palace Museum, as well as numerous temples and traditional Sattals (rest houses) or pavilions, were damaged or destroyed. In many LDC contexts like in Kathmandu, post-earthquake rehabilitation is dependent on the resilience of the communities, and their successful interaction with policy makers, engineers and architects. Largely undocumented, Kathmandu's own rehabilitation process has been diverse and uncoordinated; local knowledge bearers, including artisans, priests and caretakers of the monuments have often been side-lined or excluded from scientific designs. The hypothesis of this thesis is that monuments should not simply be reconstructed but rehabilitated along with the renewal of their linkages, and functions, to their communities. The post-earthquake rehabilitation of the monuments in Hanuman Dhoka's Durbar Square is being addressed through very different processes. Some are tendered out to contractors, others implemented bilaterally through international organizations and some conducted by local community-based committees. As noted above, however, successful implementation depends on the degree to which bearers of indigenous knowledge with other authorities are brought together. Currently, the gulf between traditional technology and materials, and modern engineering needs to be bridged to fulfil the legal requirements set through building codes and structural requirements. The approach and language of traditional artisans and modern engineering specialists needs to be translated for both communities to allow communication and finding a means of working together.

Research Aim/Objectives/Questions/Hypotheses:

The aim of the thesis is to map and evaluate the success of heritage rehabilitation approaches to a single monument in Kathmandu, the Kasthamandap, and the extent to which each intervention altered linkages with its communities. The study will review the history of the Kasthamandap, with greater emphasis on the activities that have taken place since the 1960s. Of particular interest is the impact of the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake and how this event has raised questions concerning ownership, and changed the balance of involvement of various communities in the use and management of the monument. Research on the communities related to the Kasthamandap has been approached through three broad questions. The first question is how did the Kasthamandap survive and adapt from its initial construction over a thousand three hundred years ago until its collapse in 2015? This requires a better

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understanding of the communities that maintained, and when necessary, rebuilt the structure. The second question is how did the Kasthamandap remain relevant to those communities over time? This space with undefined function was clearly adapted, and reinterpreted, as necessary by various communities. The third question is how did the communities involved in the Kasthamandap change over time, and how this will determine the continued maintenance and management of the monument? This is closely linked to the fluctuating scenario of religious and political powers, a struggle which can be found to continue even today.

Data/Methods/Analysis:

This research has been carried out focusing on a single case study, that of the reconstruction of the Kasthamandap. Its approach to answering its research questions requires qualitative data from both primary and secondary sources, particularly, information on the historical aspects of the monument and related communities have been collected through secondary sources, such as the outcome of recent archaeological investigations (Coningham et al. 2017). Primary sources were also tapped through interviews and observations that provided a means of understanding more recent and ongoing events, as well as the views of individuals within the relevant communities. Interviews with members of various communities and stakeholders were carried out as per the procedures defined by the Durham University's ethical approval.

Considering that there is a dearth of information on communities and their involvement in the maintenance and management of monuments, particularly in Kathmandu, an inductive research approach has been chosen. Having collected mainly qualitative data on the communities of the Kasthamandap, the methods used to analysis this data has been to interpret patterns over time. Particular interest has been to document the changing involvement of communities in the Kasthamandap. Though there are various factors that influence community involvement, the collapse of the Kasthamandap caused by the Gorkha Earthquake of 2015, literally jolted the power balance, questioning the status quo of the ownership and management of the monument.

Contributions to the SDGs:

Cultural heritage makes an important consideration to fulfilling the SDGs. Sustainable Development was initially defined by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need". Cultural heritage can be defined as things that we inherit from the past and is considered to be of value and worthy of conservation for future generations. The parallels in these definitions show how closely the conservation and rehabilitation of heritage is related to sustainable development. Cultural heritage is closely linked to Goal 11: "making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" and Target 11.4 "strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage". This thesis will focus specifically on this target but its research will also contribute to Target 4.7 which addresses

appreciation of cultural heritage. There are also clear links to sustainable tourism within the cultural heritage property addressing Target 8.9, which is about creating jobs and promoting local culture and products and Target 12.b, which links to creating jobs and promotes local culture and products.

Project Information:

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References:

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