

The Contribution of Dr. Ian Davis to Disaster Risk and Recovery Management 1972-2020



Photo: AIDMI

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Advocating Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building in South Asia since 2005



ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This issue of *Southasiadisasters.net* celebrates the illustrious life and career of Dr. Ian Davis, a pioneer in the field of disaster risk reduction (DRR). Aptly titled, 'The Contribution of Dr. Ian Davis to Disaster Risk and Recovery Management 1972-2020', this issue highlights how Dr. Davis' seminal work gave rise to the field of Disaster Studies which later came to define the larger field of disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the international development and humanitarian ecosystems.

A recipient of the prestigious Sasakawa Award, Dr. Davis is one of the giants who has nurtured the nascent field of disaster studies and helped it to mature into the overarching discipline of disaster risk reduction (DRR). This issue captures the interesting journey of Dr. Davis, who as a humanitarian and architect has always put community at the core of risk reduction and recovery.

The eleven contributors to this issue not only highlight different aspects of Ian's work but also repeat and reinforce their observations concerning his life and contribution to the knowledge in the broad field of disaster research and practice. ■

- Kshitij Gupta

Our Ian Davis

by Mihir R. Bhatt

As a pioneer in the field of disaster risk reduction, Dr. Ian Davis has changed the way we look at disasters. He has devised several models to explain how disasters are precipitated through the interaction of hazard and vulnerability. These models and theories form the basis of the modern discipline of disaster risk reduction. In fact, his seminal book called '*Shelter after Disaster*' published in 1978, is since considered an indispensable part of the literature of disaster studies. As an architect and humanitarian, Ian's thoughtful stewardship of this field has guided a generation of DRR scholars and practitioners both from the global north and south.

I first met Ian at a world conference in Yokohama, Japan, in 1995. George Day had kindly introduced us with the help of a letter. It was the International Decade of Natural Disaster Reduction and I was invited to be on a panel with him. Given his seniority and immense contributions to the field of DRR, I was a little awestruck to be on the same panel as him. However, Ian was kind and gracious enough to make me feel completely at ease with a warm smile and encouraging words. I was convinced that my focus on community action was timely and most needed. This first encounter with Ian during the IDNDR years was very special and cemented a good bond between us. I couldn't wait for another opportunity to work with him again as I was aware of Ian's Handbook on Emergencies and Field Operations.

Both of us were invited to join a three-member international commission to review and reflect (in a public meeting) on the Kobe earthquake recovery. A week in Kobe, meeting the highest office of the prefecture to the 'still-in-camp' victim families with Ian was a tutorial on what to do, when, and how?

I got the opportunity to put the tutorial to use soon enough in 1996, when Ian invited me to come and work with him to evaluate the Latur earthquake reconstruction and rehabilitation process. As this was my first evaluation with him, I was naturally quite excited and anxious. The most striking part of this evaluation process was the humility with which Ian approached those whose work was being evaluated. He would always respect the community's perspective and would patiently listen to all the opinions from his colleagues. It was only after carefully considering the views of all stakeholders across all levels that Ian gave his judgment about how well the reconstruction and rehabilitation process was progressing. We both enjoyed enlisting recommendations that built on the findings but reached out to what was about to come.

Ian and I had a chance to revisit Latur after almost two decades, thanks to *Tearfund*, and were glad to see what worked and what did not. We were able to see how recovery in the long-term takes turns and twists in a way that is so often missed in project evaluations. Seated on the remains of walls of heavy stone, looking at the village, we wondered why each recovery is not re-visited to have a long-term view on overall effectiveness.

After our stint together in Latur, Ian subsequently invited me to join the work that he was doing with the United Nations. This was being managed with support from Dr. Vinod Sharma, who was leading the disaster centre at Indian Institute of Public Administration in Delhi. This was a great learning exercise for me which I thoroughly enjoyed. We were also joined by other stalwarts of the field that included John Twigg, Roger Bellers and David Sanderson.

Yasemin Aysan was present in each discussion. This work with the UN that Ian led was under the auspices of the *Oxford Centre for Disaster Studies* (OCDS). It helped lay down a systematic and conceptual framework to disaster risk reduction for all of us. Since then we would often be together on some panel or another at global level and each time he had a new approach and new thinking concerning the direction of DRR.

When in 2002 I met Dr. Henry Quarantelli in his office, one of the first things he suggested was that I go meet Dr. Ian Davis and share my ideas and work on local actions!

In 2017, Ian was gracious enough to accept my invitation and came down to Ahmedabad to visit the team of our All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI). At AIDMI. He interacted with all the team members and encouraged everyone to do better in their respective fields of work. He showed immense interest in AIDMI's work and has been an editorial advisor of Southasiadisasters.net, AIDMI's



Ian Davis with Mihir R. Bhatt.

monthly publication since year 2005. His involvement with AIDMI has helped us to improve the outreach and impact of our risk reduction initiatives.

Ian has not only enriched the field of disaster risk reduction with his ideas and knowledge, but has also

touched the lives of disaster scholars and practitioners. This is why he is considered to be a role model in the risk reduction community. As a devoted humanitarian worker, Ian has shown a tremendous capacity for love and empathy to champion the cause of the marginalized communities who are 'at-risk'.

Ian Davis: What makes him different as an architect?

by Mihir R. Bhatt

- Ian Davis, originally an architect is a preminent scholar in the field of Disaster Management.
- He is affiliated with various well-known universities such as Oxford Brookes University, Kyoto University, Lund University and the RMIT in Melbourne.
- As an architect, he spent two decades in Oxford in the field of research and teaching architects and urban designers.
- Subsequently, working internationally to either reduce disaster risk or manage the disaster recovery/ reconstruction process over the past 48 years.
- He has written, co-written, or been editor of over 20 books and is currently working with a group to define ways to reduce the root causes of disasters.
- Ian's work has often related to shelter and settlement with a particular concern for low-income safe housing.
- The basic concern of every architect is to innovate by developing new forms and using new technologies but he took the concept to a new level of planning for disasters.
- He also coined the concept of "*Form follows failure*". Most historians have described the sequence of architectural or planning developments as if they were solely a response to cultural, social, technological or economic, or more frequently aesthetic developments and constraints, without "learning from failure" which he focused on.
- He also fortified pre-disaster planning very extensively throughout the world.
- He encouraged architects to channel their energies away from designing buildings that society may not actually need to the vital concerns of pre and post disaster housing.
- The emphasis of his research is that it is possible to rebuild permanent as opposed to creating temporary houses in large urban areas rapidly by the occupants using their normal vernacular style but with technical advice on safety measures. ■

Ian's work has been recognised by receiving the Sasakawa Award. This is tremendous. But not enough. In any other sector of knowledge, he would have received far more recognition.

It was his ideas about risk, vulnerability and capacity that helped to refine the inchoate field of disaster risk reduction from a peripheral area of inquiry into a fully formed academic discipline. He mentored an entire generation of humanitarian workers striving to bridge the gap between risk and

resilience by listening to the at-risk and vulnerable. His ideas, knowledge and the networks he cultivated render great public service.

I feel profoundly grateful to have been given the opportunity to be mentored by him. Thank you for everything Ian. A lot to do. A lot.

As John Twigg said in his email to me. "It's a wide-ranging view of Ian's work and influence, and it captures his approach and beliefs well - as well as his humility and

generosity. Ian writes about standing on the shoulders of giants, but many of us are standing on his shoulders too." I agree with John Twigg.

