

Towards understanding marginality in an urbanizing setting: A case of Kavrebhanjyang, Ward 9 of Dhulikhel Municipality

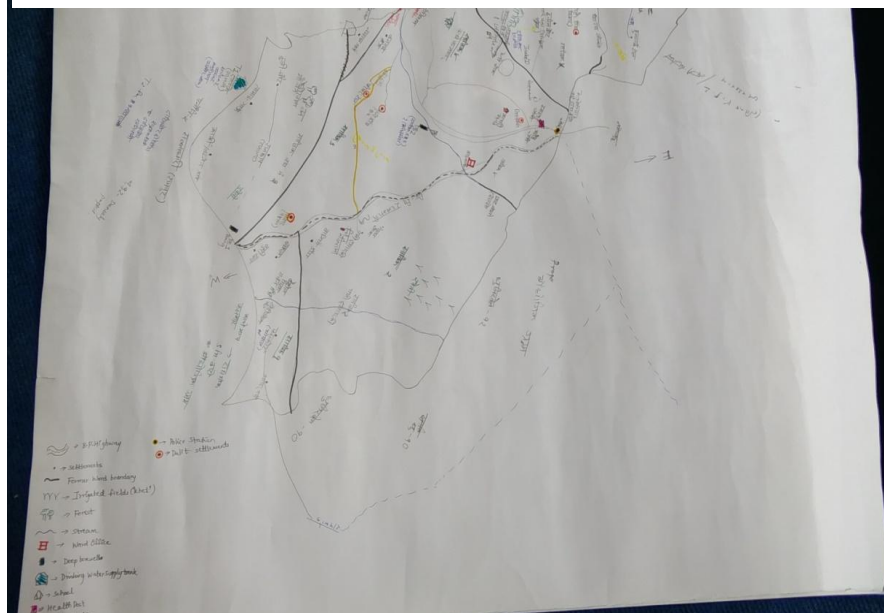
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Introduction

This report introduces Kavrebhanjyang, which since 2017 is, ward no. 9 of Dhulikhel Municipality (DM). Kavrebhanjyang was Village Development Committee (VDC) in the earlier governance system of Nepal, which was merged into DM in 2015. Kavrebhanjyang VDC comprises of nine wards, which in this report are referred to as the former wards. Seven of the nine former wards – ward number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9 – were merged to form ward 9 of DM, the current Kavrebhanjyang (see also Table 2 below). The former wards 6 and 7 were merged into Bhattedanda, ward 8 of DM.

Kavrebhanjyang comprises several settlements (*tols* in Nepali). It is elongated east to west (see Map 1) and intersected by a highway called Bisheshwor Prasad or BP highway which links the Kathmandu valley to Tarai – the flat land of Nepal. The ward office of Kavrebhanjyang is located along the B.P highway.

Map 1: Map of ward 9 of Dhulikhel Municipality demarcating former wards and locating its resources and settlements (not in scale)



This report presents our learning and insights of preliminary visits plot Kavrebhanjyang. Information was collected through interactions with the ward chairperson, elected member of the ward-level committee, municipal staff, local residents, and observations made during transect walk into the settlements. Our visit to Kavrebhanjyang was initiated accidentally during one of our visits to Dhulikhel for another project which also has Dhulikhel as its study site. The

information presented here is based on informal interactions (without using any check-list) and not yet triangulated. Hence are subject to change during further research.

Physical features

Starting from the place called Thakurichap in the west along the B.P. Highway, Kavrebhanjyang extends to Tinpiplchowk in the east. Devithandanda and Khawa respectively form the northern and the southern border of Kavrebhanjyang. Kavrebhanjyang has hilly topography. While the B.P highway is the main road of this ward, it also has a black-topped road that connects it to the Dhulikhel town, the urban core of DM. The location along the highway, temperate climate, and pine tree-covered green hills exhibit the tourism potential of the Kavrebhanjyang. Although the forests are primarily managed by the community called the community forest users group (CFUG), it also has a few private forests. Between the forests are the settlements. Some of the settlements are dense, others are relatively scattered. It has three streams which are the sources of irrigation for low farmlands. These streams also functioned as the ward borders when Kavrebhanjyang was a VDC.



