



Disaster Risk Science Institute



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From the Director's Desk

This year has been in many ways a horrendous year for Australia, with devastating bushfires, followed by the still current pandemic. Between these two, Canberra, and ANU in particular, were also hit by large hailstorm that caused widespread damage throughout the campus.

The Institute has continued apace despite the challenging environment; with bushfire smoke closing the campus for two weeks in January, working from a hailstorm damaged campus in February and transferring activities online and working from home in March.

In the first week of March we hosted Prof Matthias Garschagen from the Ludwig Maximilian's University in Munich for our inaugural Distinguished Lecture Program. The first meeting of our external Advisory Board took place on the 4th of March—just before social distancing restrictions took off.

We've also made some changes to the Institute itself; simplifying and streamlining the name—from the Institute for Integrated Research on Disaster Risk Science to the Disaster Risk Science Institute. From now on, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all of our activities will continue online. This will be facilitated by our new website: <https://drsi.anu.edu.au>.

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DRSI Newsletter
March 2020

Susan L Cutter Seminar Series

This year we had one 'traditional' seminar; on the 20th of February, Dr Meru Sheel gave a rather topical and thorough overview of multi-sector health responses during natural disasters. Her talk *Public health emergencies during natural disasters: opportunities for operational response and research*, compared two case studies from Cyclone Winston in Fiji and Hurricane Maria in Dominica, highlighting operational research opportunities to strengthen the response and recovery to natural disasters.

Please note: The Susan L Cutter seminars are continuing during the pandemic, being conducted online through Zoom.



Distinguished Lecture Program

Prof Garschagen's opening Distinguished Lecture: *Urbanization: Driver of Disaster Risk or Opportunity for Climate Resilience?* was presented on the 2nd of March 2020. It posed a number of challenging questions around assessing the future trends of urban risk, evaluating adaptation needs and options, determining when fundamental transformations in risk reduction efforts will be needed and hypothesizing how these transformations can be governed in a culturally acceptable manner.

On the 3rd of March, Prof Garschagen ran a very successful and interactive workshop for the Institute's postgraduate students focusing on the science-policy interface, using his experiences at the IPCC and the United Nations University.

This workshop was followed by a public lecture where Prof Garschagen presented the findings from the 2019 Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate.

Prof Garschagen's visit opened up many possibilities for collaboration and research

partnerships for the Institute, specifically around the methods and approaches of measuring and evaluating vulnerability, as well as developing metrics for comparing different options to address those vulnerabilities. Opportunities for postgraduates were also discussed.

The Institute is keen to further develop these possibilities with our international partners. Members and affiliates interested in these collaborations, should get in touch with Dr Anna Lukasiewicz.



PROFILE: Introducing Dr Thong Anh Tran



Dr. Thong Anh Tran is a research fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. He is also a visiting fellow at Fenner School of Environment and Society, College of Science, the Australian National University.

His research focuses on (transboundary) environmental governance, human-environment interactions, 'state-society' relations, rural livelihoods, and adaptation to environmental risks associated with floods and salinity in the Mekong Delta.

Currently, he is involved in the research project titled "Sustainable Governance of Transboundary Environmental Commons in Southeast Asia", examining hydropower dam development and transboundary environmental implications for riparian livelihoods downstream in the Mekong region.



Research in Focus: Aboriginal peoples and the response to the 2019-2020 bushfires

Recently published research demonstrates that Aboriginal people were among those most affected by the 2019–2020 bushfires in south-eastern Australia. However, apart from a renewed public interest in cultural burning practices, Aboriginal people have received little attention in the post-bushfire response.

A working paper written by PhD Candidate, Mr Bhiemie Williamson and Research Fellow Francis Markham from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, along with co-author Dr Jessica Weir from the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University describes the population geography of Aboriginal peoples affected by the 2019–2020 bushfire season in New South Wales and Victoria, and the nature of Aboriginal legal rights and interests in land across these states.

The research has found that over 84 000 Indigenous people, or one-quarter of the Indigenous population of NSW and Victoria, live in the bushfire-affected area.