AIDMI decided to devote an entire issue to Ian Davis for a variety of reasons that may become obvious from the following contributions. We asked Ian to suggest who should contribute in order to cover varied aspects of his career path and to introduce his friends. Their contributions follow in the sequence that Ian has outlined. ■

INTRODUCTION

Links between contributors and Ian Davis 1979-2020

by Ian Davis*

In 1979 a young Turkish architect **Yasemin Aysan** came to Oxford to undertake a PhD under the supervision of my colleague Paul Oliver. We shared an office and Yasemin and I jointly developed the work of Disaster Studies: (teaching/ research/ field study/joint writing/ organising conferences/ running short courses) within *Oxford Polytechnic* for a period of 14 years.

During those years we developed courses for mid-career personnel working in Disaster Management. Gradually these courses moved away from Oxford to be held in-country and a series of these workshops were held in Nicaragua, Mozambique, India, Bangladesh etc. with a Christian NGO called Tearfund and their national partner organisations. My colleague in leading these courses was **Mike Wall**, leader of *Tearfund's Relief Unit*.

Our disaster work left *Oxford Polytechnic* in the early 1990's to become the *Oxford Centre for Disaster Studies* (OCDS). One of our staff was a newly qualified architect, **David Sanderson**. He assisted in research, consultancies and in the leadership of Disaster Risk Management Courses in Zimbabwe, Peru, India, etc.

Our links with India were strengthened at that time through meeting **Vinod Sharma**, working with him in field-based research concerning Disaster Risk Reduction, Institutional Development and in Training Courses. In 1995 I met **Mihir Bhatt** when we were part of an International Commission studying recovery following the Japanese Kobe Earthquake. Later in 1996 Mihir and I were both participants in an evaluation of reconstruction in Maharashtra following the Kilara 1993 earthquake. Since then we have collaborated in field evaluations and in joint writing assignments with AIDMI.

In 2006 I was invited by **Rajib Shaw** to be a Visiting Professor in Kyoto University. This involved teaching research students and field study in Japanese towns and a tour of Vietnam concerned with community-based risk reduction.

In 1996 I became a Professor in the Disaster Preparedness Centre in *Cranfield University*. While there I supervised PhD research students including outstanding dissertations by a teacher from Iran - **Yasamin Izadkhan** and a geologist from

Ghana - **Titus Kuuyuor**. I left Cranfield in 2002 and was succeeded by **David Alexander**. In subsequent years we collaborated in writing including joint authorship of '*Recovery from Disaster*' in 2016. In 2020 we are collaborating in a project addressing the entrenched Root Causes of Disasters.

My work on shelter provision and post disaster recovery has continued throughout my career. In 2008 I met an Irish architect - **Maggie Stephenson** who also worked in these fields and a few years later we undertook joint work in Pakistan and Haiti as they recovered from massive earthquake devastation. We also worked together in international consultancies on shelter and settlements.

The final contribution is from **Nick Isbister**, a friend and training colleague spanning 35 years. His reflections relate to a book I wrote and illustrated: '*Experiencing Oxford*' (2020). ■

* Visiting Professor, Kyoto University, Japan; Lund University, Sweden and Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom and Honorary Visiting Professor; Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Europe

Standing on the shoulders of giants

by Ian Davis

First, sincere thanks to AIDMI for generously organizing this issue and to friends who have written such kind things about me. This is a humbling experience I certainly don't deserve. But I recall Groucho Marx's words on receiving an award: "I don't deserve this, but then I suffer from arthritis and I don't deserve that either!" He is also quoted with words that fit the present chaotic state of politics in the UK and the USA: "Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies."

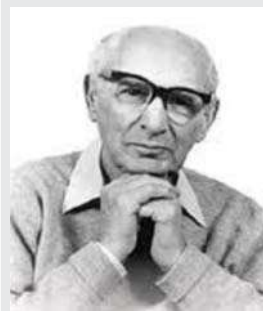


Ian Davis with Paul Oliver 2015. Paul was one of the four 'giants' referred to below.

I had better not digress down that route, so back to my topic. In 1159, John of Salisbury wrote a book called his 'Metalogicon', it contained a remarkable sentence that was repeated centuries later by Isaac Newton: 'If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.'

So, encouraged by this special issue it seems appropriate to think of a few 'giants' in relation to the work in which I have been engaged at various points in my career. I have

selected just four persons, but only have space for a key quotation from each with an example of their influence on my own thinking.



Otto Koenigsberger:
dependency or self-reliance?

"remember that relief is the enemy of recovery, so minimise relief to maximise recovery"

1978

- **Architect, Planner and world authority of low-income housing - (1908-1999)**

Otto, my long-suffering PhD supervisor for 12 years, always advised me when writing UN guidelines to be totally decisive. He suggested the use of words like 'must' rather 'may' and 'should' rather than 'could'. He claimed that over-cautious bureaucrats and politicians must never be given easy escape routes from making vital decisions.

Paul Oliver:
house or home?

"A town is made of buildings, but a community is made of people, a house is a structure but a home is much more. The distinctions are not trivial, nor are they sentimental or romantic: they are fundamental to the understanding of the difference between the provision of shelter which serves to protect and the creation of domestic environments that express the deep structures of society"

1978



- **Anthropologist. World authority on popular music and vernacular architecture (1927-2017)**

Paul, a close friend, inspiration and colleague for forty years had a great love and respect for poor, vulnerable people wherever he met them. He listened to their words, their music, studied their art and architecture to learn from them and shared this knowledge freely in wonderful recordings, drawings, books and lectures.



Henry Quarantelli:
recognise local capacities

*"When you arrive in Managua to study the earthquake you will become aware that there will have been a **massive over-estimate** of damage and dislocation, and an equally **massive underestimate** of local resources to cope with the situation."*
1973

- **Sociologist, Pioneer of Disaster Research- (1925-2017)**

I first met Henry in March 1973 en-route for Managua, following the earthquake of December 1972. I was embarking on PhD research into shelter following disasters. Despite the fact that I was a total ignoramus in the subject of disaster management, with endless patience and generosity he shared with me his knowledge, insights, files and library. It was an object lesson in mentoring I will never forget.

Fred Cuny:
horizontal or vertical management?

*"to improve the performance of intervenors the best approach is to reduce the **vertical linkages** that exist, and the volume of material, decisions etc. that move vertically; and increase the **horizontal linkages**. In effect to transfer the bulk of decision-making to the field and increase reliance upon services and materials that are already on-site and locally available"*



1978

- **Urban planner, leading expert in Disaster Shelter and Settlements - (1944-1995)**

In the late 1970's Fred worked with a team I led in developing UN Shelter Guidelines. He loved to be active in field operations and had an instinctive understanding of what worked in development practice. His passion to communicate safe building techniques to local builders was infectious and highly effective. He was tragically murdered in Chechnya in 1995.

I am deeply indebted for the friendship and rich insights that each of these four pioneers shared with me as a precious gift. Sadly, none of them are now alive but their memory, writings and wise sayings live on to inform and inspire me and so many others. I should say that there are many other giants who are very much 'alive and kicking!' They include the authors of the contributions to this issue and good friends and colleagues in AIDMI. I am immensely grateful for their contributions to my work.

All of us sit on the shoulders of giants, even if we are unaware of their powerful influence on our knowledge, attitudes or career paths. The modern cult, forever seeking new concepts, original ideas or innovative projects so often proves to be a myth. I realise after almost

50 years of work that most of my 'new' ideas are simply a re-hash of what has been written about many years back. So the messages from



Ian painting in New England USA with his wife Gill looking on and giving good advice.

remembering these four dear friends who became giants in my life is that we are not alone, we are connected and we are certainly not islands. We, and the formulation of our ideas are deeply dependent on others just as they are dependent on us. Probably the best metaphors are a lattice of inter-connected wire netting, or a relay race where batons are handed over in sequence to the next runner.