Photo 1: A view of Kavrebhanjyang, photo 2: Settlements in Kavrebhanjyang

Table 1. Community forests and streams in Kavrebhanjyang

S.N	Stream	Community Forests/Formers wards
1	Ghatkholo kholso	Bhandarkharka / 5
2	Sudikhola	Bachaladevi / 8
3	Gangaram Kholso	Mudalithumka/ 8
4	[...]	Baidolpakha/ 1
5	[...]	Dhobikhola/ 3

Social composition and social dynamics

Kavrebhanjyang has a population of 3200 comprising a total of 800 households [need to verify]. Brahmans (Humagain, Bajagain, Timalsina, Sapkota, Sigdel and Lamsal) have the largest population, followed by the Kshetris (dominantly Ranabhat). “Dalits”, the “low” caste groups, comprise the third-largest social group in terms of population. It is the ward with the highest number of Dalit households within the municipality [one of the reasons for selecting Kavrebhanjyang our study site¹]. There are three groups within Dalits: Pariyar (including Sundas), Bishwokarma or BK, and Mijar (including Rokka). There are a few Newar, Tamang and Magar households. Agriculture is the main subsistence occupation of the people. Over 90% of the total households rear cattle (dominantly cow) and sell milk which is their major source of earning cash. According to the ward chairperson, the commercial milk suppliers are concentrated in the former wards 2, 4, 5, 8. The former ward 9 and the former wards 1 and 3 have fewer of those involved in commercial dairy farming. A few (three-four) Dalit households are involved in dairy farming. While Tamangs are not involved in dairy farming, goat farming is a common occupation among the Tamangs. Dalits and Tamangs are economically weak and primarily depend on wage-based labor as their major income source. Interestingly, many of the youths of both of these caste groups worked as laborers in electrical connection and maintenance. Some of such Tamang residents have become skilled electricity technicians. Although the education status of Dalit youths has improved, they are still economically the most backward group in this ward.

Table 2: Name and social composition of different wards of Kavrebhanjyang VDC

Former Wards	Name of tols/settlements	Resident caste group	Current status
Ward 1	Thakurichap, Bakal and Phaskot, Tamang gaun	Malla and Shahi, Karki, Basnet, Tamang and Poudel	Ward 9 of Dhulikhel Municipality
Ward 2	Pani Tyanki and Milan chowk	Baniya danda	
Ward 3	Ranachap and Tamang Tol	Tamang Gaun, Basnet-Karki Gaun, Ranabhat, Biswokarma gaun, Lamsal gaun	
Ward 4	Lapsibot, Devisthan, Dandatol, Thari tol, Byavar tol, Sigdel tol, Kavrebhanjyang	Dalits (Pariyar, Rokka), Bajagain, Humagain, Sapkota, Timalsina, Sigdel, Newar, B.K, Badal, Giri	

¹ See Shrestha and Poudel (2020). “Exploring potential study sites in Dhulikhel Municipality: Summary”, shared with PolCap team, May 2020.

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Ward 5	Darimbot and Chhotedanda	Humagain, Pantha, Timsina, Bhujel, Mijar (in Chhote danda)	
Ward 8	Patleket, Thultar,	Phuyal tol, Humagain tol,	
Ward 9	Lamsal Gaun, Bajagain danda and Pariyar Gaun, Kami danda, Mijar Gaun (14HH)	Lamsal, Bajagain, Pariyar, <i>Kami</i> , Mijar	
Ward 6	Badal Gaun		Ward 8 of Dhulikhel Municipality
Ward 7			

