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Geographies of Doing Nothing—Internal Displacement and Practices of Post-Disaster Recovery in Urban Areas of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal [†]

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[†] Geographies of Doing Nothing: A term coined by Prof. Dr. Sagar Raj Sharma/Kathmandu University in a personal communication with the author.

Abstract: Disaster-related internal displacement is on the rise in many countries and is increasingly becoming an urban phenomenon. For many people, as in the case of the earthquake disaster 2015 in Nepal, protracted or multiple disaster displacements are a lived reality. While the drivers of displacement are relatively well understood, significant uncertainties remain regarding the factors that trigger prolonged or secondary displacement and impede ending of displacement or achieving durable solutions. The purpose of this article is to illustrate and theorise the discourse of reconstruction and return that shapes experiences, strategies, and policies in order to gain a better understanding of the obstacles to pursuing durable solutions that are still shaping the reality of life for urban internally displaced people (IDPs) in Kathmandu Valley. I use the concepts of ‘fields of practice’ and ‘disaster justice’ to provide insights into the theorisation of the links between social inequality, structural forms of governance, and the reconstruction process itself. Findings demonstrate that the application of these concepts has great potential to expand our understanding of ‘realities of life’ and practices of IDPs, and thus contribute to a more differentiated evidence base for the development and implementation of appropriate disaster risk reduction policies and practices.

Keywords: earthquake disaster; internal displacement; disaster risk reduction (DRR); long-term displacement; fields of practice; disaster justice; waiting



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1. Introduction

1.1. Disaster Displacement—Humanitarian Challenge and Key Concern for People-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

Disaster displacement is one of the major humanitarian challenges of the 21st century (NRC 2019, p. 1)—addressing displacement and providing durable solutions for displaced persons is therefore a key element of international, regional, national, and local disaster risk reduction (DRR) policy and practice. Disaster-induced displacement is an issue of emerging concerns because it can have a range of both immediate and long-term impacts that exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, undermine development gains and resilience—with disproportionate impacts on least developed countries—create new risks, and have the potential to increase human rights challenges. It must be questioned why, after decades of research, scholarship, and capacity building on disaster risk reduction, so many people are still displaced by disasters and why ending displacement and achieving durable solutions remains an elusive quest in many instances.

Disaster displacement is recognized as a key challenge and as an important concern for people-centred disaster risk reduction (DRR) by the Sendai Framework (UNISDR 2015). The framework provides many opportunities for DRR policy and practice at national and local level to reduce risk and address displacement in the context of disasters—and increasingly, climate change. Target B of the Sendai Framework aims to “substantially reduce the

number of affected people globally by 2030" (UNISDR 2015, p. 36), whereby 'affected people', according to the UNDRR terminology (UNDRR 2020) includes those who "have suffered injury, illness or other health effects; who were evacuated, displaced, relocated; or have suffered direct damage to their livelihoods, economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets". Disaster displacement risk, and the specific needs of displaced people, are also widely recognized as a key humanitarian, human rights, and development challenge in several further global policy frameworks, for example the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC 2015), the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (UN 2015), the Agenda for Humanity (UN 2016a), the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (UN 2016b), the Human Rights Council (Resolution 35/20; UNHCR 2017), the New Urban Agenda (UN 2017), and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (UN 2018a) as well as the Global Compact on Refugees (UN 2018b).

Triggered by disasters, conflict, climate shocks, and changes in rural economies, internal displacement—the forced movement of people within the country they live in—is increasingly taking place in many countries. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) has estimated that 17.2 million new displacements in the context of disasters were triggered by natural hazards worldwide in 2018 (IDMC 2019). The Philippines (3.8 million), China (3.8 million) and India (2.7 million) alone accounted for about 60 per cent of all new disaster-related displacements, followed by the United States with 1.2 million new displacements. However, many were preventive evacuations or planned relocations of people living in high-risk areas (IDMC 2019, p. 7). For millions of people, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, protracted, multiple, or even circular disaster displacements are a lived reality (Peters and Lovell 2020, p. 11). Clearly, too many internally displaced persons (IDPs) (According to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), IDPs are defined as follows: "Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border." (UNHCR 1998)) still fall through the cracks of measures to protect and assist them, are not reached by these measures, or have no possibilities to participate in them—or are prevented from doing so. There is little firm information on how and when durable solutions (Bradley 2018) will be achieved, what the obstacles are along the way, and how both individuals and governments are progressing to get there. In November 2013 for example, Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda)—the most destructive typhoon so far—struck the central Philippines, killing 6000 people, damaging or destroying 1.1 million homes, and displacing 4 million people. The government announced a relocation and resettlement programme for 200,000 households previously living in these areas, but hundreds of thousands of IDPs had to wait in limbo due to missing information on whether or when they will be resettled. One thousand more had no other choice than to return to their former homes to await relocation, which was increasing their vulnerability and their risk of secondary displacement (Thomas 2015). In another example, on 29 August 2005, the threat of Hurricane Katrina led to the evacuation and displacement of over 1 million people from New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast, 300,000 of whom are expected to remain permanently displaced. Many victims were again displaced and scattered throughout the United States, with the diaspora concentrated in cities with significant African American minorities such as Houston, Atlanta, and Dallas-Fort Worth (Oliver-Smith 2018; Sastry and Gregory 2012). Evacuation and displacement in the city of New Orleans was shaped by local interest in using the displacement of the predominantly African American population as an opportunity to reshape the city's social environment (Fussell 2006; Fussell et al. 2010): The city used the disaster as a pretext to destroy large public housing units, most of which had suffered only minor damage. For survivors who did not own homes, the massive destruction in New Orleans made housing scarce and rents rose significantly three years

after the hurricane, discouraging many poor African American families from returning (Oliver-Smith 2018).

Disaster-related displacement is increasingly becoming an urban phenomenon, and displacement from within as well as between cities is also becoming more frequent in many countries (IDMC 2018, 2019; Earle 2016). There are few sufficient data to capture both qualitatively and quantitatively how IDPs move and adapt in urban spaces, understand dynamics, risks, and impacts, leading to a lack of understanding of the scale, duration, and severity of multidimensional urban displacement (Haysom 2013). This in turn hinders local and national governments as well as operational NGOs to develop and implement appropriate disaster prevention, risk reduction, and response measures. Robust quantitative data are hard to come by. Urban IDPs tend to remain relatively invisible in the urban landscape because they often mix with the broader urban poor and other migrants and thus remain under the radar of city and national authorities (IDMC 2018; Landau 2014). However, just knowing how many IDPs live in urban areas is not enough to explain the drivers of displacement risk or the factors that trigger new and secondary displacement. According to IDMC “Conditions and vulnerabilities must also be considered. This means understanding how impacts vary by people’s gender, age, socioeconomic situation, and ethnic and cultural background, as well as over time.” (IDMC 2019, p. 2). It remains unclear “to what extent cities provide a safe haven for people who flee there, or to what extent displaced people are able to integrate and build new lives in the city” (IDMC 2019, p. 2). This is also in line with Peters and Lovell (2020, p. 4) who point to the need for a more nuanced understanding of drivers and impacts of disaster displacement. Data fail to differentiate needs, priorities, and capacities in efforts to recover from disaster-related displacement and widespread gaps in data obscure a large spectrum of vulnerabilities and outcomes. Information on the severity and duration of displacement across different displacement contexts and demographic groups is rarely systematically collected, protracted, or continuous displacement without a specific location to ‘return’ to is rarely tracked (Peters and Lovell 2020, p. 7; Gupta 2015). Moreover, insufficient attention is paid to underlying social and economic inequalities, power relations, and who is the most marginalized, as those displaced by disaster are often homogenously labelled as ‘affected people’ (Peters and Lovell 2020, p. 13; Gupta 2015). It is therefore crucial to establish an appropriate evidence base for the design and implementation of policies and interventions by governments and operational organisations to find durable solutions for IDPs and reduce the risk of future displacement.

As Black (1991) reveals in his analysis of academic literature, refugee movements and displacement had become a subject of considerable academic interest in the social sciences and in geography in particular in the 1980s, after having been neglected for decades. Mazur even notices that existing sociological work on refugee studies is “fragmented, incomplete and, to a great extent, superficial” (Mazur 1988, p. 60). Whereas before the Cold War period refugee movements were seen as a temporary problem geographically confined to Europe, the 1970s marked a significant shift in refugee flows and consequently in scholarly interest as number and complexity of refugee movements and displacement, particularly in the global South, increased (Barnett 2002, p. 247). To the 1980s, existing scholarly work tended to view refugee flows as temporary, single events. A number of studies have concentrated on the causes of refugee migration, the consequences of refugee flows in the global South as well as on patterns of resettlement (Black 1991, p. 285). Research was often limited to studies that described extent and pattern of refugee migration or the classification of refugees and displaced persons in categories. An accepted corpus of theory on which to base research was missing at that time. As Black (1991) already argued “it is important to identify both the diversity of individual and group experience within various refugee populations, and also to examine critically the parallels between these experiences and those of other migrating or disaster-affected populations” (Black 1991, p. 281).