This reality has important implications: the need for mutual respect; the vital requirement for face to face education rather than being stuck in front of an impersonal computer screen; the value of teamwork and the need for a heavy dose of humility- to acknowledge our indebtedness to past writing, past knowledge, past insights and to our past giants. ■

Reflections...

by Yasemin Aysan*

A number of major disasters happened in the 70s, such as the Gediz and Lice earthquakes in Turkey, a mud slide in Peru, a Hurricane in Honduras, and a cyclone in Andhra Pradesh in India. This was a period when Ian Davis started working on his PhD on post disaster shelter, which in his own words was "an epic assignment that took all of 12 years to complete in University College London in 1985". He did not take a purely academic approach to his PhD and maximised his practical understanding of what happens after disasters by visiting various disaster sites. At the same time, he shared his accumulated knowledge from his research and visits with the NGOs and officials working in these places. His interest in sharing knowledge, disseminating experiences and learning from the locals still continues through his commitment to training and writing.

There were many by-products of his PhD research that were to make the information more practical and accessible to a wider audience. He compiled the original case studies for the UNDRO '*Shelter after Disaster: Guidelines for Assisting Groups*' (1982), that have been drawn on for the OCHA and IFRC supported 2nd edition (2015) with many new reflections from the decades in between. However, many of these case studies first appeared in print in Ian Davis' first book '*Shelter after Disaster*' (1978).

While all these other publications made major contributions to the area, I believe his 1978 publication has been the most influential in changing attitudes towards post-disaster shelter. I consulted a number of

colleagues in writing this piece, and they unanimously shared the same view. For example, until his book was accessible and also translated into Spanish there were hardly any practical examples on alternative approaches to post disaster shelter in disaster-prone regions. It shed a new light on the subject, it opened eyes to a developmental approach focussing on what affected people are able to do to help themselves and how they could be supported through training in safer construction and locally appropriate materials. This was in a climate where universally applicable emergency shelters and approaches were developed in certain industrialised countries, such as tents, pre-fabrication, or polyurethane units and contractor based reconstruction. Decades later alternative approaches disseminated by Ian grew into widely accepted trends in post-disaster shelter and reconstruction such as 'owner-driven' or 'building back better'.

Reducing disaster risks was another passion of Ian's, again when the dominant approach of the time was emergency management. Mainly through the Disaster Management Centre's (DMC, *Oxford Polytechnic*) training programmes many government officials from developing countries, NGOs and humanitarian workers were introduced to the concept of vulnerability and risk in a practical manner for the first time. The importance of the DMC was twofold. To introduce these mostly disaster management officials to a more developmental approach; and to provide non-academic, practical training to make knowledge accessible to the government officials

from disaster prone countries and humanitarian workers.

At the time there were only 3 non-academic, short courses available globally: Cranfield, UK and a military college that focussed more on disaster management, Intertect USA, a private institute managed by Fred Cuny, another eminent disaster guru at the time, and the DMC. Ian has always been a pioneer and a visionary as in the case of recognising the need for the DMC. Again, he quickly observed that a single attendance at a DMC course would not change decades of entrenched mind sets. He managed to convince the UK government, a faith-based NGO, *Tearfund* and others to take training to the disaster prone countries. He continued to support those who attended the DMC course in their own countries, with their governments, organisations and individually such as in the Philippines, Colombia, Caribbean and Pacific islands, LAC and Asia. These visits contributed not only to knowledge dissemination but also to institutional development of DM and DRM organisations. Of course there is now a huge proliferation of such trainings locally and globally and institutional development is a major subject in its own right.

A second book, that was again unanimously regarded as the most influential by all those I consulted, was '*At Risk: People's Vulnerability and Disasters*'. Ian was a co-author with Wisner, Blaikie and Cannon. Ian's key contribution through this book was the '*Disaster Crunch and Release Model*' that expressed graphically the dynamics and root causes of vulnerability to disasters,

and ways to reduce them. The model was then also applied to the case studies. This model would be disseminated in different training manuals and would later be known as the PAR model (Pressure and Release) that had acceptance worldwide.

Where do I fit in all this? I was rather accidentally lucky to find myself in the midst of such an incredibly pioneering and exciting period. I met Ian in 1979 when I received a one year scholarship to *Oxford Polytechnic* from the British Council towards my PhD on social and cultural aspects of vernacular architecture. I volunteered back in Turkey to a number of post disaster situations and also designed shelters in our course work at the architectural school. Vernacular architecture of the people resonated well with Ian's ideas on post disaster shelter and interested me. At the same time he was interested to know about the post-earthquake shelter and reconstruction in Turkey. I went

to Oxford to start a PhD and teach back at my University. Through Ian's support I gained a totally new career. When we had a military government in 1980 he gave me a part time job so I could stay on. For the next 14 years we worked very closely. He involved me in everything he did, teaching at the DMC and the faculty, several research projects, trainings in the field to name a few. I met many eminent people on the subject through him and they remained colleagues. I was a novice, but he trusted me to represent the Centre at many international meetings, research projects and in the field such as the North Yemen Earthquake and Pakistan floods. The experiences of working with Ian were extremely useful later in pursuing my international career.

His enthusiasm was and still is contagious. In writing this piece I once again realised how many lives, like mine, he touched and continues

to do so. Like myself he inspired many to have careers in this area. Many continue to inspire others, extending his legacy and contribution worldwide, like a ripple in water. This worldwide contribution to disaster prevention and reduction was crowned when he received the Sasakawa Award in 1996.

Apart from his most influential publications and professional achievements we all also agreed on Ian's courage to initiate a new, humane attitude and his inimitable sense of humour. He cares for people, feels for them which is a necessary quality needed to work with communities. His Christian commitment strengthens these qualities that he combined with his professionalism in his manual on '*Christian Perspectives on Disaster Management*', a wonderful document that highlights many biblical examples that can be replicated by other faiths as useful in working with communities.



St Mary's Church Radcliffe Square Oxford. Ink drawing by Ian Davis (2019).

Any writing on Ian is incomplete without mentioning his artistic side. His love of the English countryside, Oxford town and architecture painted in his watercolours were generously shared with his colleagues and friends. I am proud to be both and lucky to have received many cards over the years until the bug of online celebrations invaded the world! ■

* Turkey

Epilogue: I consulted a number of eminent colleagues in writing this piece who have known Ian and worked with him on many occasions. They are the three wonderful Colombians, namely **Juan Pablo Sarmiento, Gustavo Wilches-Chaux, and Omar Dario Cardona,** and **Joe Chung** from Fiji who made major contributions to the subject and continue to do so. They have been part of some of what I described above and not surprisingly our views overlapped.

Christian perspectives on disaster management

by Mike Wall*

I worked with Ian Davis, principally when I led the Relief Unit at *Tearfund*, from 1988-1997 on Disaster Management Training including publishing as joint editors the manual titled '*Christian Perspectives on Disaster Management*'.

From my own professional experience in Disaster Risk and Recovery Management, or from the education I personally received or led, I believe that future education and training needs of staff entering this field, or securing continual professional development, needs to take note of Ian's timely advice to avoid the 'talking teacher'. The trainer needs to be an embodiment of the message they are communicating and so the most powerful tool in training is the person of the trainer - not his or her words. The breadth and length of Ian's exposure to disaster situations was and is a powerful aid to increasing the impact of his training. He has always embodied the message he was communicating.

Too often we focus on getting our teaching material right whereas what we need to focus on more is keeping our experience up to date and continuing to practice empathy. It is not enough simply to visit the scene of a disaster. We need to be more than physically present, we also need to be emotionally and even spiritually present. This first-hand exposure to such situations not

only authenticates our training but it also deepens the impact of what we say.