Kavrebhanjyang is said to have over two-dozens of dairy farms. A major market for the milk produced is Kathmandu Valley. Similarly, in the low land of this ward, (commercial) cultivation in a cycle of three crops per year is a common practice. Dhulikhel town located towards the north of this ward is at a walking distance of less than an hour from the ward office. However, the people of Kavrebhanjyang prefer Banepa, which is, according to the chairperson, 4 kilometers far than to reach Dhulikhel, as their market-hub. Some of the respondents explained the availability of the public transport service connecting Kavrebhanjyang to Banepa (along the B.P Highway) is the major reason for preferring Banepa to Dhulikhel. Other reason(s) that could influence the people’s preference for Banepa needs further investigation.



Photo 3: Irrigated (*khet*) and unirrigated (*bari*) (terrace in photo) fields of Kavrebhanjyang

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Potato, maize, mustard and peas are commonly cultivated in the uphill, *bari* lands. However, the delay in the winter rain has caused a delay in the growth of the crops in these rain-fed fields. In the irrigated land (*khet*) paddy, wheat and vegetables are commonly cultivated. Details on the landownership and their interrelation to producing or reducing marginality are yet unexplored. However, as per the discussion, a majority of the families with crop yield sufficient for year-round consumption belong to Brahman caste. This however does not imply all those belonging to Brahmans and Kshetris, are socio-economically and politically privileged. An example was the old Brahman man we encountered during our visit to Kavrebhanjyang (elaborated below).

Diluting yet deep-rooted caste-based disparities

Although the settlements are primarily clustered based on caste, they are not always discrete and distinct. For instance, Brahmins/Kshettris households located next to the house of Dalits and participation during social functions such as wedding ceremonies and paying condolences during death rituals were common. Concerning their relationship, many of the respondents belonging to Brahmin/Kshetri caste groups claim that caste-based discrimination was never strong and whatever existed has much reduced. Those belonging to the Dalit caste, however, argue that although the caste-based discriminations have declined drastically, it has not ended yet. For example, a man in his late 40s belonging to the Dalit caste shared “in the past, if we happen to accidentally touch the higher caste or their pots in fetching water from a common water source, they would (expressing their rage) break our mud water pots”. Dalit respondents also admitted that the discrimination is not severe as in the past, the change as per them was prominent after the Maoist insurgency (the inclusion of the marginalized was a major agenda of the Maoist “revolutionary” strategy). Nevertheless, caste-based divisions exist. A Dalit woman interviewee who worked as a farm laborer shared that they have to wash the plates in which they are provided food and keep it separate to let it dry before the higher caste landowners collect their utensils. Another woman shared that they still need to wait for their turn to fetch water from *Pandhero* (a traditional communal water source) even if they reach the water source before a higher caste individual. However, as reported by one of our Dalit respondents, the youth Dalits do not follow these practices and that the Dalits and non-Dalits youths mingling together is common. Concluding this however is difficult as our respondent also mentioned how a Dalit young female was for being a Dalit.

Of the three different sub-castes of Dalit residents of Kavrebhanjyang, as per the traditional occupation divisions, BKs are blacksmiths, Pariyars play music during festivals and marriage and do tailoring, and Mijars primarily make leather shoes. In addition to the divisions between Dalits and non-Dalits, caste-based hierarchical relations pervades among the Dalits. Among the three sub-castes of Dalits in Kavrebhanjyang, the entrenched caste-based hierarchy positions Blacksmith at the top of the hierarchy, followed by Mijar. Pariyars are traditionally at the bottom of this hierarchy. During an informal interaction, a Mijar woman boasted of her caste-defined position: “hierarchically above the pariyar”. In another case, a Pariyar woman explained that a mason belonging to Mijar group would not drink water or eat food touched by them; rather bring his own water and walk all the way downhill to have his lunch. Sub-caste-based clustering of the Dalit settlements also indicates that (sub)caste-based divisions exist among these different groups of Dalits. Although an in-depth analysis of how caste impacts social positionality of individuals and their participation in community “development” activities demands further investigation, experiences shared by the Dalit respondents indicate the tacit existence of the caste-based divisions in Kavrebhanjyang.

