

# **Khacchad:Mule Participatory and Ethnographic Documentary Film**

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# Khacchad: Mule Participatory and Ethnographic Documentary Film

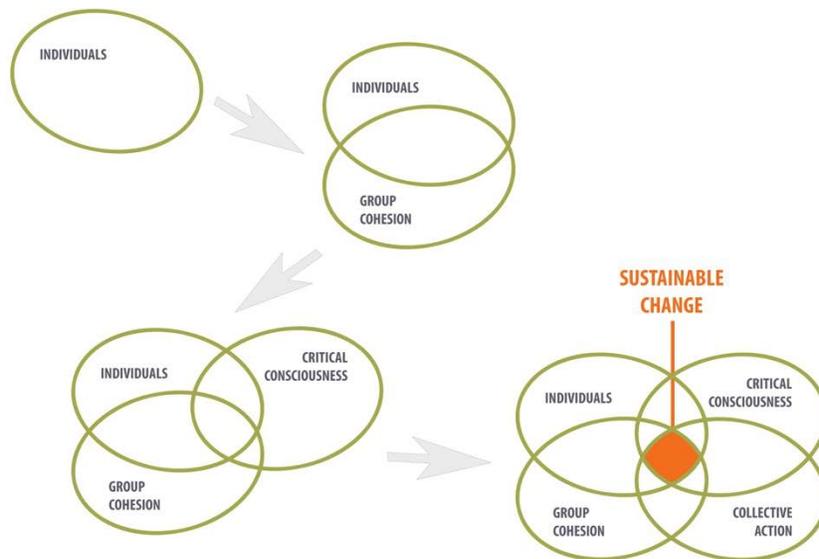
## 1.1 Abstract

For thousands of years, mules have been used by civilisations all around the world. Yet their contribution is often overlooked. In Nepal, over 100,000 equines are regularly used, pulling carts, labouring in brick factories and carrying goods into the high Himalayan mountains. Loved and cared for by many, but abused and exploited by others, their lives are full of adversity and danger. This 83-minute film emerged from research that asked ‘Can participatory and ethnographic filming making methodologies create positive changes to the health and wellbeing of Nepal’s working equines?’ It emerged from a partnership with The Donkey Sanctuary UK, The Donkey Sanctuary India and Animal Nepal, a Nepali NGO working for animal welfare. Supported by staff at Animal Nepal and The Donkey Sanctuary India, the researcher spent a year journeying and filming with the mules, engaging with the diverse communities through which the mules pass over the course of their lives; including breeders in Northern India, workers in the Kathmandu brick factories and porters in the Himalayan mountains. This was original research because the complete story of Nepal’s working mules had never before been documented as a complete story.



The filmmaking process involved an approach that integrated Investigative, Ethnographic and Participatory Filmmaking. These approaches are identified in the above diagram, towards the ‘Internal’ left of a spectrum that defines the proximity of the filmmaker to the subject and subjects. The research process used Paulo Freire’s ‘critical consciousness’ theoretical methodology in which participants contributed to the narrative within the film and the way they and their mules were portrayed. The participatory process and the final film acted as a mirror in which equine-handling communities reflected on their use of, and treatment of, their mules.

The participatory filmmaking process is summarised in the diagram below, in which 4 stages of community activity can lead to sustainable positive change.



Film screenings were held within participant communities with pre and post-screening focus groups using quantitative and qualitative data collection to measure changes in participant knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards their mules. This directly led to participants creating innovative community action plans for enhanced equine practices.

Specific actions for the enhancement of equine wellbeing that emerged from scrutiny of the final film by community members and Animal outreach teams included:

- Seed funding to support 'green fodder' micro businesses in the high mountains so that mules can have a more balanced diet. Green fodder is essential in reducing equine colic, a common condition in mountain mules that can be fatal.
- The building of permanent stables within the brick factory setting to house equines during their resting hours.

Ultimately, the film affected change in four key audiences; (1) within participating grassroots communities in Nepal leading to innovative community action plans enhancing equine wellbeing, (2) with government officials in Nepal to enhance policies to protect working equines, (3) with NGO veterinary outreach teams to develop better equine intervention programmes, and (4) to global audiences through film festivals and television broadcast, promoting wider awareness of working-equine issues.