1.2. Internal Disaster Displacement in the Wake of the Gorkha Earthquake 2015 in Nepal

On 25 April 2015, the Himalayan state of Nepal was severely hit by a devastating Mw 7.8 earthquake disaster, followed by thousands of associated aftershocks, including a major Mw 7.3 aftershock on May 12 (Avouac et al. 2015). Both events were causing second-order damage such as landslides, avalanches, and infrastructure collapses, which became additional hazards in some areas. According to official figures, more than 8800 people were killed and 22,300 injured; 882,000 houses were destroyed, leaving 2.8 million people homeless and displaced. 14 out of the country's 75 districts were severely affected. The overall economic damage was estimated at about US\$ 7 billion (Government of Nepal 2016). Nepal has a long history of major earthquake events (Chaulagain et al. 2018; Davis et al. 2020). This disaster had been long anticipated (UNOCHA 2013). However, nobody seemed prepared for the humanitarian impacts and the necessary disaster relief.

While most persons who were rendered homeless and displaced after the first major event in April lived in makeshift or temporary shelters close to their destroyed or damaged homes, many of them fled to live in camps following the aftershock on 12 May 2015. By June 2015, 409 places of displacement had been spontaneously developed in the districts most affected by the earthquake, giving refuge to 117,700 IDPs from 21,711 households (IOM/CCCM 2015). Rural-urban migration emerged as an additional coping strategy for many affected households. Approximately 17,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) (IOM/CCCM 2015) fled the worst affected rural regions towards displacement sites in the densely populated urban areas of the Kathmandu Valley. These IDPs were mainly poor, marginalized groups such as Dalits ('untouchables'), elderly people, and households headed by women, whose houses had been destroyed or rendered uninhabitable and whose access to income opportunities, resources, and basic services was severely interrupted. These in-migrants often have to live—sometimes for years—under highly precarious conditions in inadequate accommodation with no security of tenure and where the provision of basic services is not guaranteed. Due to a lack of social integration and inadequate urban policy concepts, inequality between city dwellers and in-migrants confronted with poverty, exploitation, and discrimination can increase. It is particularly in the context of disaster management that the disadvantage and thus the marginalization of IDPs can become entrenched, as they are already severely disadvantaged by the trauma of the disaster, damage, displacement, and the loss of social capital and other assets. Many of them live in great insecurity and in constant fear of being evicted from their temporary accommodation.

The Government of Nepal adopted an "owner-driven" housing reconstruction program, providing cash grants as an incentive to build earthquake-resistant homes (Government of Nepal 2016). However, the procedures for identifying the beneficiaries had serious shortcomings as they were detached from the lived social reality of the victims and Nepalese society in general. Therefore, tens of thousands of disaster victims could not meet the criteria and were not entitled to obtain the government grants. In particular, many of the IDPs were (and still are) without legal property, so they were not eligible for financial reconstruction assistance from the government and were left out of the reconstruction process. As preliminary results of the Asia Foundation's Independent Impacts and Recovery Monitoring Project (IRM) of April 2017 on shelter and reconstruction shows, 39% of the population were still living in self-built emergency shelters two years after the earthquake (The Asia Foundation 2017). The number of people returning to their own homes after this period was still restricted. Especially those who had been already marginalized before the earthquake, people with low income, only lower than average education, members of the indigenous groups, and the so-called low castes are much more likely to stay in the shelters than others, according to the study.

The number of people leaving their rural home areas as a result of disasters, climate shocks, conflicts, and insecurity is increasing worldwide (IDMC 2019). Particularly in the countries of the so-called 'Global South', affected people often 'strand' as IDPs in urban areas and conurbations (Crisp and Refstie 2012; Haysom et al. 2012; IDMC 2018; UNHCR

2016). Urban agglomerations like the Kathmandu Valley can take in large numbers of IDPs virtually unnoticed, because long-term IDPs in particular, who often settle in the urban periphery, are not counted for years after the disaster. Urban displacement needs therefore to be addressed and understood from two perspectives: The perspective of IDPs and the perspective of the cities they flee to. For the purposes of this paper, however the focus is on the IDPs' perspective. The often long-term settlement of displaced persons in urban areas is hardly anticipated and understood in geographical research so far. In particular, studies on the immobility of IDPs in the context of disasters are limited and not as extensively investigated as those on their mobility. A considerable share of the scientific debate on immobility still focuses on the decision of people to stay in disaster-prone areas, areas of conflict, or areas that are vulnerable to negative effects of climate or global environmental change (Ayebe-Karlsson et al. 2020; Brun 2015; Crisp and Refstie 2012). In contrast, processes and outcomes of long-term settlement of displaced persons in urban areas have rarely been studied and therefore cannot yet be fully explained. In particular, there is a gap in the academic literature regarding the long-term displacement and immobility of IDPs, the (apparent) inability of some to leave the places of displacement, and reasons for others to stay. This paper addresses this gap and seeks to bridge it using the example of post-disaster IDPs in the Kathmandu Valley.

When the author visited the Valley in December 2016 and spring 2018, many displaced people were still living in camps and temporary shelters. Particularly striking were the numerous temporary shelters that still existed in the urban periphery in 2018. This immediately raised the question of what triggers and drivers are causing the reality of life and living for IDPs to remain seemingly unchanged many years after the earthquake. Is it their way to achieve recovery and restore their life or, on the contrary, are households unable to leave the location of displacement because they face numerous constraints in exercising and controlling their own recovery and reconstruction? Are there certain obstacles to this process? Why do some IDPs seem 'to do nothing'? To build a better and more informed picture of urban internal displacement requires more comprehensive examination of the particular triggers and drivers that cause and prolong urban displacement, but also on challenges and opportunities. Recognizing that disaster displacement is shaped by multiple, complex, and intersecting risk factors, and that individuals' vulnerability and experiences of displacement may vary widely, existing, predominantly one-dimensional explanatory approaches, such as purely economic approaches, do not seem to be adequately able to explain the diverse drivers of displacement risk. As stated by Peters and Lovell (2020, p. 24), an evidence base as well as new methodologies may be required to capture the diversity, characteristics, duration, and complexity of protracted and multiple disaster displacement and to grasp the obstacles preventing durable solutions. This would contribute to a more complete understanding individuals' experience and dealings with disaster displacement over their life course and allow for the initiation of appropriate, people-centered translation into DRR practice.

In this article, I present the post-disaster long-term internal displacement in urban areas of the Kathmandu Valley/Nepal in order to illustrate and theorize the discourse of reconstruction and return that shapes experiences, strategies, and policies. I use the concepts of fields of practice, disaster justice, and waiting, which are presented in Section 2, to provide insights into the links between social inequality, structural forms of governance, and the reconstruction process. Next, the methods used in the pilot research in the Kathmandu Valley are described. I continue by presenting the results of this study. Then I discuss these results by reflecting on the conceptual framework in which this study is situated. I will then establish links between social inequality, governance, disaster justice, the concept of waiting, and the reconstruction process in Nepal.

2. Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach

Based on the identified research deficits and the intended contribution to knowledge of the present research, the theoretical framework used in this research is formed by 'fields

of practice' and 'disaster justice'. The outline of the theoretical framework presented below is done with the aim of structuring ideas about complex phenomena of reality and serves as 'lenses' through which the specific case is viewed analytically. Given that the purpose of this research is to 'test' theories to better understand the problem of disaster-related long-term displacement, the pilot research and preparatory activities were based on the conceptual framework of the 'Grounded Theory'. Grounded Theory is a flexible 'social' research tool for doing qualitative research that allows new theories to be tested and strengthened based on the research data when no appropriate theory has yet been formulated. Grounded Theory has proven to be a useful approach for researchers seeking to conceptualize social and human-centered phenomena in innovative ways (Timonen et al. 2018). Due to the exploratory nature of the pilot research and to the methodological approach, mainly qualitative methods (see Section 3) were employed for data collection. In order to better understand the particularity and complexity of the specific case of IDPs in Kathmandu Valley, a single case study was conducted, i.e., in this pilot research, only one context was considered, and no contrasting cases were analyzed. This is also due to the fact that severity, duration, scale of displacement as well as vulnerabilities and impacts vary widely in different disaster contexts and are therefore not directly comparable to the current Nepal case.

2.1. Fields of Practice

As Button and Schuller in their introduction to 'Contextualizing Disaster' emphasize, the way how disasters are perceived and contextualized plays a significant role not only in the response to major events but also in the conceptual design of disaster prevention (Button and Schuller 2016, p. 1). They are making a strong argument for the necessity to perceive disasters as routine and a direct product of culture (see also Bankoff et al. 2015), and as a disaster continuum in which they are connected to each other along social ruptures. Disasters are shaped by everyday life and the material world—ignoring this issue "deters us from studying the nature of the social and cultural construction of reality" (Button and Schuller 2016, p. 3).