While there are some relatively well-to-do Dalit families in Kavrebhanjyang, the majority of them are socio-economically backward. Many Dalit men have continued their traditional occupations, women work as agricultural laborers. Making and selling of curios such as *khukuris* (the national knife of Nepal) are a major source of BKs' income. As per our respondents, a reduction in the flow of tourists due to the impacts of Covid pandemic has hampered their income. According to the ward chair, there are 23 landless households in Kavrebhanjyang, most of whom belong to the Dalit. Dalit families who had a larger landholding in the past have sold their lands, the reasons are yet to be explored. As per our respondents, some sold their land to construct houses as their houses were destructed by the 2015 earthquake. Several Dalit households were still residing in temporary tin huts, locally known as *tahara*, which indicate their financial constraints to rebuild their houses. According to a ward member, the municipality has recently introduced additional financial assistance to such families who have not yet been able to reconstruct their houses damaged by the earthquake. The ward committee member belonging to a Brahman caste claimed Dalit-focused programs are a major priority of Dhulikhel Municipality. Elaborated examples include the capacity-building training for the Dalits and their occupation-related instruments (e.g., *aaran* for BKs) provided by the ward/municipal government. Additionally, Dalits' children have also been provided monthly allowances and nutritional supplements. The ward member explained that the municipality had organized an event called "Mayor with Dalits", which has committed additional support for the Dalits. The committee member remarked that despite municipal priorities and supports for uplifting the livelihoods of Dalit households, dissatisfaction pervades among Dalits, which is claimed to be "their strategy to access more of such supports" [needs further investigation].

Many families of Dalits have sold their land in need of fast cash. Alcoholism, which is said to be common among both men and women belonging to the Dalit community, is claimed to have intensified the selling of land among the Dalits. As per the non-Dalits, this was reinforcing their socioeconomic marginality. During our field visits, we noticed alcoholism was indeed common among Dalits, even the youths. Experience of an interviewee Dalit woman whose husband had sold almost all his land due to his alcoholic nature resonated with the claims made by many of the non-Dalit respondents. The woman who was the (fourth) wife of this man explained this was a common problem among the Dalit men and women. Her response to our question about what she wished to change in Kavrebhanjyang as it a part of a municipality indicated the severity of this social problem. She wished that "the municipal government restrict and remove all the alcohol selling shops (known as *bhatti* locally) that lie along the border of Dhulikhel and Kavrebhanjyang". This, as per her, would not only help her protect the earning she and her husband jointly made from tailoring works but also her only remaining land, the plot where her *tahara* stands.

Selling of land however is not limited only among the Dalits. It appeared to be the only option for the less privileged households in need of fast cash. For example, a *Janajati* Tamang respondent had sold his all (3.5 *ropanies* of) land to treat his wife suffering from a serious illness. People are also selling land and migrating to relatively accessible low lands closer to the highway. According to our respondents, primary buyers of such lands are the business-minded and wealthy Newars of Dhulikhel town who seek to gather and hold large areas of land for developing resorts and expanding their tourism business to Kavrebhanjyang.

The trend of land-use change has been slow but, land speculation is growing in this ward adjoining the urban center of Dhulikhel Municipality. Excavation of hills with the section along the highway converted into the flat land while discarding the consequent landslide risk in the remaining section has become a lucrative way to increase the commercial value of land (see photo 4). The statue of the Balbhadra Kunwar² (see map 1) recently inaugurated by the Mayor of Dhulikhel is likely to increase tourists flow to Kavrebhanjyang, further enticing those investing in tourism. Overall, growing is the interest in land pooling and “developing” it into an “organized city” as envisioned by the ward chairperson. This is likely to increase the land value and land transactions as in other areas clubbed into municipalities. Changing land use and growing appropriation of land for tourism may turn to be the risk for such agro-based communities, mainly the landless groups depending on farm-based labor.