On another point, I believe that a missed opportunity in disaster management training is the spiritual dimension. I recall visiting Nicaragua with Ian after a devastating hurricane had hit the West but not the East coast of the country. The Christians in the East told us that they had prayed and so that is why the hurricane did not reach them. On another occasion I visited the Philippines after the eruption of Mount Pinatubo and was told by a person in the local market that the volcano's devastation was a judgement from God because of the sex-workers serving the nearby US military base.

Whatever our opinion about these explanations we need to acknowledge that they were truly held by these local people who articulated them. In our '*Christian Perspectives on Disaster Management*' manual we sought to throw light on these deeply held beliefs and to understand how they impacted disaster management. I would like to say that this work on understanding the spiritual beliefs in a disaster context has moved on since we published that manual in the early 1990's but I am not sure it has moved on much further. This could be a challenge for any future researcher to take up.



Finally, after leaving the field of disaster management and moving into leadership training I would suggest that all future training in disaster management should include as a requirement an element of leadership training. When Ian and I led the Disaster Management workshop there were always what Ian termed 'Management Capsules' included in the teaching programme. These were short tips on key aspects of leadership such as time management and conflict resolution. I believe that there continues to be a need for more general management education and leadership training in any programme of disaster management training.

I hope these reflections are of assistance to those who are training the next generation of disaster management practitioners. ■

* Tearfund's Relief Unit, UK

Thank you...

by David Sanderson*

It was my pleasure, and privilege, to work for Ian Davis for four years, as a Project Manager at Ian's organization the *Oxford Centre for Disaster Studies*. In that time, Ian gave both myself and other colleagues the space to learn, and to make plenty of mistakes, while always guiding and supporting us. Ian's clever knack of framing statements as questions to which some years later it dawned on me he already knew the answers, provided an atmosphere that was supportive, generous and always constructive.

I learnt a million things from Ian (and continue to do so through his new writings), and so it is hard to remember them all. On one occasion, Ian took time to describe to me the cycle of disaster and the crunch models, which still stand today as simple and instructive ways of explaining disasters. On an early assessment visit to Peru, I called Ian up in the UK, worried and anxious about how to move forward. He calmly described to me some of the principles of what we were aiming for and all was okay.

It was while at OCDS that I worked with Ian on an urban risk reduction project in India, partnering with AIDMI, SEEDS and Professor V.K. Sharma from NCDM. On our first visit Ian calmly led the workshop, asking the questions that helped us unlock each step as we went. The eventual project led to a number of activities with each of the partners, and paved the way to numerous subsequent activities.

Ian has been behind many organisations and ideas that have become mainstream in the humanitarian landscape. One of these is the NGO *Tearfund* which Ian was closely involved in forming. While working for Ian, in 1995 we both travelled to Zimbabwe to lead a two-week workshop for Tear Fund's partners. Ian, armed with flipchart paper, a Polaroid camera (to photograph participants) and packets of marker pens was quite the sight!

Ian was of course seminal in forming understandings of what makes for good shelter after disaster. As an architect Ian wrote the first PhD thesis to specifically address shelter and settlements in disasters, which became the popular book '*Shelter after Disaster*'. At Oxford Brookes

University, the *Centre for Development and Emergency Practice* (CENDEP) began a course with this name, forming the first ever Post-Graduate Certificate in this subject. As CENDEP's director at that time, it was my privilege that Ian associated himself with this course, and also accepted a visiting professorship.

My own journey in humanitarian work was kicked off by Ian. As an architecture student in 1989, I applied to study at *Oxford Polytechnic* (as it was then called) in part because of Ian's reputation and work, and, while knowing next to nothing about what that kind of work involved, wanted to get involved. To those ends, while at *Oxford Poly*, I worked hard to 'get noticed' by Ian - knowing for instance that Ian might be walking along a corridor in the architecture school on more than one occasion I orchestrated to 'just happen' to be walking towards him, and would instigate some kind of conversation, however inane it no doubt was!

I am therefore very grateful to Ian. First and foremost to his towering contributions made in his chosen subjects - development, disasters, resilience, climate change, shelter, to name a few. It is also the way he has done it, with grace, humility and always with a supportive approach to those around him. Thank you Ian! ■

* Professor and Inaugural Judith Neilson Chair in Architecture, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia



Ian in Zimbabwe at the falls.

Friend, philosopher and guide

by Vinod K. Sharma*

In 1993, the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) organized the first Workshop on Disaster Preparedness supported by the UNDP and Govt. of India. The IIPA then established the National Centre for Disaster Management (NCDM) in 1995 with the assistance of Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India.

As I was instrumental in setting up of NCDM, I needed some guidance from some experienced person of this area. I met Dr. Ian Davis in Yokohama in 1994 very briefly and listened to his presentation. I was highly impressed with his knowledge and interest in the subject. I got an opportunity to meet him again in Oxford in 1995, when he was heading the 'Oxford Centre of Disaster Studies' (OCDS). He hosted me at Oxford and I had a very long interaction with him and his colleagues. He spoke at length about the concept of a National level



Ian Davis with Vinod K. Sharma.

centre and its importance to the nation in the years to come. He gave a blue print for this centre and offered me his unconditional support in my mission to set up a national level institution in Disaster Management. I learned the following five points from Ian, which are as follows-

1. **Disaster Management cannot be learned from books:**

His first lesson to me was that Disaster Management cannot be learnt through books. It can only be learnt if you visit the disaster site immediately after it happened and interact with various stakeholders, victims, local grass root level officers to the top decision makers. I followed his suggestion and got involved in documenting each and every big disaster after 1995 and involved Dr. Manu Gupta and Dr. Anshu Sharma (SEEDS India) in documentation of each important disaster event and lessons learned from these disasters. The Chamoli earthquake 1999, Orissa super cyclone 1999, Gujarat earthquake 2001 were the beginning of my learning about various aspects of Disaster Management.



2. Capacity building of various stake holders is the key for DRR in a nation:

Disaster Management is relevant for all and so every stakeholder should understand the various dimensions of Disaster Management. 'Community participation at each level is important' was the mantra that Ian taught me and this mantra became the key to my success in Sikkim. Now we are making Disaster Management Plans for the 'Gram-Panchayats' so that the lowermost link of governance is involved in DRR.

3. Research and Training should go hand in hand in Disaster Risk Reduction:

He always advocated that Disaster training contents should be prepared after training need analysis and research. In our joint project with OCDS, we did action research, studied two cities (Delhi and Ahmedabad) and used the research in making training modules. That was basic work on Urban Risk Reduction

done by OCDS, NCDM, SEEDS India and AIDMI, which is still referred to in urban risk research.

4. Disaster Education is a very important aspect of Disaster Preparedness:

Disaster education at various levels is required for long term disaster risk reduction, this is becoming a national policy. In Sikkim, the Hon'ble Chief Minister announced on 18 September 2018 that from the upcoming session, disaster education will be provided from the primary level to higher education. The state is preparing the syllabus and taking assistance from UNICEF and few NGOs like SEEDS India in fulfilling this commitment at state level.

5. Mainstreaming DRR in development:

Unless and until all concerned departments are involved in disaster preparedness, effective DRR is not possible. In developing countries, all development activities should

incorporate DRR in the project to have the 'resilient infrastructure.'

I am indebted to Dr. Ian Davis for the love, affection, guidance and encouragement that he generously showered on me whenever I needed it. Whenever, I got discouraged, he gave me examples of many other people and countries and asked me to continue my mission in India. Today, I can see that my little efforts in this area could make significant changes in the Indian Disaster Management system. I could do significant work in disaster preparedness, mitigation, linking disasters to development, reconstruction, rehabilitation and recovery in the state of Sikkim. The authorities of Sikkim have a vision to make Sikkim as a model state in DRR.