Assuming that cultures can be best identified and defined by so called 'fields of practice' involving conventionalized dealings, agendas, codified tasks, and targets and inspired by a pragmatic vision of practice that perceives 'truth' as a product of our experiences and practices, Geiselhart et al. (2015) developed a conceptual framework that can help to analyse the adaptation to disaster risk on a practical level. Focusing both on institutionalized fields of practice and on individual dealings within the setting of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Botswana, the authors argue that by looking at an 'arena of singularities' a better understanding of the cultural dimension of disasters can be fostered. The key idea is to analyze different notions of disaster-related concepts within 'fields of practice'. The emergence of a field of practice can be understood as individual experiences, some of which are made by numerous people over generations, merging to form collective experiences and knowledge pools and establishing themselves in conventionalized practices. Fields of practice are thus understood as specific contexts in which practices are institutionalized in order to make life in general and social action in particular more predictable and reliable (Geiselhart et al. 2015, p. 124). Fields of practice are not necessarily bound to geographical regions or clearly delineated spaces; rather, they are formed by the specific intertwining of practices and common understandings (e.g., similar acts, sets of rules, norms, beliefs, values) (Orlowski 2020). To the best of the author's knowledge, this novel approach has so far only been used by Geiselhart et al. (2015) and Orlowski (2020) in the context of the cultural dimension of disasters.

A field of practice and its justifications can be regarded as a network of experiences; a field of practice thus forms a 'space' of continuity and routines (often shifting or transforming gradually over time), and thus of reliability and security, and enables people to cope with their everyday life or to draw from a societal knowledge pool about solutions to a typical problem (Schütz et al. 1973; Schütz and Luckmann 2003). Taking a pragmatic view, prac-

tice is in a continuous state of transformation. According to Geiselhart et al. (2015, p. 137), practice is rooted in the past and is oriented towards the future by continuously passing through an infinite number of singular moments of social interaction. Situations that are beyond previous experience or expertise and in which we question conventionalized beliefs and practices might demand new and creative solutions that are unknown to, or met with skepticism, suspicion, or rejection by some actors involved. They are described by Geiselhart et al. (2015, p. 126) as “singularities”.

For example, disasters occur as singular incidents that give rise to unanticipated moments and are characterized by a multiplicity of singular situations or occurrences (Geiselhart et al. 2015). The earthquake disaster in Nepal in 2015 represents such a situation, which may lead to ruptures in the established justifications and conventionalized practices. In the period following the disaster, which is usually characterized by severe hardship, helplessness, chaos, and numerous contradictions, the fields of practice of different representatives and individuals may collide. People who live through a disaster will, in a very short period of time, encounter a multitude of new experiences against which the convictions established in these areas will have to prove their ‘truthfulness’ and validity. This was the case, too, with the earthquake disaster in Nepal in 2015, where individuals were brought into contact with a number of fields of practice and their justifications, for example from the government, (I)NGOs, international relief organizations, and disaster victims. They all share a certain pool of experience and knowledge and thus have a set of conventionalized practices that, in the wake of a rare, high impact disaster event, in their logic of action clash, coexist, or even merge. They may even appear incomprehensible and thus incompatible to the other party. From the network of shared experience in the time of crisis, which are characterized by shock, suffering, and stress, and the desire to find a solution that will end the crisis, a singular situation can arise, which should initially be seen as a singular experience that cannot yet be generalized. From this singular situation, i.e., the encounter of several fields of practice, individuals may seek to develop creative solutions and practices beyond institutionalized routines or solutions, which in their cumulative form can be described as an “arena of singularities” (Geiselhart et al. 2015, p. 126).

2.2. Disaster Justice

In the disaster studies literature, disasters are conceptualized as socially constructed products of historically rooted, pre-existing structural inequalities, in which vulnerability to disasters is disproportionately high among those already poor and marginalized (Adger 2006; Oliver-Smith 1999; Wisner et al. 2004). The social, economic, and political structures of the societies in which people live are still the main causes of people’s vulnerability to disasters. They significantly influence the way in which individuals are exposed to risks to an unequal extent, and how these affect them in different ways and intensities (Wisner et al. 2004; Bankoff 2018). Emphasizing on the relationship between disaster risk reduction and broader concepts of equality and justice, Verchick (2012, 2018) developed the concept of disaster justice that describes the “fair treatment of all people in policies relevant to catastrophic hazard” (Verchick 2018, p. 290). The recognition that individuals are unequally exposed to risks due to political structures and unequal social and economic systems led to the idea of inequality as the origin and cause of injustice and social vulnerability (Bankoff 2018, p. 372). Disaster justice, as a dimension of social justice, implies more equitable and inclusive modes of disaster preparedness, response, and redress that pay attention to unequal vulnerabilities among social groups and risks disproportionately imposed on socially disadvantaged populations (Douglas and Miller 2018). According to Douglas and Miller (2018), due to the social dimension of disaster risk, disaster justice is linked with the rights of citizens to make claims through established systems of governance and thus constitutes a moral claim on governance. With regard to issues of blame, responsibility, and agency in disaster contexts, Bankoff (2018, p. 363) reinforces this argument by saying that “governments have a responsibility to protect the vulnerable; the failure of

state to protect its own is not only regarded as an injustice but as ‘a breach of democracy’s fundamental obligation to its citizens’ (Verchick 2012, p. 52)”.

3. Materials and Methods

The research I undertook in the Kathmandu Valley, and discuss in this article, focuses on the experiences, views, and strategies of disaster-affected, displaced households and individuals over time and the practice and control of their own recovery and reconstruction. The approach is focused on people’s everyday lives, adaptation strategies, and the constraints they face when confronting the shock of disaster, stressors associated to displacement and (self-)recovery. The research was prepared by an on-site visit in December 2016. Against the background of the observations made at that time, I designed a pilot study to assess the current challenges through an on-site survey and to identify the main research gaps. Using the example of IDPs in the Kathmandu Valley, the pilot study aimed to supplement and update the state of the art of research on processes and outcomes of long-term displacement in urban areas following disaster. My research was significantly advanced in 2018 by a three-weeks field visit. An in-depth study was planned for 2020, which could not be carried out due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The information and data presented and analyzed in this research were collected following three principal steps:

1. Literature and document review: I conducted a literature review covering journal articles and academic studies on the earthquake disaster in Nepal, urban IDPs, the reconstruction process as well as concepts and theories presented in this article. I have also taken into consideration situation reports, damage, and need assessments as well as reports from the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In addition, I have examined the Displacement Tracking Matrix Nepal (IOM/CCCM 2016) as the main tool for tracking and monitoring sites and camps hosting internally displaced populations and earthquake displacement reports were analyzed.
2. Participant observation: Based on the assumption that aspects of action and thought become observable through participation or the direct experience of the situation, participant observation was conducted. As a first part of the empirical research, in December 2016, I spent several hours a day in places of displacement in the Kathmandu Valley to gain a better understanding of the IDPs realities of life and to learn about the neighborhoods they were settled. This helped to assess the environment and dynamics at the displacement sites and to verify initial assumptions. This also contributed to establish an initial contact with the IDPs.
3. Semi-structured individual and key-group interviews that were conducted in Kathmandu Valley in March 2018: Based on the latest disaster displacement matrices and analysis of Google Earth images, I first identified still active displacement sites in the Kathmandu Valley and visited them. The interviewees were identified through purposive sampling, with efforts being made to ensure diversity in the types and location of the households visited. I then used a snowballing approach to identify additional informants. An overview of the displacement sites where interviews were conducted is shown in Figure 1. Given the post-disaster sensitivity of the displaced and sheltered population, I conducted informal interviews in order to acknowledge their fragile situation. Participants gave their informed consent before they participated in the interviews. Due to the specific circumstances of the study (i.e., research at displacement sites) and in order to acknowledge the fragile situation of individuals and households, oral consents were used in practice as this seemed appropriate. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to achieve insight into views and strategies of displacement-affected households. The guided interviews comprised 14 key questions, but the individual story and perception of each respondent determined how the interview was structured and allowed for flexibility. In total, my sample comprises 18 informal, guided interviews. As such, the study does not claim any representativeness. Due to the sensitivity of the data and personal reasons of the interviewees, not all interviews could be digitally recorded. The interviews and

discussions were conducted with the help of a local research assistant in the official Nepalese language or the tongue of the respective ethnic group and then translated into English. For these reasons I did not do any transcriptions. Instead, I wrote down key aspects and important statements raised during the interviews. The statements then served as the basis for a memory protocol, which allowed me to structure the most important contents. Therefore, I did not apply any other digital methods to further process the information gathered during the interviews. Where available, the sound recordings were compared with the memory protocols. For further evaluation, I summarized and categorized the participants' information from the semi-structured interviews in a descriptive analysis. In this way, I identified a typology of IDPs. Each type of IDP, which will be presented below, represents a different perspective on the ongoing displacement situation and the associated immobility. The name or designation of each type of IDP represents a summary of the descriptive analysis. In a following analytical step, I divided respondents into 'trapped IDPs' who are obviously unable to leave, and 'immobile IDPs' who have chosen to stay. The term 'trapped populations' was first introduced in a UK government report on 'drivers' of migration and human mobility outcomes in the context of environmental change and refers to vulnerable populations that lack the resources to escape environmental stress through migration (Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change 2011; see also Ayeb-Karlsson et al. 2020).