Migration in and out of Kavrebhanjyang is not yet common. The in-migration from Koshi-pari (lit. east from Koshi river) (e.g., Dolakha and Ramechhap districts) to Kavrebhanjyang had increased during the Maoist insurgency (1996-2006) but is confined to Thultar and Salyapani areas, the former ward 8 (of Kavrebhanjyang VDC). Wealthier groups constructing houses in the urban core of Dhulikhel and Banepa Municipalities are growing.

² Balbhadra Kunwar (30 January 1789 – 13 March 1823) was a Nepalese military commander and administrator in the Kingdom of Nepal. Being one of the National heroes, he was highly praised for his military skill for the defence of the Nalapani fort in the Anglo-Nepal War (1814–1816) (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balbhadra_Kunwar).



Photo 4: A hill along the B.P converted into flat land for commercial use.

Ward level planning processes and infrastructure services

Although Kavrebhanjyang is formally governed as an administrative unit of DM, the former ward level division plays an important role in the current ward level development planning and decision-making processes. Our respondent, a member of the ward committee, remarked the committee has the responsibility to inform the ward population about the municipal development programs and projects and communicate the development needs and demands of the population to the ward and municipal government. The ward committee has divided the responsibilities based on the former ward division and the population size of the former wards (see table 3). While such devolution seems to have helped to better understand the development needs of the population, an in-depth understanding of these processes and their implications will be crucial to understand how these affect or enhance the political capabilities of the marginalized groups.

Table 3: Responsibility division between the ward members

Former wards	Ward committee member
1, 3	Ward Chairperson, Basanta Ranabhat (Kshetri)
9, 2	Dalit ward member, Anju Sundas
4	Sarita Humagain (Brahman)
5	Dhime Sarki (Dalit)
8	Upendra Bahadur Humagain (Brahman)

Although settlements are located on the hilly terrain, they are inter-connected by recently constructed roads which make the settlements accessible and connect those to the B.P highway. In this ward, the (re)construction of concrete houses increased after the 2015 earthquake. Many traditional houses sustained the 2015 earthquake, but many of those mainly in the Dalit settlements are replaced by corrugated tin huts. Stone paving of trails connecting the uphill settlements is ongoing. Many of these roads and trails were constructed as part of the development initiation made by the recently elected local bodies. According to the ward chairperson, since the election of the local representatives in 2017, the municipal budget has been maximally invested for the construction of the access roads. As per him, Kavrebhanjyang has a total of 23 access roads. These recently constructed roads are yet to be incorporated into the cadastral map. The ward chairperson explained this presence of road in the field and absence in the map is strategically used by the landowners to evade the tax. On one hand, claiming that the lands do not have road connection as per the cadastral map the landowners pay the tax specified for land without road access. On the other hand, landowners claim the land to have road access and demand the ward's recommendation when applying for a building permit. Additionally, road access has increased the monetary value of the lands. The ward chairperson complained such dual nature of the landowners makes justifying the access to the municipal development budget difficult as it is spent primarily on road construction.

These roads are earthen tracks connecting the settlements to the B.P Highway. While these have improved access to the hilly settlements, yet usability of these tracks in the rainy season is questionable. During the field visits, we observed road construction-induced soil erosion in the fields along the road (see Photo 6). Attention to these aspects seems lacking among the elected local representatives while the views of the landowners are yet to be explored.

