
Guest editorial: Emerging voices and pathways to inclusive disaster studies

Guest editorial

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This special issue features early career researchers (ECRs) in disaster studies. Its aim is to explore different pathways to make this academic field more inclusive. It consists of two volumes. The first volume was published in April 2022. That volume presented papers by ECRs that explore reflective and inclusive research methodologies, provide careful reflections on research positionality, and/or apply progressive theoretical frameworks to the study and communication of hazards and disasters. In this issue, we present papers by ECRs who aim to platform the voices of disaster-affected people in their research. In the editorial of our first volume, we discussed how academic publishing can be made more inclusive (Elaferi *et al.*, 2022). As such, after an overview of the papers in this volume, we conclude this editorial with a critical reflection on how inclusive our special issue has turned out to be.

The seven papers in the present volume address key insights from the Disaster Studies Manifesto [1]. They highlight the importance of ensuring that disaster studies are informed by local realities and explore how to develop respectful, reciprocal and genuine relationships between “local” and “external” researchers in disaster studies. The authors discuss the role that research and educational settings could play in enabling local researchers and young people to contribute to locally relevant disaster research. They explore ways of co-researching with people at risk of disasters and show how cross-country perspectives could be used to foster research that platforms the voices of disaster-affected people.

Focusing on academia, Manomita Das discusses the barriers local researchers face when it comes to conducting locally relevant disaster research. Sneha Krishnan, Robert Soden, Bhen Aguihon, Rongkun Liu and Pradip Khatiwada present reflections on the value of setting up academic support groups for inclusive and participatory ways of working. Exploring how educational settings could be used to foster more inclusive disaster practices, Miguel Angel Trejo-Rangel, Adriano Mota Ferreira, Victor Marchezini, Daniel Andres Rodriguez, Daniel Messias dos Santos and Melissa Oliveir show the potential of participatory mapping for involving graduate and high school students in disaster risk reduction (DRR) planning. Revathi Nuggehalli Krishna, Caroline Spencer, Kevin Ronan and Eva Alisic show how participatory methods can be used to co-develop DRR initiatives with children in informal settlements in Chennai.

Also focusing on practice, Abner Lawangen describes his use of two indigenous community-engagement strategies to analyze how communities perceive the role of rural cooperatives in DRR and management. Chrysant Lily Kusumowardoyo and Husna Yuni Wulansari discuss the opportunities and challenges of conducting co-research with people with disability (PWD) in humanitarian programming. Pradytia Pertiwi also focuses on disability-inclusive disaster management practices. Her paper explores how PWD organizations try to overcome systemically-rooted challenges in mainstream DRR initiatives. In sum, the ECRs featured in this paper explore a number of different pathways to inclusive disaster studies.

In both volumes of this special issue focused on ECRs, our main aim has been to platform emerging voices. Thus, it makes sense to conclude this editorial with a reflection on our own practices and to question how we could have been more inclusive ourselves. As we argued in the first volume of this special issue (Elaferi *et al.*, 2022), we aimed to publish the works of ECRs as they are uniquely positioned to challenge established practices and foster research



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innovations. We also encouraged those studying disasters as local insiders, especially from low-income countries, to submit their work. In line with the Disaster Studies Manifesto, we believe that research informed by local realities and local knowledge has potentially a larger impact on both practice and scholarship. However, despite our efforts, we have not been fully able to reach the level of author diversity that we originally had in mind. Although we have included authors who reflect on local realities that they are familiar with, most are affiliated with institutions in high-income countries, such as the United Kingdom and Australia (Figure 1). The Africa-based authors we had short-listed unfortunately dropped out of the process.

This output inspires many valuable reflections. While our call for abstracts specified that we would offer language support, we only received abstracts in English and Spanish. We now ask ourselves if we should have published our call in other languages. We ended up rejecting approximately 70% of the abstracts we received based on our evaluation on how well they addressed the call. Perhaps we should have used different criteria and processes for selection, such as inviting authors for a discussion. Furthermore, the mentors who volunteered to provide guidance to the authors for the special issue are highly reputable scholars who are all well established in disaster studies. As such, they may have judged the work of the authors on the basis of criteria that may have influenced their own careers. Moreover, looking at ourselves as a team of editors, we question our own role as gatekeepers: Should a special issue about inclusivity be led by four scholars from privileged institutions?

Like the cross-country academic support group discussed by Krishnan *et al.* in this volume or the conversation presented by Goodall *et al.* (2021), we regularly discussed different perspectives on inclusivity. We learned a lot from the contributing authors, the feedback from the mentors and reviewers and the editors of Disaster Prevention and Management. Being guest-editors for this special issue was an experience akin to conducting co-research in a

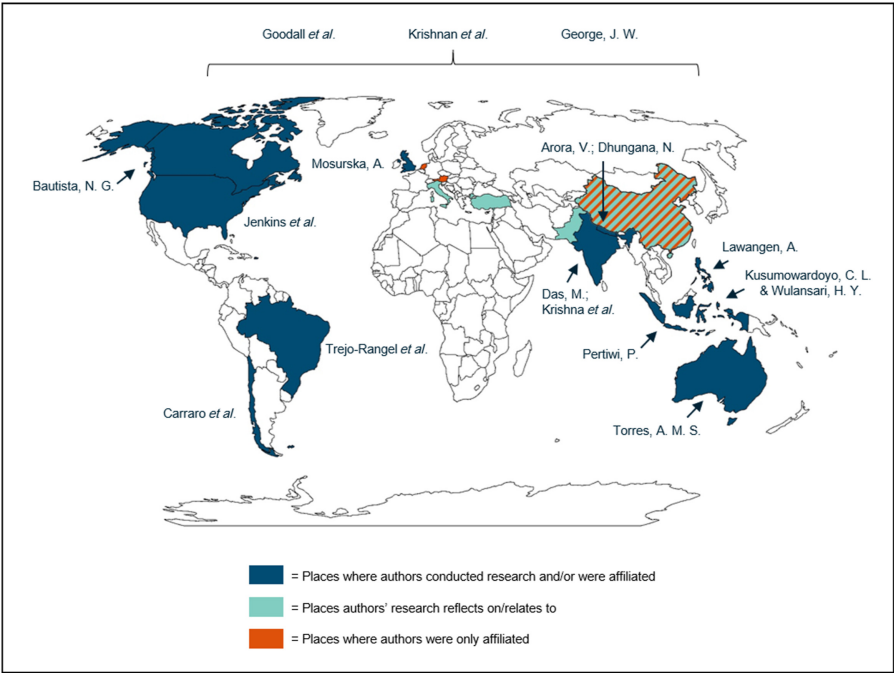


Figure 1.
Geographical
distribution of authors'
affiliations and
research foci

participatory and interdisciplinary manner. For this special issue, we worked with bachelors, masters, PhD students and postdocs who shared their fresh views on inclusivity in disaster studies. In hindsight, we believe that our special issue would have been more inclusive if we had adopted some of the insights provided by them, such as involving co-editors from low-income countries and organizing our publication criteria around local realities. The contributing authors show that there is not necessarily “one best way” to be more inclusive. Instead, they show the value of being self-reflective and seizing opportunities to do things differently, over and over again. We hope that this special issue will inspire ECRs to take disaster studies forward towards more inclusive research and publishing practices.

Collective of early career researchers - Eelaferi

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Note

1. Power, Prestige and Forgotten Values: A Disaster Studies Manifesto, <https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/power-prestige-forgottenvalues-a-disaster> (accessed 12 August 2021).

References

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