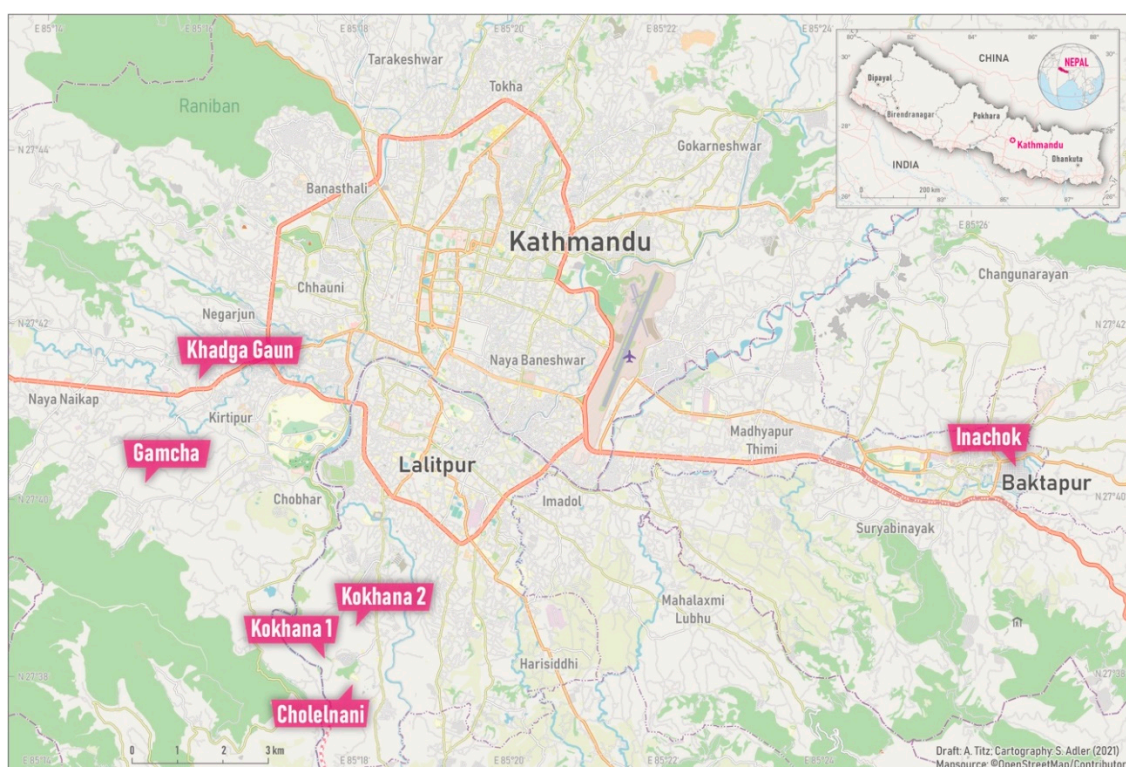


Figure 1. Locations of camps and displacement sites where interviews with internally displaced people (IDPs) were conducted.

4. Results

Disasters are likely to increase the incidence of displacement of people when individuals or households are no longer able to sufficiently secure their livelihoods where they actually live. The effects of disasters can lead to significant displacement as they may render existing homes and settlements uninhabitable. For some people, as in the case of the earthquake in Nepal, these displacements can be long-term. While the drivers of

displacement—in the event of a disaster—are relatively well understood, uncertainties remain as to what makes people stay at displacement sites or what forces them to be displaced for a prolonged period of time.

During the interviews, it already became evident that most of the interviewees shared certain basic problems that characterize the everyday life of IDPs in urban areas of the Kathmandu Valley. Despite the specific circumstances of each displacement risk situation and the nature of displacement, when compared to other events, some general underlying factors that constrain an end to displacement can be identified, for example legal or regulatory barriers or failed relocations programs and plans (Ginnetti et al. 2011; Thomas 2015; Sastry and Gregory 2014). These fail because they did and do not take changing needs, priorities, and capacities of the individuals into account. A fundamental factor in this is that the diverse, changing needs, priorities, and capabilities of the individuals concerned are not considered, or not sufficiently so. As is often the case with IDPs, the interviewees expressed huge difficulties in re-establishing their livelihood after disaster—and it is the more vulnerable groups, in particular poor, marginalized groups, elderly people, and households headed by women, that find it hardest. Respondents stressed that the absence of land ownership and lack of financial resources prevented them from leaving their displacement site and returning to their home village. However, burdens were also very high in the displacement sites themselves: Most of the respondents had to lease the land on which they live—often they had to commit themselves for many years. The lease costs, which on average amount to 18,000 NPR (approximately 130 EUR) per Ropani (Nepalese unit of surface area; approximately 94 sqm) and year, represent a heavy financial load for the families in view of very limited income opportunities. Land for subsistence farming, which had been the main source of income in their home village for most of them, was not available at all displacement sites. Some male family members were able to earn a living as unskilled day laborers in the construction industry. One family was entirely reliant on remittances from a relative working in Malaysia. This chronic lack of financial resources—among other things—meant that the interviewees had only little room for maneuver. However, despite these similarities, the interviewees also had very individual fates and problems that made it difficult or even impossible for them to find solutions in the specific displacement situation. Based on these distinctions, I typified and grouped the interviewees as outlined in the following subsection.

4.1. *Trapped IDPs*

4.1.1. The Homeless at Home

Based on the interview responses, I assigned the type “homeless at home” to a total of eight households from Haku village in the Rasuwa district, all belonging to the Tamang ethnic group. Their houses had been destroyed by the earthquake or damaged to such an extent that they were no longer habitable. The earthquake events had caused second-order damage such as landslides and avalanches, which became additional hazards, in Trisuli Valley and Langtang Valley in particular. As a result, geologists examined numerous areas for their landslide hazard and identified danger zones—the village of Haku, for instance, was classified as an unsafe site. As a consequence, the families had been forced to leave their emergency shelter in their home village. The interviewed families leased private land from relatives in Gamcha (see Figure 1) and used their own funds to rebuild temporary homes there (see Figure 2). As they were officially registered residents of Haku, they were not eligible for assistance in their displacement site. This would have required a relocation certificate from the local government, which they have so far been denied. Their main constraint was that the leases run for several years and therefore the families are tied to the land and its liabilities in the medium term. The statements were marked by expressions of no attachment to Gamcha or its social environment. Many of those interviewed hoped to return to their ancestral village and have their own house on their own land “at home”. On the other hand, the respondents in this group were the only ones who felt that after the traumatic experiences of the earthquakes they were afraid to live in their home village

and considered it a dangerous place. By the time of the interviews, only a few households had received the first tranche of the reconstruction grants, and there was widespread uncertainty about the conditions under which further payments were to be made and how they had to be used. In Haku, moreover, new land would have to be designated and allocated as settlement land. The interviewees stated they felt too powerless to change their situation and perceived first of all local government of Rasuwa District as having responsibility.



Figure 2. Examples of temporary shelters in camps and displacement sites (a) Inachok; (b) Khokana; (c) Khadga Gaun. (Photographs by A. Titz 2018).

4.1.2. Failure of Social Capital

Based on their interview responses, this category was assigned to two seniors. An over 70-year-old widow, who belongs to the Newar ethnic group, lived in the city of Bhaktapur. She has three daughters who are married and live with their husbands' families. The old lady had lived in a rented flat in the Inacho district of Bhaktapur, but the house was destroyed in the earthquake. Her landlord refused to sign verification papers to recognize her residence on his land in his house, therefore she was not found eligible to receive government reconstruction grants. She managed to move into one of the temporary cottages that had been built by the Triple Gem Buddhist Society on a rented former vegetable field Inachok (see Figures 1 and 2a) and had to pay 500 NPR (approximately 4 EUR) monthly. As she is landless, suffers from diabetes, and is physically not very robust, she is not able to engage in subsistence farming. Her daughters occasionally provide her with food and a little money, but their families also lack financial resources to help support

the old lady's livelihood. The old lady reported about tensions with the nearby residents and the landowner. Since the NGO had only rented the land for three years, the pressure to leave the temporary shelter was growing daily. Due to the landlessness and the lack of financial resources, she had severe difficulties in restoring her livelihood following the disaster. She felt abandoned by society and her family and felt that she did not belong anywhere. The second senior, a widower aged 77, also is a member of the Newar ethnic group. His four daughters are married and live with their husband's families. Since the earthquake disaster, he has been living in a temporary shelter (see Figure 2b) of an NGO (whose name he could not remember) that had set up a camp on state-owned land in Khokana ("Khokana 2", see Figure 1). However, he and other inhabitants were under increasing pressure to leave the camp or were threatened with its closure. The old man expressed great fear of being evicted. He was in possession of all necessary documents to receive the full amount of the reconstruction grant. However, this would not cover the full costs of an earthquake-resistant new house. As he had divided his land among the four daughters who had transferred it to their husbands' families when they married, the old man lacked additional financial resources. He received hardly any support from the daughters' families. What is particularly distinctive about the interviewees of this group is that they were not able to mobilize the social capital of their family network in the post-disaster context. Due to their old age, they saw no opportunity to leave their temporary housing and find a new home with their own means. Their statements were characterized by great hopelessness and the fear of an uncertain and insecure future.