The maximum budget spent on road construction vividly illustrates the priority for road construction. Road construction however does not seem to be the priority of Kavrebhanjyang residents. Our respondents unanimously stressed improving access to water as their major need. Ensuring access to drinking water services under the “one-house-one-tap” provision was the campaigning strategy during the local election in 2017 and is still the widely proclaimed development slogan of the Mayor of DM. The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 recognizes access to clean drinking water (and sanitation) as a fundamental right. As per the constitution and the Local government Operation Act, 2017, the local governments have exclusive rights in relation to local water management, including the provision of formulating policies, laws and standards related to local drinking water services. Currently, DM is constructing 17 drinking water supply projects. Three of these are in Kavrebhanjyang. Of these three ongoing water supply projects, two are based on deep groundwater sources while the third involves the integration of the local spring sources and groundwater source from one of the deep borewells.

At present household piped water supply systems are arranged by tapping springs dispersed in the community/private forests/lands. The black PVC pipes tapping water from the source to the households are common in this hilly terrain. Some households have invested individually while some in a small cluster to tap water from the source to their households. It also has some community water supply projects established with support from development agencies such as Water Aid and Fund Board. Former ward 4 of Kavrebhanjyang VDC has one of such systems. The users of this community-managed water system recalled the intensive labor contribution they made in constructing this water supply system with financial and technical support from the Fund Board. Around 100 households of different caste groups are supplied water from this system. Each household is charged NPR.300 per month, which is used to pay the water “guard” who operates this system. Each of the households gets 30 minutes of water supply every alternate day. According to the respondents, the water source has declined significantly over the years. In addition to limited water supply, the respondents pointed poor water quality limits the use of this water. While they used this water for cattle rearing, for domestic needs, they fetch water from a *Kuwa* (a traditional water source) located downhill to their settlement (see Photo 3, 4 and 5). These households are however privileged compared to many other households, including the Dalits in the higher belts. For the latter fetching water from *their* traditional *kuwa* is the only option to meet the daily water requirements. Those residing further uphill need to fetch water from a forest despite the risk of attack by wild animals and criminal offense.



Photos 3, 4, 5: Managing water in Kavrebhanjyang

Under the “one-house-one-tap” water supply provision of the municipality, the municipality has also got two deep bore wells drilled in Kavrebhanjyang: one in the former ward 3 of Kavrebhanjyang and the other in former ward 4. This first borewell-based project is expected to improve water supply to the former wards 2 (a large part of it), 3, 4, 5, and 9 within the fiscal year 2020/21 (2077/78). According to the ward chairperson, this supply will be extended to former wards 1 and 8 in the following year. Laying of the water supply pipelines is ongoing with a mandatory labor contribution from the user groups. The villagers who cannot contribute in

labor have to pay NPR.750 as daily labor contribution for the water supply project. Usually, labor contribution has to be made for a total of seven days. Labor contributions are common rather than contributions in cash. More information about the water supply systems is to be explored.

Table 3: Drinking water supply projects in Kavrebhanjyang

	Location/Source	Supported by	Water supply for	Size of water reservoir (l)
Ghat khola Khanepani	Former ward 3/ deep borewell	Municipal government	Former ward 3, Bakal, Thakurichap (except Phaskot)	70,000
Deep bore well	Former ward 5	Dhulikhel Municipality	Former wards 9, 4 and majority of ward 2	40,000
Darimbot water supply	Bhandarkharka Forest (former ward 5)			
Thultar Water supply		NEWAH ³		
Sita Ghari Khanepani	Kavrebhanjyang, (former ward 4) Spring sources	Fund Board	Mid 2000s	45,000

Kavrebhanjyang has two schools, one secondary school, and one private boarding school namely, Karthari Secondary School and Bachaladevi Lower Secondary School respectively. It has a health post and a Red Cross office. Construction of a public hospital (of 15 beds) and a branch of Mediciti (Private) hospital is expected to commence in the near future. Similarly, Dhulikhel Municipality aims to develop an Industrial Village (*Audyogik gram*) including parts of Ward 10 and ward 12 of the municipality, and connecting Kavrebhanjyang at Phaskot settlement.