Thanks Ian for everything! ■

* Executive Vice Chairman at Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority, Indian Institute of Public Administration, Sikkim, India



In February 2017, Ian and Gill Davis visited Gujarat to learn about the work of AIDMI, to visit various rural development projects and to examine progress in recovery the Kutch earthquake of January 2001.

Ian's vision and concepts

by Rajib Shaw*



Ian in Hue, central Vietnam.

Like many others, my familiarity with Ian Davis was through his landmark book "At Risk". At the time, when the concept of disaster risk reduction was evolving, this book was the Bible, Quran, Gita for all of us!! I first met Ian in a conference in Geneva, followed by another conference in Delhi. After a couple of meetings and several hours of interactions, Ian invited me to assess a PhD thesis in Cranfield University. I had my first visit to Oxford during that time, and the most touching part was staying in Ian's house and having the rare opportunity of a full dinner by a British Cook (*Ian himself cooked a full dinner for me....*)!!! He also guided me in Oxford areas, and we had several hours on the street, restaurant and bar over 2 days, and we talked about different issues of UK, Japan and India, and the conversation continued.

As a follow-up, I invited Ian as a visiting professor in Kyoto University for six months. That was possibly the most intensive discussion I had with him on

academic aspects. I have asked all my graduate students to have individual sittings with Ian, and he had patiently listened to my 15 plus graduate students (from Japan as well as different overseas countries, mostly Asia) over a period of 3 to 4 weeks, and provided his deep insights, advice and suggestions on different aspects of disaster risk reduction research. We had an opportunity to make a joint field visit to Hue, Central Vietnam related to a project on community based climate change adaptation. Ian's deep insights and suggestions were very fruitful not only for us, but were also highly appreciated by our Vietnamese counterparts.

During his six months stay in Japan, he gave a series of lectures to our students, and delivered several public lectures in the university as well as to other agencies like JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), Kobe university, IRP (International Recovery Platform), etc. I was amazed with the vast variation as well as depth of his views on the subject, which, of

course, was a reflection of his deep experiences over several decades. Among all these, let me elaborate on his favorite topic of **disaster recovery**, which he described with *five concepts, five problems, six models and three conclusions*. To put a slide on this at the beginning of the presentation made it much easier for the non-native English speakers to follow his presentation and also enjoy it fully. The key five concepts were: 1) learning from experiences, 2) building resilience, 3) organizing recovery, 4) developing recovery strategies, and 5) Building back better. The six models he used were: 1) resilience graph, 2) the chain of safety, 3) resilient structures, 4) effective recovery organizations, 5) effective disaster cycle, and 6) building a safety culture. We now use "build back better" as the key pillar of the Sendai Framework. We also talk about cascading disaster and safety chain. We also discuss on resilient infrastructure, and promote the ongoing effort of coalition of disaster resilient infrastructures. However, Ian's lecture series was back in 2006-2007, when possibly many of these terms and concepts were not conceptualized and popularized.

In a nutshell, Ian is the source and inspiration to many of us. Many of the key concepts of disaster risk reduction which we are working on, were developed, conceptualized and proposed by Ian several years and decades ago. I convey my deepest respect to this great visionary. ■

* Professor, Kyoto University, Japan. Chair of the UN ISDR (UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction) Science Technology Advisory Group (STAG).

A tribute and admiration to a great teacher

by Dr. Yasamin Izadkhah*



Dr. Ian Davis with Dr. Yasamin Izadkhah.

How can knowing someone in your life change your career and life? Where am I to begin to honour someone who touched every aspect of my life? It has been so difficult to compose my thoughts and write a few words about Prof. Ian Davis. He is so great that words fail to describe him in a single page as supervisor, father figure, friend, colleague or advisor... Prof. Davis is indeed a pioneer in disaster research, well known to those professionals who have worked and researched in the area of disaster management for so long.

How did I get to know him? I was awarded a British Council scholarship in 2000 to attend a short course in the Refugee Studies Programme (RSP) in Oxford University. A colleague of mine in Iran advised me to find Ian while I was in Oxford, although I did not have any contact number of him. At that time, the information on websites was not as useful as today. I have to say that I found him by a miracle. One of my Christian friends asked me to join her in the church Sunday service. Out of curiosity, I accepted and as I was telling her that

I was looking for someone named Prof. Ian Davis, a man in our front row looked back at me and said...'Do you want his telephone number?' He was Mike Dobson, one of Ian's close friends. And that was it!

Well I got the chance to meet Ian in his home few days after my call when he returned from the World Conference on Earthquake Engineering in Auckland. From my first visit, I found him to be a very kind person who listened to me with care and interest. In less than a year, I was privileged to join the *Royal Military College of Science in Cranfield University* as a doctorate candidate with Ian's recommendation, since he was a Professor in this institution. Evidently, he had agreed to be my supervisor after he read my proposal. What an honour!

Over the three years of working closely with Ian, I gained more than a basic understanding of academic issues including disaster preparedness and education. Moreover, I learned from him, the values of life such as kindness, trust and honesty. Following his advice, I was able to undertake a post-doc. research project on the South-Asian Tsunami in 2006. These research projects we worked on together are among the most valuable papers I have published to date. Many opportunities arose because of his help, such as presenting my research in conferences around the world. The way he was concerned about my family while I was a long way from home, how he assisted me when I had an operation during my study in UK and even how he helped me

to sort out my personal problems, is still memorable.

In the meantime, I will definitely accept Ian's excuse for managing to leave the first three draft chapters of my PhD thesis in a plane on his trip to Barcelona... Although he should forgive me for chasing him in Vancouver buses when attending the World Conference (2004), begging him to read the final chapter of my thesis. How I wish I could go back to those days!

The memories I have with Ian are too many to count. In January 2020 I will have known Prof. Ian and his family for 20 years and I keep visiting him annually since I left the UK in 2006. In September 2008, I decided to cancel my trip to Germany and attend Ian's wedding with lovely Gill. I could not miss

that event. His 80th Birthday in 2017 in Oxford was another memorable time I had to be with him and family. I also had the pleasure to host Ian in Tehran twice in 2004 and 2008. We travelled to many Iranian historical cities including Shiraz, Yazd and Isfahan together. He enjoyed it very much. Well...he is an architect after all. He is also a visual artist and I have many of his drawing on my office wall.

I have confidence that every piece of Ian's remarkable work and his valuable contribution in the past 60 years will leave a footprint for present and future generations. He is a phenomenon indeed. The value of his mentorship is immeasurable. He can be called as '*Father of Disaster Management*', and a humanitarian worker. He is kind, humble, generous, sociable, and simple and

truly the embodiment of guidance and trust. I have now worked for 15 years in the disaster management and education sector in Iran and still go back to those fundamental theories, models and lessons I learned from Ian. I am sure his contribution and devotion to the disaster management sector will continue. To conclude, I would like to present my sense of appreciation for and indebtedness to Prof. Ian Davis who I will admire for the rest of my life. He will definitely stay as a true inspiration for me and many other disaster risk professionals forever. ■

* Associate Professor, Risk Management Research Center, and Director of Public and International Relations, International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIEES), Tehran, Iran



▲ Ian Davis with colleagues from a UNDP Delegation he was leading in 1993. The task was to decide of flood reconstruction measures in Anhui Province of the PR China.

◀ Ian Davis examining a model of Malkondji Village in 1996 to be reconstructed after the Killari Earthquake of 1993, India.

Reflection on a mentor, father figure and friend

by Titus Kuuyuur*

I first met Prof. Ian Davis in 1999 when I enrolled into the then Royal Military College of Science, Cranfield University, (now the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Cranfield University) to pursue a short course on disaster management. Ian's advice persuaded me to take up a Ph.D programme that I began two years later under his supervision into '*The Seismic protection of schools and hospitals in Accra, Ghana*'. Ian's insights and guidance on undertaking research - subsequently led me into a career within the United Nations in the humanitarian field. The focus of my work has been to contribute to the growing knowledge on disaster risk reduction and the development of national disaster resilience.