4.1.3. Plans Thwarted

I assigned two Christian Newar families from Khokana to this IDP category on the basis of their interview statements. After the earthquake, they moved to a cottage that was temporarily made available to them free of charge by their church, the Koinonia Patan Church. Information about this accommodation opportunity was relayed to them during the service. The families had then built temporary dwellings of only a few square meters in size on their private property in Cholelnani ("Khokana 1", see Figure 1) made of corrugated iron and truck tarpaulins and had been living there since the end of October 2015. They described the general living situation in the cramped dwelling as very problematic; in summer it was very hot, but in winter it was very humid and cold, so that health problems frequently occurred. The families planned to build a new house for the parents, their sons, and their families on their private land, but faced the problem that only the two homeowners were recognized as beneficiaries of reconstruction grants (in Nepal, there is a practice of setting up separate kitchens within the same house after sons have married or for other reasons, thus creating 'separate' households in one house. Poor families in particular set up separate kitchens under the same roof, as they cannot afford a separate house.). The two families wanted to sell parts of their land, which is located in a fertile vegetable growing area and is of great importance for the vegetable supply of Kathmandu, in order to generate the necessary financial means for the reconstruction. However, at the time of the interviews in March 2018, they were prevented from selling land. This was because the government was planning 'smart city' projects in the outskirts of the Kathmandu Valley and started acquiring large areas of land in Lalitpur and Kathmandu for this purpose. The families concerned would only be allowed to sell their land to the government at a fraction of the regular land price. The main characteristic of this group is that respondents obviously were prevented by external constraints from restoring their livelihoods after the disaster. Their statements were therefore characterized by a deep feeling of being forced to live in temporary accommodation and being stuck in a hopeless situation.

4.1.4. Lost Chances

In this group, I include two families from the Ramechhap district who belong to the Tamang ethnic group, too. They had already rented a house in Nakhu, a neighborhood of

Laltipur, for several years, which was classified uninhabitable after the earthquake. They then learned from a neighbor from their home region that land was to be leased in Khadka Gaun (see Figure 1). The building materials for the temporary dwelling was bought from their own funds. The main problem for the families was the insufficient supply and the poor quality of drinking water. In addition, they were constantly exposed to noise and dust due to a road construction company that working gravel and sand in the neighborhood. The distinctive aspect of these families was that they were in a quandary: Their house in Nakhu was only rented because the families had planned to return to their home village once the children had finished school. Although they had been living on their landowner's land in Nakhu for many years, he refused to sign verification papers recognizing their residence on his land, which would allow them to receive the state subsidy. They had to commit themselves to a five-year lease of the land on which they lived temporarily. Apart from the cost of food and their children's education, the monthly lease costs were the heaviest financial burden on the families. Their homes in their village in Ramechap District were also severely damaged by the earthquake. However, as they continued to live in the Kathmandu Valley in the time after the earthquake, they did not receive much information from their home village about the reconstruction program and the associated conditions and deadlines. As a result, they were unable to qualify for the reconstruction program in their home village, too. Their statements were marked by helplessness and despair, as they wanted to return to their home district in the foreseeable future. They were facing their future with great uncertainty and many anxieties.

4.2. Immobile IDPs

Apart from IDPs who are obviously unable to leave their displacement sites due to very specific barriers and constraints, I was also able to identify some 'immobile IDPs' who had deliberately decided to stay in Kathmandu Valley.

4.2.1. The Educationally Conscious

An interviewed family from Makwanpur District had been living in Gamcha (see Figure 1) since spring 2016. Here they had leased land for which they pay 14,000 NPR (approximately 100 EUR) rent per Ropani and year. In their home village in Makwanpur District, they had already started to construct a house according to the new earthquake-proof building regulations. The family only wanted to stay in Gamcha until their children had graduated from school, because after the earthquake, they saw improved educational opportunities for their children in the Kathmandu Valley. That was the only reason for their current immobility.

4.2.2. The Home Builders

In addition, I interviewed three families from Rukum District, who belong to the Magar ethnic group, in Gamcha (see Figure 1). They had been living in the Balaju district of Kathmandu for more than 12 years, as they saw better job opportunities here than in their home village. As their house in Balaju was no longer habitable after the earthquake, they moved to relatives in Gamcha/Kirtipur. They had to pay 14,000 NRs rent per Ropani and year as well. This group was the only one who expressed neither a desire at all to return to their home village nor did they want to stay in their location of displacement. They explained their immobility by a lack of financial means: Their aim was to earn enough money to buy a house in Kathmandu, because there were already established sources of income. They dreamed of a better life in the city but were unable to move because of the weak household economy.

4.3. Processes and Outcomes of Long-Term Displacement in Urban Areas

The results of the pilot research, which aimed to supplement and update the state of the art of research on processes and outcomes of long-term displacement in urban areas following disaster, show that many of the IDPs interviewed were poor, disadvantaged,

and marginalized population groups such as members of ethnic groups, older people, and religious or linguistic minorities. The results also show similarities and differences in the immobility of people and how their immobility is related to their well-being. However, the results also outline a number of non-economic losses or damages to which people were or are exposed as a result of the disaster event itself, their displacement to displacement sites in the Kathmandu Valley, and the permanent threat of displacement. Some of the respondents were forced to leave their ancestral villages and residential areas after the earthquake disaster—for many of them, the situation they found at the displacement sites was even worse. Many displaced people live in expanding informal settlements in the urban periphery and are exposed to a considerable degree of risk and insecurity. The informality of most IDPs is often exploited to demand very high rents, leases, and even bribes for access to land. Some of the IDPs have been living on agricultural land in the urban periphery for years, but most of them still have no legal claim to the land and live with the constant risk of displacement. While some of the IDPs choose to stay in the displacement sites, many others cannot escape this situation, which they have been facing for several years now, by their own efforts and financial resources. In addition, the IDPs show very different forms of residential status, which entitles or excludes them from certain rights and (financial) government support. The findings are also in line with [Kotani et al. \(2020\)](#) who observed more than 50 transition patterns of the residential status (open space, temporary house, house of relatives and friends, unrepaired house, repaired home, rebuilt home). The authors even assume that the disparity in residential status among affected household had been determined even before the recovery process began and therefore promoted recovery disparity.

The underlying causes of the people's vulnerability and their limited ability to adapt to the new situation or even to actively shape the reconstruction process can be traced back to deeper social structures, political dysfunction, and structural inequalities such as poverty, landlessness, lack of participation and empowerment in the reconstruction process, and even human rights violations. In order to better understand potential barriers to mobility and thus why some people are obviously trapped at their places of displacement, I will discuss the results by reflecting on the conceptual framework in which this research is situated in the following section.

5. Discussion

5.1. Internal Rationalities and Contradictions of Different Fields of Practice in the Context of Adaptation to Disaster Risk and Recovery

The earthquake disaster experienced by numerous people in Nepal, but especially the situation of the IDPs, is also characterized by an ambiguity of fields of practice and modes of interpretation, which suddenly stood side by side or even in rivalry. This is reflected in the diversity of very individual fates and problems of the respondents and the deep feeling of insecurity and uncertainty expressed by many of them. To overcome this uncertainty, individuals and organizations may develop different strategies and acted beyond their habits. These new experiences could substitute existing justifications for the various fields of practice and form a new basis for reliable action ([Orlowski 2020](#)). Based on what has been described here, the question therefore arises as to what practical consequences the various 'justifications' have on practical reality of the IDPs. It is thus a question of what effects the ruptures of different worlds of experience have on the dynamics of the social world and, in the case under consideration, on the dynamics of assessing and dealing with disaster risk and recovery and reconstruction. The aim is—following Schütz's concept of life world ([Schütz and Luckmann 2003](#))—to understand how individual understandings are related to specific conventionalised risk practices, or how the interaction of different risk-related rationalities is related to the practice of individuals. In order to understand how individuals navigate through different fields of practice, it is necessary to look closely at their everyday life, life world and routines.