Relation of Kavrebhanjyang with the municipal government

The incumbent ward chairperson was the Pradhanpanch (then the local government head) in the early 1980s (2040 B.S) and has a strong socio-political family background. His strong support and that of his father in the declaration of Dhulikhel as the district-headquarter seems to have contributed to establish and strengthen political links between the ward chair of Kavrebhanjyang and the politicians and elites of Dhulikhel town. According to one of our key-informants, the incumbent ward chair is entrusted with the role of Deputy Mayor in absence of

³ Nepal Water for Health (<https://newah.org.np/>)

the Mayor and Vice-mayor. This indicates that the chairperson of this ward has a good socio-political network and influential position with respect to the municipal decision-making processes. This, in our view, could also be an important asset in communicating our research findings with the municipal authorities.

Different wards of DM vary in their area, population, socio-economic composition and development needs, and status. Irrespective of these differences, an equal budget is allocated to all the municipal wards. According to a member of the ward committee, this homogenization of the wards is a major challenge for Kavrebhanjyang which has a relatively larger area and a higher population of socio-economically backward groups.

Marginal groups and way forward

With the highway passing through it, Kavrebhanjyang adjoining the most urbanized wards of Dhulikhel municipality is likely to urbanize at an increasing pace, making it an interesting site to understand marginality issues in the urban context. Further, distinctly settled Dalit, Janajati, Brahman and Kshetri communities allow exploring social positionalities in tandem with differential political capabilities. Differences in the physical status of the shelters in this hilly ward distinctly indicate the differences in the socioeconomic positions and vulnerabilities of the residents there. During field visits, we noticed many of the earthquake victim Dalit families, were finally constructing their houses with the government providing the third installment of the financial support for reconstruction. Almost all of such under-construction houses were two-roomed, single-storeyed concrete houses. These further reflect their economic marginality. In-depth research is needed to substantiate this preliminary observation and better understand their socioeconomic and political positions.



Photo 6: Road construction-induced soil erosion in Kavrebhanjyang.

Infrastructure development in Kavrebhanjyang (as in other wards of Dhulikhel Municipality) is undertaken through two means: the projects exceeding NPR. five million are undertaken through tender while the projects costing less than that are done through ad hoc user groups (*called upabhokta samiti*). To qualify for accessing the municipal development budgets, the ad hoc users' committees are required to make 20% (of the total project cost) as a cash contribution for the project. The ward chairperson explained that the mandatory cash contribution is intended to ensure the involvement of the users, community ownership, and hence protection of the infrastructure. The users' committees fulfill this formality by making cash deposits prior to the signing of the contract with the municipal government. In stark contrast to the planned contribution from the beneficiaries in (urban) development, in Kavrebhanjyang, 20% cash contribution, as per our respondents, has rather increased hesitance against involvement in the development projects. The mandatory cash contribution has to be deposited in advance of accessing the municipal budget. Widespread is the notion that the users' committees have to temporarily deposit 20% cash in initiating the project. The users' committee, particularly the chairperson of the committee deposits the amount and gets it reimbursed after the municipality releases the first installment of the project budget [this need further investigation]. While this "fake" contribution is strategically evaded by those with economic security, it has exclusionary repercussions. This firm requirement has restrained the

economically weaker group from participating in the development activities. According to the ward chairperson, in one of the projects, the development budget for which was getting freeze in lack of formation the user committee, the ward chairperson had made the initial deposit personally so as to involve the local communities and prevent freezing of the budget. The ward chairperson noted that the Dalits actively make the labor contribution in implementing development projects. The participation and position of Dalits in planning and implementing the infrastructure projects in an apparently inclusive municipal and national policy context however remains overlooked. Concurring with Long (2003)⁴ we note the need to deconstruct the development interventions and investigate how the play of power, poverty and politics in constituting users' committee and accessing municipal services affect political capabilities and marginalization.