The notion of addressing the root causes of disasters through the use of the '*Crunch Model*' which Ian invented, has been widely used for many years and it still accurately depicts how disasters occur. He also taught me that vital recovery resources are easily made available as soon as a disaster strikes but they progressively decline over time as governments and donors lose interest and move on to new demands. Another of the lessons from working with Ian is that in the absence of disasters, it is hard for a country to secure funding for disaster preparedness, and mitigation. When Ian took me through the cost benefit analyses during disasters, I noted that it was not possible to put a price on life. Therefore, greater advocacy is needed to

mainstream risk reduction in order to shift the paradigm from responding to disasters to investing in preparedness and mitigation. Risk-informed planning was discussed at length in most of Ian's classes in Brookes and Cranfield Universities for over two decades, and today it has reached development organizations such as government and partners and has at last created a new path to mainstream disaster risk reduction into development programming.

Ian was not only interested in academic research and mentoring his

students, but he also took an interest in their social life. So, in 2014 I was privileged to invite Ian to Ghana to be my special guest of honor at the colorful traditional ceremony, where I married my wife Irene. His fatherly advice during the ceremony has impacted positively in my social life and career development. Painting is one of his hobbies, so he surprised me with a wedding gift of a beautiful painting of my office at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Cranfield University.

Ian has been instrumental throughout my fifteen-year career by serving as an example and mentor. In my career progression to become a Senior Resilience Advisor in UNDP, Ethiopia, Ian played a pivotal role in securing all the positions that I have held within the UN in several countries through the references he wrote on my behalf.

He has indeed shaped the lives of many young professionals including me in becoming an authority in disaster risk management, and for that I will forever be grateful to him. I end this piece by thanking Ian for being a devoted humanitarian worker who has actively mentored a generation of risk reduction professionals and touched us all with his kindness, wisdom and love. ■



Ian proposing the health of Titus and Irene, at their wedding in Accra, Ghana, 2014.

* Senior Resilience Advisor, Inclusive Growth & Sustainable Development Unit, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

A Davisian approach to shelter and reconstruction

by David Alexander*

In 1978, Ian Davis published a small, well-illustrated book titled *'Shelter after Disaster'* (Davis 1978). Although it was a modestly sized volume issued by a small institutional press, it soon became a widely sought-after item among the community of disaster scholars. It has remained so ever since. With illustrations and argument, Professor Davis systematically dispersed the aura of myth, misassumption and ineffectiveness that clung to the field of post-disaster shelter. Ian Davis is a person of considerable wisdom with an aptitude for listening. As a result, he was able to see the problem of shelter from the point of view of those who needed it, rather than merely from the viewpoint of those who provided it. By judicious use of examples drawn from all over the world, his book showed how the two perspectives so often failed to coincide.

My first encounter with the science and social science of disasters was in 1980, when neither branch was well developed. However, I was struck by the sudden realisation that disasters could be managed systematically, and that much of what happened in a disaster was predictable and could therefore be planned for. I was also aware that disasters are very easily misunderstood. Misconceptions tend to take root, nurtured by popular culture and persistent bad practice.

As an architect and humanitarian, Ian Davis has always been at the forefront of the fight to explode the myths associated with disasters and improve preparedness, response and recovery. He has a sharp eye for both the good and the bad of what goes on in the field. Since he is an



Ian Davis at Persepolis, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Islamic Republic of Iran, 2008.

architect by training, and by years of professional practice, his work is often profusely illustrated. It can be as visually exciting as it is intellectually stimulating.

From Ian, I learnt that disasters give us a peek into the inner workings of society. They reveal the good and the bad of human relationships and

endeavours. Ian can be swift to condemn: impractical shelters with inadequate design lives, installed in the wrong place, unwelcoming to their intended users, inappropriate to the local climate, lacking resistance to hazards, and culturally unacceptable. But he is also swift to give praise to sensitive, workable solutions to the shelter problem that

improve the lives of their occupants and survive the test of time.

One of Ian Davis's other concerns is a classic one for architects, namely the relationship between form and function in the context of disaster (which destroys the latter and thus engenders changes in the former). His 1983 paper on the topic is a classic and a tour de force of reasoning about the world's haphazard attitude to building safety (Davis 1983).

Over the period 2010-2015 Ian Davis and I wrote a book titled *'Recovery from Disaster'* (Davis and Alexander 2015). We managed to put together 20 principles, 21 models and 38 case histories, as well as a survey of the opinions on priorities in recovery given by 51 of the best experts in the field. Ian created and ran the survey. All the experts from this

field participated in this survey, which is a testimony to Ian's stature as the doyen of this field. Many of us look up to Ian as a role model, and this is in response both to his profound humanity and his extraordinary ability to think creatively and laterally. He and I filled our book with our best ideas, which involved not only much writing, but also a great deal of deliberation about power relationships, social issues, culture and disasters, and many more contextual matters.

At the same time as the recovery book was published, Ian brought out a second edition of his book on *'Shelter after Disaster'* (Davis et al. 2015), which was widely, and justly, celebrated. It further cemented his intellectual leadership. It is a testimony to Ian's stewardship of this field that post-disaster shelter

become so mainstreamed that it is now considered an indispensable part of disaster and recovery studies. ■

* Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction, University College London, UK

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Architecture as service

by Maggie Stephenson*

For over 50 years, Ian has used his skills as a communicator and his conviction as an activist fighting fake news. He has channelled science and evidence into the hands of politicians and policy makers through his involvement with national and international bodies, ranging from UN shelter guidelines in the 1970s and 1980s, to a decade on the UK National Committee of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) from 1991-1999, and participating in the 2008-2011 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the management of risks of extreme events and disasters to advance climate change adaptation (IPPC SREX).

Sustained engagement in policy making is often frustrating with no

guarantee of results. Many technical experts and academics are reluctant to invest their time due to the professional compromises involved or pressure to adopt political positions. But Ian has always been aware that the political is not optional or avoidable and not only the domain of elected officials or technocrats.

All of us, architects and planners, who design and construct housing and cities, or who work in disasters and development supporting shelter should be acutely conscious of the political choices we make and implications of our actions. Whether in the private or public sectors, academia or NGOs we should reflect on the power we wield, how we empower or disempower others and how we are accountable to society.

In his writing, teaching and advocacy, Ian emphasises the importance of defining guiding principles to help us navigate the political and ethical choices we face and to govern our individual and collective conduct. He discusses the values which underpin our societies and our obligations to learn from the successes and failures of our histories. He questions the hubris of those determined to (re)invent the wheel or who fail to question themselves and question others.

He is always ready with a quote or an anecdote, as he draws upon and directs us to the wise words of others, whether recently overheard or long since written.

His own words add to the canon of wisdom, including landmark texts



Ian Davis with Maggie Stephenson.

which shifted the course of disaster thinking and practice. The update and reissue in 2015 of *Shelter after Disaster* (1982) introducing new generations to the original source to draw new interpretations.

We are fortunate that Ian not only stands on the shoulders of giants of the 20th century literature on shelter, settlements and disasters, but worked closely with those giants personally as lifelong friends, mentors and collaborators, informed by and informing their work with his own.

How we live and how we live together, how we are shaped by and shape our environments and how we express our social structures and personal values through housing and settlements are themes throughout the pioneering work of Ian's friends-urban development planner Otto Konigsberger, sociologist Henry Quarantelli, architect John Turner and cultural polymath Paul Oliver-along with how to educate built environment professionals to make a fairer, safer and more sustainable world [See Ian's reflections on the influence of

his friends: 'Standing on the shoulders of giants' (page 5)].