This is also impressively reflected in the results of the interviews. While many Nepalese have gained extensive experience and learned how to respond to more frequent

events such as landslides, floods and ‘everyday risks’, most of them lack the appropriate experience in dealing with extraordinary events such as the earthquake disaster of 2015. A rare earthquake event usually represents a new, less typical phenomenon for which there is little or no conventional practice to date. Many individuals undergo a variety of new experiences in a very short period of time, but socially derived solutions and established convictions in dealing with disasters may not prove valid for them. The particular event is beyond the experience of many Nepalese, as the previous major earthquake event occurred in 1934. There are probably only a few living people today who have witnessed this hazardous event, and obviously there is no similar, shared experience from which certain conventionalized views or practices have emerged that could be relied upon. In addition, it should be noted that people attach less importance to rare and serious events, such as an earthquake, and that the more frequent and less serious, so-called ‘daily disasters’, which are directly interrelated with their livelihood, are given more importance. A secure livelihood serves as basis for people’s capacity to protect themselves from hazards (Cannon 2014). While they have experience and routine in dealing with day-to-day needs and everyday risks, individuals often lack appropriate experience in dealing with serious events, or simply lack the memory of such events.

However, still, years after the earthquake disaster, many of the displaced population have not been able to overcome their displacement situation—or are they prevented from doing so? It is fair to say that the situation of IDPs is characterized by an ambiguity of fields of practice: Fields of practice of the government that are reflected in a particular reconstruction process as well as the established field of practice of certain groups within the Nepalese society, which is represented by an exclusionary social and political system, may stand in rivalry to the IDPs fields of practice. These fields of practice are formed by various justifications that affects IDP’s ability to dealing with disaster risk, recovery, and reconstruction in a self-determined way. IDPs are therefore confronted by different fields of practice that are beyond their own sets of experience and control. What are the fields of practice involved, what are their basic justifications, and how can they be described? There are different understandings of why the earthquake caused such great damage and losses, and therefore different ideas about the pathway to recovery and reconstruction and increasing resilience to future events. Different fields of practice and the internal logic of each may serve to illustrate this in the following.

5.2. Post Disaster Reconstruction and the Blind Spots of Technoscientific Knowledge

In September 2016, almost one and a half years after the earthquake, the Government of Nepal started an “owner-driven” housing reconstruction program, based on a World Bank project, to respond “rapidly” to the destruction caused by the 2015 earthquakes (Government of Nepal 2016). The reconstruction program was conducted by the Nepal Rural Housing Reconstruction Program and the Nepal Reconstruction Authority, providing cash grants as an incentive to build earthquake resistant houses. Beneficiaries were identified on the basis of three house-by-house damage assessments and were to receive 2000 US \$ in three tranches. However, the highly formalized reconstruction process was delayed, slow, and characterized by insufficient information, confusion, uncertainty, and frustration among those who had lost everything. The categories used to identify beneficiaries had serious shortcomings, as they were detached from the lived social reality of the victims or the general public (Amnesty International 2017). As outlined above for the IDP category ‘plans thwarted’, for instance, the practice of setting up separate kitchens under the same roof, thus creating ‘separate’ households in one house, was not initially considered and only one homeowner was recognized as a beneficiary. In addition, the reconstruction approach did not consider Nepal’s history of feudal land tenure systems and local informal tenure relationships. In order to qualify for the rebuilding grant scheme, a proof of land ownership as a condition for owners of private houses was required. Many disaster victims, for example the IDPs of the group ‘lost chances’ or the elder women of the category ‘failure of social capital’ (see Section 4) belong to disadvantaged groups who

did not have land ownership certificates or could not provide any proof of evidence to recognize their residence, typically for many years, on the land or in the house of their landlord. Many landless IDPs or those living under communal, ordinary, or informal arrangements have no original claim to land. As a consequence, tens of thousands of people made homeless by the earthquake were not entitled to obtain government subsidies and were left out of the reconstruction process ([The Asia Foundation 2016](#); [Amnesty International 2017](#); [Government of Nepal 2016](#)). The reconstruction program extended the period during which many Nepalese remained displaced and only few residents were able to cope successfully with the bureaucracy of the homeowner-driven reconstruction program.

Disasters, by definition, exceed the ability of a disaster affected population or nation to cope with conditions of damage and suffering, resulting in a situation where assistance from international relief agencies, humanitarian agencies and (I)NGOs is requested or welcomed ([Barrios 2016](#); [UNDRR 2020](#)). As a consequence, disaster-affected populations very often find themselves interacting with representatives of public authorities and (I)NGOs charged with the task of implementing reconstruction programs, or with external experts claiming expertise in disaster management and recovery. Reconstruction policies and practices on the part of government officials and expert planners—their respective field(s) of practice—are often facilitated and enabled by digital technologies and socio-technical processes. However, these top-down interventions have the potential to consolidate and enhance the harmful social impacts of disasters ([Barrios 2016](#), p. 136) as they often mask collective knowledge and experiences of populations for recovery, neglect it, or deem it irrelevant.

As [Soden and Lord \(2018\)](#) impressively prove in their study on practices of damage assessment in the Lang Tang Valley/Nepal, the technologies used in damage assessment to identify beneficiaries were unsuitable for providing a comprehensive, qualitative picture of disaster impacts. [Soden and Lord \(2018\)](#) at that point invoke [Harley \(2002\)](#) who referred to processes in which “objects and phenomena outside the surveyor’s classification or ‘reality’ are excluded” ([Harley 2002](#), p. 98) and thus eliminated from the discourse, as “cartographic silencing”. In a similar way, Soden and Lord argue that ‘silences’ have been produced by “social practices and information systems supporting the Government of Nepal damage assessment” ([Soden and Lord 2018](#), p. 3), which ultimately shaped the nature of disaster recovery. The damage assessment mainly consisted of “engineering data on the condition and level of damage faced by private households” ([Soden and Lord 2018](#), p. 6), which were classified to assess the eligibility of individuals to receive financial assistance. However, the assessment technology proved to be deficient as there was a fundamental discrepancy between the quantified loss assessed and the “lived experience and expressed ideas” of the population ([Soden and Lord 2018](#), p. 9). The assessment proved to be inadequate to take into account every day and conventionalized beliefs and practices, past knowledge, or past means of recovery, including the relevant data. This example highlights the ambiguity of fields of practice and modes of interpretation based on the different risk-related rationalities of the Nepalese government and the disaster-affected population. The knowledge and convictions of the government representatives and the population concerned did not match and could not be reconciled, resulting in ruptures between practices and life worlds of disaster victims and IDPs in particular. As such, the internal logic of government’s field of practice seemed to clash with those of many disaster victims. As far as disaster response and recovery is concerned, there do not appear to be any intertwining of practices and common understandings such as certain norms, values, or similar acts by government and disaster victims. A space of continuity had not yet been formed, rendering life, in particular the life of disaster victims and IDPs, less predictable and reliable—but it is reliability and security that enable people to cope with their everyday life. The issue of uncertainty was raised by almost all IDPs interviewed for this study, as they were severely impaired by the trauma of the disaster event, loss of home, social capital, and other assets, and displacement. Most of the respondents were living under highly precarious conditions in inadequate and unsecured accommodation, and the elder people in particular (category ‘failure of social

capital') expressed living in constant fear of being evicted from their accommodation. The feeling of not having any options for action has also increased the feeling of insecurity and uncertainty among many of the respondents. Many of the respondents expressed fears of an uncertain future.

The ways government officials and expert planners define and operationalize reconstruction policies and plans can articulate different assumptions about how actors conceptualize social wellbeing and recovery, but this does not necessarily consider or reflect the demands, needs, aspiration, and hopes of a disaster-affected population. Rather, imposition of these assumptions has the potential to perpetuate a disaster's social disruptive effects (Barrios 2016, p. 135). By transforming "the lived experience and condition of individuals, communities and their infrastructure" (Soden and Lord 2018, p. 2) into statistical indicators with the help of techno-scientific knowledge, which strongly shapes the field of practice of Nepalese government agencies in this particular case, this information becomes not only quantitatively comparable and assessable, but especially readable for bureaucratic and logistical purposes. Very often, this type of information dominates crisis response and, in particular, ideas about what a future recovered life might look like. As in the case of the Nepalese government, socio-technical processes enable a standardized management of reconstruction, which renders the complex, chaotic post-disaster world and especially the disaster victims manageable. By applying techno-scientific knowledge and practices, established routines of collective restoration, and everyday repair practices of the victims were rendered invisible, the needs and hopes of the disaster-affected population were silenced, and social, cultural, and political contributions to disaster vulnerability were disguised. Furthermore, the IDPs are also almost invisible in spatial terms, especially in urban agglomerations such as the Kathamdu Valley, as the densely populated area can shelter a large number of them, in addition to 'regular' in-migrants, almost unnoticed. While numerous earthquake victims lived in camps and emergency shelters in the city centers in the post-disaster phase, the long-term displaced IDPs live quite scattered in the urban periphery and therefore hardly shape the urban settlement pattern. Many IDPs live under precarious conditions in informal settlements where they are exposed to a high degree of risk and insecurity; the informality and emergency situation of many IDPs is often exploited to tie them to high rents and leases for long periods of time. As the results of the survey show, the fate and the related challenges and problems of IDPs are very specific. The very individual and unique experiences that have been made by only a few people or even an individual in a relatively short period of time have not been merged; moreover, they have proven to be incompatible with the practices of the government. In the specific context, conventionalized practices have not been able to prevail, leaving the lives and social actions of the IDPs unpredictable and unreliable.