While Indigenous people comprise nearly 5.4% of the 1.55 million people living in fire-affected areas, they are only 2.3% of the

total population of NSW and Victoria. Furthermore, Indigenous people in the bushfire-affected area have younger population profiles, more than one-tenth of children in the bushfire-affected area are Indigenous, raising the diverse effects of bushfires on infants and children in particular. Aboriginal people also have a variety of distinct and spatially extensive legal rights and interests in land as First Peoples, including across much of the fire-affected area.

Their paper argues that the response to the 2019–2020 bushfires must be different. The erasure of Aboriginal people in previous bushfire disaster responses must be acknowledged, adequate Aboriginal representation on relevant government committees involved in decision-making must be ensured and Aboriginal people's voices and understanding of bushfires need to be heard.

Their paper is available at the CAEPR website:

<https://caepr.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/working-papers>

Upcoming Events

The Susan L Cutter Seminar Series

22nd April 2020

Knowledge networks: fast-track pathways to research impact in natural hazards research

Dr John Bates from the Bushfires & Natural Hazards CRC

Dr John Bates is the Research Director of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre. Dr Bates joined CRC as Research Director in 2017, where he is responsible for managing the CRC's research and utilisation program. Prior to joining the CRC, he was the founding Director of the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience.

29th April 2020

Emergency management in Australia: comparing bushfires and Covid-19

Emeritus Prof John Handmer

Em Prof John Handmer is Senior Science Adviser in Risk at IIASA, an Emeritus Professor with the RMIT School of Science, an Honorary Professorial Fellow with Geography, University of Melbourne, and a Fellow of the Australian Social Science Academy. He works with the Australian Bushfire & Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre. He has also held positions at the Australian National University and at the Flood Hazard Research Centre, Middlesex University (London). He chairs the Scientific Committee of the Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR) Program of ISC (International Council of Science and the UNDRR), and has recently been on a number of Australian advisory bodies.



Publications of Interest

Ballard, C., Calandra, M. and McDonnell, S. (2020) (eds) Confronting the Naturalness of Disaster in the Pacific. Special Issue of Anthropological Forum 29

Ballard, C. (2020). 'The lizard in the volcano: narratives of the Kuwae eruption.' In Eveline Dürr, Philipp Schorch and Sina Emde (eds) Experiencing Pacific Environments: Pasts, Presents, Futures. Special Issue of The Contemporary Pacific 32(1): 98-123

Chatelard, G. and Ballard, C. (2019). Defining Methodological Guidance for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Emergencies. LHE/EXP/19/2. Report for the UNESCO Expert Meeting on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Emergencies. Paris: UNESCO Living Heritage Entity, https://ich.unesco.org/en/events?meeting_id=00718

Kamruzzaman, M., Daniell, K. A., Chowdhury, A., Crimp, S., & James, H. (2020). How can agricultural extension and rural advisory services support agricultural innovation to adapt to climate change in the agriculture sector? *Advancements in Agricultural Development*, 1 (1), 48-62, <http://agdevresearch.org/index.php/aad/article/view/9>

May, D. (2020). To burn or not to burn is not the question. *Inside Story*, <https://insidestory.org.au/to-burn-or-not-to-burn-is-not-the-question/>

McDonnell, S. (2019). Other Dark Sides of Resilience: Politics and Power in Community-Based Efforts to Strengthen Resilience, *Anthropological Forum*, DOI: 10.1080/00664677.2019.1647828

Upcoming Events

The Distinguished Lecture Program

Our next Distinguished Lecture will be delivered by Prof Susan L. Cutter, who will be 'visiting' us (online) in July this year.

Dr. Susan Cutter is a Carolina Distinguished Professor of Geography at the University of South Carolina and director of the Hazards and Vulnerability Research Institute and the IRDR Center of Excellence on Vulnerability and Resilience Metrics. She has authored or edited 15 books, 150+ plus peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, and mentored more than 60 masters and doctoral candidates. Her research focusses on vulnerability and resilience science with specific reference to methods, models, and metrics. Her scientific contributions include the hazards of place model of vulnerability, the disaster resilience of place model, as well as tools for assessing spatial and temporal variability in vulnerability (the Social Vulnerability Index or SoVI®) and the Baseline Resilience Indicators for Communities (BRIC) Index.

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