Ian's great talent for friendship has helped develop important new syntheses, linking often separate fields together. Are we making those links today to ensure shelter after disaster continues to connect to anthropology and housing development policy or to link climate with settlements and livelihoods? Although our digital age presents us with unprecedented opportunities for communication and connections, many fields of study and many individuals seem to be increasingly specialised and isolated. It requires extra effort to communicate and build friendships, just as it does to engage with policy and politicians, but how far will we progress without these efforts?

Perhaps the greatest lessons we could learn from Ian apply to politicians, architects and students alike - to be curious, keep an open mind and embrace where it leads you but know and hold your principles and above all to empathise in order to learn the most valuable insights of all- why do people think

and do what they do and how might we be of greater service.

In October 2019, at the conclusion of a UK Shelter Forum, a number of Ian's friends expressed their thanks and good wishes following his decision to retire from teaching and writing about Shelter and Disaster issues.

I sent this message to be read out to the gathering:

"Ian, I know you like a quote, so here's one from Bob Dylan concerning Johnny Cash...

'Johnny (Cash) was and is the North Star; you could guide your ship by him....

I first met him in '62 or '63 and saw him a lot in those years. Not so much recently,

but in some kind of way he was with me more than people I see every day.'

Bob Dylan 2003.

"I'm no Bob Dylan, but you're definitely Johnny Cash or our North Star."

I don't just tell everyone to read your books, I try to imagine on an ongoing basis, what would Ian think or do? Ian would put ethics front and centre, puncture delusions with wit, proceed with warmth to encourage us and he would tell a very good story so we don't forget.

I never thought when I first read your books that I would have the chance to meet you, let alone work with you. But lucky me, I did, and learned 10 times more reasons to guide my ship by you.

Best wishes. ■

* Practitioner Architect, Ireland

Experiencing Oxford

By Ian Davis



In the final paragraph of Yasemin Aysan's generous tribute (*page 8*) she referred to my love of the city of Oxford where I have lived since 1971 as well as my watercolour paintings. During the past few years, as I reached my early 80's, I decided it was sensible to 'wind-down' my work in Disaster Risk Management since this was becoming increasingly difficult to keep up in reading the ever-expanding literature and extensive foreign travel was becoming less possible. This created a gap that I wanted to fill with unfinished business concerning both Oxford and watercolour painting!

In the 1990's, over a period of about five years I was asked by the editor of the Oxford University alumni journal - '*Oxford Today*' to write a

series of articles about my favourite places in Oxford, as well as to create paintings of Oxford University Colleges. I received some encouraging feedback with requests that I should put the articles and paintings together in a book about Oxford. So, for the past four years I have enjoyed writing about something other than Disaster Risk. I decided to focus my writing and painting on the way we experience towns, streets, buildings and the natural landscape through our various senses: touch, sound, smell, vision, movement as well through association and symbolism. This was all focussed on Oxford - my home city and the place I had used as a tool in teaching students. I also used to take students who attended Disaster Management Courses in

Oxford on short walking tours of Oxford as a welcome change from learning about floods and earthquakes.

Since some people prefer to *look* rather than *read*, I decided to create a highly visual book to include over 200 of my photographs and over a hundred paintings or drawings. Many of these were painted over the past three years specifically to illustrate matters raised in the book.

I have received some kind comments from some friends who read advance copies of the book. They included the following endorsement by Christina Hardyment, an Oxford based author, and book reviewer for one of Britain's leading newspapers: '*THE TIMES*':

"Experiencing Oxford is without doubt the most stimulating book about the city and its university that I have come across, a wonderful contribution to the plethora of Oxford guides. Davis has lived in Oxford for most of his life, used it as a tool to inspire generations of architecture students, painted and photographed it, and reflected deeply on its extraordinary sensory appeal. He knits ancient and modern into a multi-layered collage rich in historical, literary and visual reference that is guaranteed to shake up your thinking. It is a wonderful book, and the paintings are glorious."



Readers of this issue who would be interested in purchasing a copy of the book should go to the following website where there is a description of the book and instructions on how to obtain copies.

ianrobertdavis.com (on page 22 Nick Isbister describes how Ian came to write 'Experiencing Oxford') ■

I went to visit the fine art printers, Gutenberg Press in Malta in February 2020 for a final check of the proofs, prior to printing the 320 page book. 'Experiencing Oxford' was published in March 2020. ▲

The Oxford Skyline seen from South Parks which is just behind Oxford Brookes University where Ian Davis taught and researched Disaster Related subjects from 1972-2020. Ian painted this view which became the cover of this book in 2017. ▼



Experiencing Ian

by Dr. Nick Isbister*

Ceaseless curiosity. Indefatigable inquiry. Deep, deep compassion. 83 now, just a tad slower, just a bit harder of hearing than he used to be, but still with those penetrating eyes. 35 years, that's how long I've known him. Architect, lecturer, professor, pioneer, 'game-changer', Christian, husband, father, friend - roles he wears easily, facets of his remarkable polymath capabilities.

We met up recently to celebrate the publication of his latest book, *Experiencing Oxford*. The book is a tour de force, an astonishing record of the City, an incredible insight not only into the City itself but into the mind and interests and capabilities of Ian himself.

Observer, witness, draftsman, illustrator, historian, chronicler, photographer, art historian, painter, commentator, urban-theorist, writer, bricolage-maker, magpie, a 'gatherer, a snapper up of unconsidered trifles'. And, we might add 'husband', for the book is also testimony to the enduring impact of his beloved first wife, Judy - mother to his children and pioneering teacher of children with 'Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties'



Ian Davis with Nick Isbister.

(PMLD). It is to Judy that Ian attributes the insight that pervades the book, that 'experiencing' is a multi-faceted, multi-sensorial way of approaching life.

Architects and town-planners long to be great practitioners of what they call 'place-making'. Great place-making creates spaces, townscapes, landscapes that welcome people, delight them, give them experiences they remember, want to remember, want to repeat, send them on their way enhanced and enriched, foster

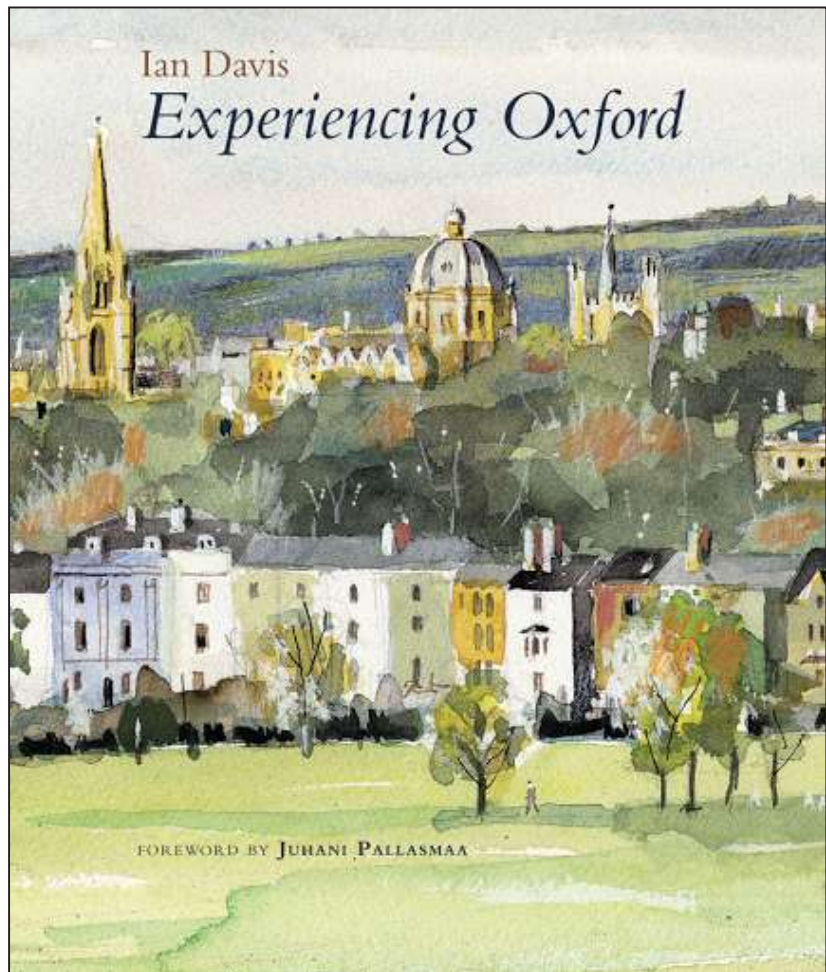
human flourishing. Ian knows this. Ian knows that to understand something thoroughly you have to merge with it and let it merge with you. Ian 'gets' Oxford. And he knows Oxford has that magic, or rather parts of Oxford have it in spades. This is how he describes Radcliffe Square, in the heart of Oxford University:

'There are very few urban environments in the world where sublime quality is universally recognised - complex urban dramas where



everything fits and actors perform to perfection. Accolades of total magnificence, splendour and harmony derive from the presence and interaction of a host of qualities: physical, environmental, social and aesthetic. These relate to buildings, urban spaces, building materials and details, ground surfaces, trees and planting and exuberant skylines. Such places delight the senses and they often contain symbolic references to offer meaning to their users. They contain vistas, balances, discords and surprises.' (p.103)

Oxford is a city that, at its best, has these glorious harmonies, discords, vistas and surprises. *Experiencing Oxford* is, like the City itself full of a similar plethora of glorious harmonies, discords, vistas and surprises. The book is testimony to the man too. Interlaced with the Oxford story Ian tells here, there is a profound personal story, Ian's story. Bishop Ian Ramsey, formerly Professor of the Philosophy of Religion in Oxford University, and founder in 1985 of Oxford University's Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion (IRC) used to say that all communication involves important elements of what he called 'human disclosure'. 'Experiencing Oxford' is all the richer for Ian's 'self-disclosures' throughout the text. Ramsey also said that if you want to know someone then look at their enthusiasms, for their enthusiasms (note the etymology '-en-theos' - 'God-filled') show so much about what matters to them. Ian's enthusiasms infuse this book. Ian's enthusiasms enrich this book. Ian's enthusiasms draw us into a deeper understanding of what life is, could be, and perhaps should be. As he says in the book:

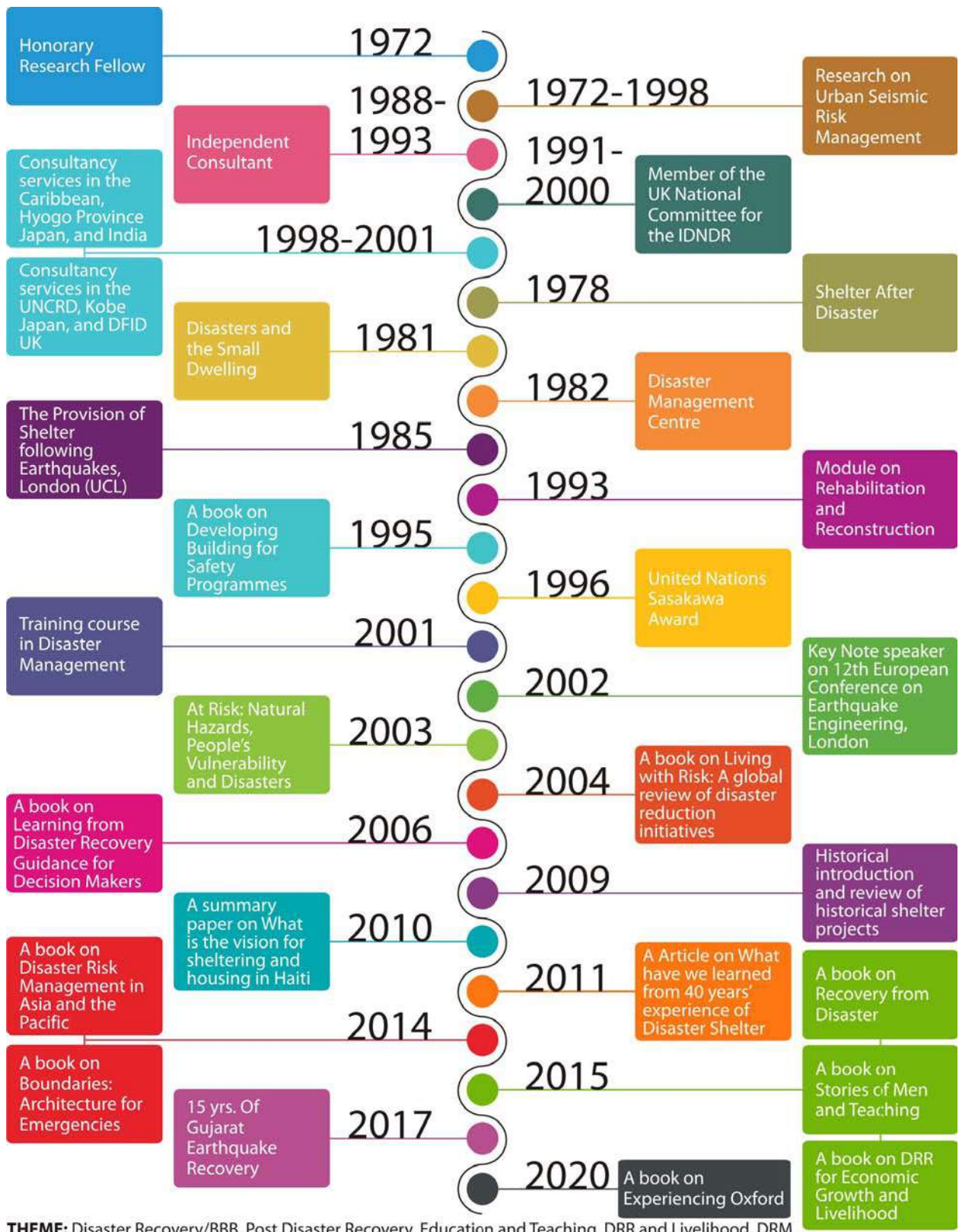


'Probably, we know instinctively that 'man does not live by bread alone', since few seem satisfied with a purely physical world confined to what we see, hear, smell, taste or touch. But the spiritual sense, and its role in society remains elusive, difficult to define yet immensely powerful. Expressions such as 'wellbeing', 'belonging', 'transcendence' or 'wholeness', may best describe the deep sense of harmony that we aspire to from the places we inhabit.' (p. 246)

Another Oxford man Christopher Wren, who's memorial in St Paul's Cathedral bears the motif "*Lector, si monumentum requiris, circumspice*" ("Reader, if you seek a monument, look about you" (see Page 22 for the inscription in Latin)). Reader, if you seek a monument to Ian immerse yourself in this book, dive in, steep yourself in its beautiful, rich pages, let its deep sensuality seduce you, let its idiosyncrasies amuse you, let's sheer humanity make you into a better human being.' ■

* Psychologist and Executive Coach.
Director of 'Listening Partnership'

Timeline



THEME: Disaster Recovery/BBB, Post Disaster Recovery, Education and Teaching, DRR and Livelihood, DRM, DRR and Architecture, Disaster Shelter, DRR, Disaster Mitigation, Disaster Management, Safer Housing

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