The 'invisibility' of internally displaced populations may make it even more likely "that their specific experiences, especially those related to their displacement", will be overlooked and that they will be largely excluded from shaping reconstruction and return processes (Purkey 2016, p. 4). Purkey (2016) argues that participation of IDPs in determining one's own fate as the core of human dignity, which is linked to ideas of autonomy, freedom, capacity to act, value, and responsibility. As respondents confirmed, knowledges for disaster management that is embedded in local cultures and everyday practices had been marginalized during the reconstruction process. Local communities and individuals were excluded from formal reconstruction activities and were therefore not able to shape their own reconstruction and return process. Instead, the highly formalized reconstruction process that shapes the internal logic of the government's field of practice produced social norms and used the successes of reconstruction—i.e., the reconstruction of the country in an earthquake-proof building mode—to demonstrate the re-establishment of "normality" (Barrios 2016, p. 148) in the post-disaster period.

5.3. Barriers and Constraints to Disaster risk Reduction, Equality and Justice

Tracing the origin of disasters in Nepal in a longer time frame clearly brings up issues of socially constructed risk and vulnerability that have been systematically reinforced and exacerbated by long-term policy and politics (Huang 2018). The coincidence of different social, political, and spatial orders has led to a historical discrimination of certain population groups and thus to their systematic exclusion from political, economic, and social processes. The foundations for this were laid as early as the 11th–13th centuries with the immigration of high-caste, Hindu ethnic groups. Through the expansion of their sphere of power, numerous traditional tribal areas of ancient Nepalese ethnic groups were politically and administratively united into a unitary state. With the introduction of Hindu legislation, the society was classified in a nationwide social hierarchy of ordered ranks. The abolition of traditional land use rights, the nationalization of land, and the monopolization of political and administrative offices manifested the political dominance of the Hindu elite (Gellner et al. 1997; Pfaff-Czarnecka 1989; Pfaff-Czarnecka et al. 2008). For centuries the exclusionary policies of the Hindu elite spread to all social, economic, political, and spatial spheres and resulted in chronic social exclusion (Luhmann 1997), marginalization and subordination of certain social groups to day. As Pfaff-Czarnecka et al. (2009) point out, social exclusion that exists in South Asian societies is distinct from that in many other societies. The distinctiveness has resulted from “stratification based on caste, ethnicity and racism” (Pfaff-Czarnecka et al. 2009, p. 1), which enabled the development of a social and cultural system that excluded certain social groups through structural barriers in access to resources, justice, and services. In particular, the process of nation-building (Hippler 2003) during the modernization and assimilation phase of Nepal in the second half of the 20th century was characterized by the systematic exclusion of ethnic groups and their concerns (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2007). To avoid ethnic dominance in the districts of the state, even administrative boundaries were repeatedly and purposefully changed. This was implemented particularly strikingly in the 1960s, when traditional ethnic settlement areas were deliberately cut up during the administrative restructuring. The new federal order, which was adopted in the wake of the new constitution of 2015, envisages the creation of regional autonomies based on the traditional settlement areas of the ethnic groups and was the subject of an extremely conflict-ridden debate and is still under criticism.

The historical development of the social, political, and economic context outlined above has a considerable impact on the vulnerability of many Nepalese people to disasters. Although the caste system was officially abolished in 1963 and caste discrimination was declared a criminal offence in 1990, the social reality is quite different. Exclusion, marginalization, and subordination of certain population groups, which are systematically prevented from participating in development processes, are unfortunately still the almost inevitable consequences. Disasters are particularly serious when people who already live in precarious conditions have only limited or no scope for action. This is particularly true for women, Dalits, and other caste-based and ethnic minorities, but also for up to 25% of Nepal’s population, which is estimated to be landless or near-landless (UNDP 2004). As the results of the interviews indicate, especially poor, marginalized people, the elderly, and households headed by women, are the most vulnerable, as specific structural conditions are affecting vulnerabilities and coping capacities. The respondents expressed enormous difficulties in restoring their livelihoods following the disaster. Respondents stressed that poverty, lack of land ownership, and lack of financial resources prevented them from exercising and controlling their own recovery and reconstruction process.

Regarding the proliferation of injustice in Nepal, Parthasarathy (2018, p. 422) argues that the people most affected by disasters are systematically excluded from forms of disaster justice. This exclusion results from highly unequal social and political regimes, which in turn legitimize governance in general and disaster mitigation in particular. As such, certain groups within the Nepalese society are more exposed to hazards than others and do not have equal access to state resources before, during, and after a disastrous event. In the case of the earthquake disaster in Nepal, underlying social fault lines and failures in prevention,

mitigation, and recovery measures lead to unequal patterns of vulnerability and risk, and the event has perpetuated, in part even reinforced, aspects of pre-existing inequality and injustices. As the respondents confirmed, after the end of emergency and post-disaster operations, when many (I)NGOs and humanitarian agencies had left the country, most of the households affected by disaster were left on their own. For post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction, most of the interviewed families, who already suffer from poverty and limited means of subsistence, were dependent on their own local resources and received only little or no external assistance and support. Some respondents expressed the view that they themselves felt too powerless to overcome their displacement situation and that the government, to which they attributed responsibility, had failed to protect and assist its citizens equally. As it was reported by the respondents, and as we will see in the following sub-section, there were no participatory forms of disaster management; for instance, the housing reconstruction program was introduced as a top-down intervention by the Nepalese government and failed to recognize demands and needs, experience, and rationalities that take place at the local and individual level. It thus posed a risk of increasing and reinforcing discrimination and deprivation. The period of displacement was even extended for most of the interviewees, as for many IDPs, because they were not able to successfully overcome the bureaucratic hurdles of the reconstruction program, thus preventing them from controlling their own recovery process. Furthermore, according to the respondents, who had experienced numerous obstacles, there has been no fair and equitable access to information, resources, and services to support reconstruction, and they were unable or lacked the capacity to articulate their individual or collective needs.

5.4. *The Geography of Doing Nothing: IDPs Waiting for a Future to Come*

The situation of the IDPs is characterized by an ambiguity of the fields of practice, which may even be in competition with other fields of practice: Fields of practice of the government, which is reflected in a distinct reconstruction process introduced as a top-down intervention that has failed to recognize demands and needs, experiences, and rationalities located at the local and individual level, and the established field of practice of certain groups within Nepalese society, represented by exclusionary and unequal social and political regimes that expose certain groups within the society more than others to hazards and systematically exclude them from forms of disaster justice. In particular, the knowledge and convictions of government representatives and the affected population did not match and could not be reconciled, resulting in ruptures between the practices and life-worlds of the disaster victims and especially the IDPs. With regard to disaster response and management, there does not appear to be any intertwining of practices and common understandings such as certain norms, values, or similar actions by government and disaster victims. No space of continuity has yet been established, which as a consequence renders life, particularly the lives of disaster victims and internally displaced persons, less predictable and reliable. However, it is reliability and security that enable people to cope with their daily lives. So, what to do (nep. *khe garne*)? Are IDPs simply doing nothing, and waiting, and if so, what are they waiting for?