Similarly, while the high caste-individuals claim caste-based discriminatory practices have softened and even vanished, experiences and perceptions of those belonging to Dalit caste indicate caste-based disparity persists in many respects, including in the planning and materialization of infrastructure projects. Focusing on Dalits' social, economic and political positions and access to infrastructure in this urbanization-oriented ward can be appropriate to materialize the objectives of the political capabilities project: understand and address marginality in an urban context.

Table 4: Dalit communities in Kavrebhanjyang

	Ward number/ Village	Number of HH	Population
Pariyar	9/ Pariyar Gaun		
Mijar	5/Chhotedanda		
Mijar	9	14	
Bishwokarma	3		

As mentioned earlier, caste seems to strongly shape development activities in Kavrebhanjyang, but not the sole determinant of the socioeconomic and political positions and marginality of residents in this ward. We encountered such an example during our visit to Kavrebhanjyang. Carrying a few packets of chips in a soiled sack, an old man was heading towards the Devithan, the touristic spot at the northern border of Kavrebhanjyang (see map 1). Upon inquiry, we found that he was a resident of Kavrebhanjyang and belonged to the Brahman caste. Although he intended to sell the packets of chips, he was less hopeful as he was aware that his filthy old appearance did not appeal to his prospective customers who preferred the well-placed shops.

⁴ Long, N. 2003. An actor-oriented approach to development intervention.

Reducing of age during his youth in the hope to get employed as a civil servant has backlashed. Nor could he get formal employment then nor did he formally qualify for the government-provisioned elderly allowances. He recalled spending his youth working as a farmworker. He explained despite that his house along with other houses in his settlement was damaged by the 2015 earthquake his name was not included on the list of the earthquake victims. Hence he did not possess the “red card”, the identification of the earthquake victims, and had not received any reconstruction allowance the government has provided in multiple installments. Although he made several rounds of visits to the ward and the municipality offices to get his name included under the governmental re-announcements to include the missed victims for the reconstruction supports, he has yet not succeeded in getting the “red card”. Hence he remains excluded from the provisions aimed to ensure “access to safe housing” for the earthquake victims, primarily the poor and marginalized groups. Tired of the futile requests to present the evidence and get the entitled allowances, he satires “in the settlement where all the houses were damaged by the earthquake, the earthquake left my houses undamaged”. Although we could not visit and observe his house, the ward chairperson also admitted that he is an earthquake victim and should have been provided support under the reconstruction scheme. The ward chairperson further explained (in a manner of complaining) that the evaluation of the earthquake-rendered damage is done by the engineers assigned by the National Reconstruction Authority using the technocratic criteria and the discretionary authority given to them. As per the ward chairperson, the local government can neither revise the criteria nor is the list of the victims' names shared with them; hence they cannot influence the decisions made for the provision of the reconstruction allowances. While the proponents of housing rights are advocating to ensure “shelter for all” and informal settlers and their federations for their fundamental “rights to housing”, the struggles for safe shelter do not seem to be any easy for the poor and marginalized within “formal” settlements. The ward chairperson further explained that there were 17 such houses which despite being damaged by the earthquake, the families were not included in the victims' list. It can be an interesting topic to further investigate and unpack the informal ground politics to gain legitimacy for formally provisioned reconstruction allowances.

Some questions can be entry points for further exploration and analysis:

1. How are the settlements of different groups distributed in the landscape?
2. How are the decisions related to the selection and implementation of development projects made?
3. Development activities are undertaken through ad hoc users' committee. How the users' committees are formed and how they function? How do caste-class intersections influence the formation and functioning of such committees? Do these affect access to urban infrastructure services?

4. Which of the settlements are included or prioritized for water supply provisions? Why?
5. How are the road construction projects framed? How are the decisions related to road construction, such as route and priority in upgrading of roads made? How do local residents participate in or resist road construction projects? How are the risks-related to construction of roads perceived and prevented?
6. How were the Dalits and marginalized households dispossessed from land or how they relate their historical relation with land-based livelihoods and society/social change? How are changing market context being materialized by marginalized communities or how they are influenced by markets?