The film was officially selected for screening in four film festivals in America and Europe, winning Best in Festival in the International Nature Without Borders Film Festival and a Silver Award for best Documentary Feature at the North American Film Awards. It was broadcast on satellite television across the South Asia region.

<https://vimeo.com/channels/marginalvoices/481743569> (Password: Mule)

## 1.2 Photographs of Filmmaker on location in Nepal



## 1.3 Film Poster

A BEAUTIFUL PORTRAIT OF NEPAL'S WORKING MULES AND THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE THEIR LIVING WITH THEM

**KHACCHAD  
MULE**

SILVER AWARD  
North American  
Film Awards  
2018

OFFICIAL SELECTION  
Travel FilmFest  
International  
Film Festival  
2019

OFFICIAL SELECTION  
S.O.F.A (Shout  
Out For Animals)  
Film Festival  
2020

OFFICIAL SELECTION  
Nature Without  
Borders  
International Film  
Festival  
2020

**A FILM BY MICHAEL BROWN**

Produced in Northern Ireland  
with the assistance of  
screen

MARGINAL VOICES

THE DOGNEY  
SANCTUARY

IN NEPAL OVER 100,000 EQUINES ARE REGULARLY PUT TO WORK IN BRICK FACTORIES  
AND CARRYING GOODS INTO THE HIGH HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS. THIS IS THEIR STORY.

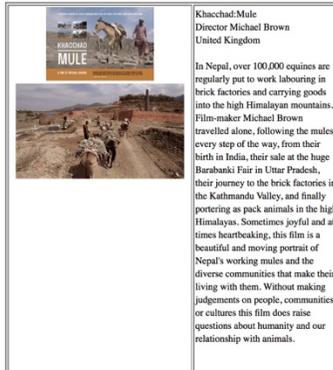
RUNNING TIME: 83 MINUTES

## 1.4 Film Festival Awards



Fall 2020 WINNERS

### BEST OF FESTIVAL Narrative Feature Film Centered on: Animal, nature or environment



## 1.5 Live Screening and Panel Discussion

Live online screening and panel discussion – December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Zoom.

International audiences were reached through the screening and panel discussion featuring the filmmaker, a film theorist, an animal law expert, an equine veterinarian and an equine community engagement consultant.

Liverpool Screen School  
presents an  
**online film screening** of the  
**international award  
winning film**

followed by a Q and A  
about the film-making process and the  
issues the film raises, with panel members:

Dr Emma Roberts (LJMU, Associate Dean for Global Engagement)  
Dr Michael Brown (LJMU, the Film Maker)  
Dr Simon Brooman (LJMU, Animal Law and Ethics)  
Dr Keith Marley (LJMU, Film Theorist)  
Luke Edwards (University of Liverpool, Equine Veterinarian)  
Julia Smith (Equine Community Engagement Practitioner)

Thursday December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, 7.30 - 10pm  
Free tickets should be pre-booked through Eventbrite:  
<https://tinyurl.com/y4adz7hj>

LIVERPOOL  
JOHN MOORES  
UNIVERSITY



## 1.6 Community Change Measurement Tools

The primary audiences for the participatory film are the equine-owning communities who took part in the project. Qualitative and quantitative measurement tools were developed to assess changes in subject's knowledge, attitudes and behaviours as a result of watching their film.

### Pre and Post Film Screening Questions for Equine Owners and Handlers

**Aim:**

To explore changes in the equine owners/handlers' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards their mules.

**Respondent Name:**

**Location:**

Owner only	Owner and Handler	Handler only

Tick appropriate box

### Development of Community Action Plans By Equine Owners and Handlers

**Aim:**

To facilitate equine owners and handlers to collectively develop and implement Action Plans to improve the health and wellbeing of their equines, using the 5 Freedoms as a guide.

**The 5 Freedoms of Animal Wellbeing Are:**

1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst
2. Freedom from discomfort
3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease
4. Freedom from fear and distress
5. Freedom to express normal behaviour