As Donovan (2017, p. 50) emphasizes, disasters “force a new future upon a population”. Disasters are highly transformative processes as they can enforce re-ordering of the relationship between people and between people and the physical landscape. Through the alienation of the physical and human landscape due to the physical damage and displacement, the disaster transforms the existing geography into a disaster geography that bears the potential to evolve into uncertain future geographies. However, the alienation of the physical and human landscape may also lead to loss of identity and place attachment, as in particular the IDPs have been disconnected from their homes, existing social networks, and the physical environment they are familiar with. In a similar way, Purkey (2016, p. 12) argues that “displacement can be understood in part as a process of deconstructing the identity of the individual through loss of home, livelihood, community, citizenship, and a sense of belonging”. This was reflected very distinctly in numerous interview statements,

and, as an aside, will also profoundly shape different fields of practice. For example, the 'homeless at home' expressed no attachment to their temporal place of residence but, on the other hand, were afraid to return to their home village because of the traumatic experiences of the disaster and the damage. The two elderly people of the group 'failure of social capital' also stated that they did not feel they belonged anywhere, mainly because their homes were destroyed, and they felt lonely as their daughters lived with their husbands' families. They therefore felt aimless and in limbo, which was why the interviews were marked by a deep sense of hopelessness and despair. The group of home builders also seemed to be 'lost', as they neither wanted to return to their home village nor to stay in their place of displacement. The loss of identity and place attachment may be regarded as barrier that cause the reality of live of the IDPs to remain unchanged for a prolonged period. At the same time, however, the loss of identity and local ties also contributes to the fact that many of the IDPs interviewed look forward to their future with great uncertainty. Brun (2015, p. 19) here offers a time perspective on protracted displacement, saying that "everyday time continues to flow through routinized practices and survival strategies" that helps displaced people to create a sense of order and control. Brun defines displacement as a kind of not only spatial but also temporal "in-betweenness", as people are separated "from their everyday practices and their familiar environments, resulting in physical dislocation, social disruption, and material dispossession" (Brun 2015, p. 21). Long-term displacement—which also means protracted uncertainty—can therefore be conceptualized as 'waiting'. As such, everyday life is characterized by waiting and an uncertain future, both of which strongly influence the mobility or immobility of displaced persons. Bourdieu (2000, p. 208) for example distinguishes between an abstract future, a time perspective existing at a remove from daily life, and everyday time, the mundane and immediate consequences of routinized actions that offers people the reassuring sense of being oriented towards an immediate set of forthcoming.

As the IDPs interviewed obviously fail to cope with their everyday life due to spatial and temporal "in-betweenness" (Brun 2015, p. 21), we can assume that the very specific, individual experiences and pathways of life after the earthquake disaster did not yet form a collective knowledge pool or established conventionalized practices. From this perspective, a post-disaster field of practice did not yet emerge, leaving the live of the IDPs and social action in particular less predictable, unreliable, and unsafe. This was repeatedly confirmed in the statements of the IDPs, which were characterized by great hopelessness and fear of an uncertain and unsecure future. It may be due to the fact that the time span between the earthquake disaster and the survey was too short to develop institutionalized practices in this very specific context. It may also be the case that the IDPs due to very individual fates and problems so far had no opportunity or were unable to organize themselves more strongly to articulate collective needs, which led to a prolonged duration of their displacement. Some respondents expressed the view that they themselves felt too powerless to overcome their displacement situation. The absence of routinised practices and common understanding on the other hand may serve as an explanation for the inability of some IDPs to create a sense of order and control of their lives. Their present is characterized by an obviously static wait-and-see uncertainty. In this respect, Jeffrey (2008, p. 954) offers the concept of 'chronic waiting' (i.e., for years or lifetime) and argues that chronic waiting has become central to subaltern experience. Drawing from his research on youth political action in Uttar Pradesh, Jeffrey argues that "waiting must be understood not [...] as the absence of action, but rather as an active, conscious, materialized practice in which people forge new political strategies, in which time and space become objects of reflection, in which historical inequalities manifest themselves new ways" (Jeffrey 2008, p. 957).

On the other hand, for displaced persons, everyday time as well as the abstract future time may lack content if they are caught up in a predictable set of activities, e.g., manage their families and their private space; in the end, it is a question of power and agency whether a preferred future is attainable. However, displaced people may feel oppressed

by the passage of time and trapped in a state of unending, unstructured time, giving them a feeling of being trapped in an endless present. This feeling was expressed very clearly, for example, by the group ‘plans thwarted’, which were prevented from selling land. Their statements were characterized by a deep feeling of being stuck in a hopeless situation. When alternative, desired futures cannot be realized or reached due to perceived or experienced lack of power and uncertainty of not being able to control future, it may also seem a waste of time and costs to work towards reaching future goals (Gifford 2011). This may lead to a “feeling of being stuck in a meaningless present, waiting for a future that does not come” (Brun 2015, p. 29). On the other hand, waiting can also be understood as hope for the future. Ruszczyk and Bhandari (2020) observe that hope connects the past with the future, a “not yet”, through a temporary space. Hope refers to the feeling that a good way of being is “not yet here”. When people stop waiting, future time is disconnected from everyday time and the past—then hope is also disconnected, and hopelessness can find its way. Most of the interviewees, apart from the ‘homeless at home’ and the ‘home builders’, dreamt of a return to their home village and as such of a future that is located in a—probably—idealized past. However, the majority of the responses were characterized by a deep feeling of hopelessness and despair, so that with regard to Ruszczyk and Bhandari (2020) it can be said that some of the respondents may no longer be waiting for a better future—or have given up doing so.

Gifford (2011) identified so-called “dragons of inaction” (Gifford 2011, p. 290), seven categories of psychological barriers, that limits actions on part of the individual to adapt to climate change. He identified uncertainty as a major psychological barrier for action, i.e., people do not act because they perceive they have little behavioral control over the outcome or that their actions will not have much impact. To overcome this uncertainty, individuals and collectives have to develop different strategies and act beyond their everyday habits. Displaced people, however, often draw on the relationships and resources that shape their ‘everyday’ life story to give meaning to the legacy of injustice and to carry out the social repair work that is an almost inevitable part of life after disasters (Bradley and Duthie 2014, p. 167). Alcalá and Baines (2012) here refer to the everyday as the vibrant yet intangible space in which “emotions, interactions, tensions, power struggles, tactics of domination and resistance and small, big, ceremonial or routine events occur” (Alcalá and Baines 2012, p. 387).

6. Conclusions

Displacement associated with disasters (those linked to the effects of climate change in particular) is expected to become an increasingly prominent concern in upcoming decades. Increasingly, IDPs are to be found in camps in the towns and cities of developing and middle-income countries and are therefore affected by and engaged in urbanization. IDPs are facing a highly diverse set of challenges depending on their origin and status, age, gender, their poverty level, and their access to social networks. Many of the IDPs interviewed for this study have been in the Kathmandu Valley for years now. Even if the local governments may see their hosting role as temporary, it appears likely that a majority will become permanent urban residents for their presence is part of the urbanization (Crisp and Refstie 2012). The experiences and everyday lives of those affected have so far been made far too little use of for disaster relief and, conversely, disasters are particularly serious when people already have to live in vulnerability, politically incapacitated, and without any scope for action of their own (Cannon et al. 2014).

Findings demonstrate that there is great potential in analyzing different notions of disaster-related concepts and their justifications employing the concepts of ‘fields of practice’ and ‘disaster justice’, not only in the response to major events and adaptation to disaster risk on a practical level, but also in the conceptual design of disaster prevention. As the results of the pilot research demonstrate, IDPs have to navigate through different fields of practice that are beyond their own sets of experience and control. However, still, there is a striking knowledge gap regarding the understanding of ‘realities of life’ and

practices of IDPs living in urban areas. We need to widen our understanding of displaced persons in post-disaster contexts from simply ‘doing nothing’ towards more complex subjective, sometimes even psychological perceptions. The scope of ‘doing nothing’ should be better examined as different groups of IDPs and individuals experience various barriers—or facilitators—in different contexts and will therefore respond differently. This would also enhance the possibilities to contextualize experiences, norms, and beliefs of those affected and displaced by disaster and future projects for recovery and reconstruction in the context of current contingencies. It may thus help to bring different fields of practice into convergence.

Disaster risk and displacement risk cannot be fully understood and resolved through a purely technocratic risk management perspective: As the findings of this research show, disaster displacement risk is fundamentally social and political process that involves choices and constraints, challenges, and opportunities experienced, perceived, and interpreted by IDPs in very distinct ways. As noted by Peters and Lovell (2020, p. 19), “business as usual approaches will not be sufficient to address current and future displacement risk”. Getting to know more about the lived realities, experiences, and vulnerabilities of IDPs and unpacking emerging issues in particular, very specific cases of disaster displacement in fragile contexts, novel and creative approaches should endeavor to bridge the data gap on disaster displacement (Peters 2019). However, to make sense of such questions and observations, it is necessary to understand how the decision making of at-risk societies and individuals is embedded in culture, and how people use culture in their everyday life to establish DRR practice (Bankoff et al. 2015; Geiselhart et al. 2015). Long-term, systematic data collection that explicitly incorporates the changing needs, priorities, and capacities of affected people is required to complete and understand the picture of disaster displacement impacts. Only then can effective policies and interventions be developed to help people prevent, prepare for, and recover from natural hazard-related disasters and build their resilience to ongoing, recurring, or future hazard events.

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Informed Consent Statement: Due to the exploratory nature of this pilot research and the given research conditions on location, written consent was not obtained from respondents. However, informed consent was always obtained orally. Thus, all involved subjects gave their informed consent for inclusion before they participated in the research.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author as long as this does not infringe with the privacy of interviewees participating in this study. The data are not publicly available due to potential infringements of confidentiality.

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