

# ‘Taking a stand in island studies: Challenging processes of exclusion, appropriation, and displacement’, a special section of *Island Studies Journal*, 18(2), November 2023

Guest Editors: Adam Grydehøj, Ping Su, Yaso Nadarajah, Elena Burgos Martinez

From its inception as a distinct field, island studies has positioned itself as a challenge to taken-for-granted and outsider-dominated narratives of islandness. The founding editor of *Island Studies Journal*, Godfrey Baldacchino (2008, p. 37), nevertheless rightly cautioned against island studies contenting itself with being the study *of* islands or *for* islands, arguing that island studies must also be “a pursuit *by* islands/islanders, or *with* them.”

In their call for ‘Critical reflexivity and decolonial methodology in island studies: Interrogating the scholar within’, Nadarajah et al. (2022) suggest that the problem is not just a failure to ‘include’ ‘islanders’. Island studies is deeply implicated in processes of tokenism and forced inclusions, denial and circumscription of expertise, and onto-epistemological discrimination and hegemony. Diverse island cultures, peoples, and experiences get bundled together into the problematic category of ‘non-Western’, and their ideas and experiences are converted into academic capital within the professional and financial frameworks of globalised academia. Many researchers who have been pushed to the margins of academia on grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or other factors bound up in systematic injustices find themselves punished for failure to conform with the body of theory developed by their oppressors or former colonisers or encouraged to compromise on their own values and perspectives. Indigenous conceptions of islands and island lives are frequently overlooked or twisted to fit pre-existing Western conceptions of what ‘islandness’ ought to be. Others, researching from outside Western contexts, find their scope of recognised expertise strongly circumscribed, with a tendency for the island studies mainstream to convert them into ‘mere’ activists, poets, or mouthpieces for Western theory—into anything but legitimate scholars in their own right. For its part, tokenism contributes to efforts to create an illusorily ‘colour-blind’ island studies, which uncritically prioritises equality and inclusivity without acknowledging the continuing effects of coloniality.

This special section on ‘Taking a stand in island studies’ seeks to build upon Nadarajah et al.’s (2022) argument that it is important for researchers to recognise their own positioning within academia as well as to acknowledge epistemic plurality and the diversity of perspectives on islands. We encourage the submission of papers concerning:

- Processes by which underrepresented scholars are excluded from island studies, have their expertise erased, or have their ideas deployed in the service of dominant theories and concepts
- Island studies’ place in wider academic and societal processes of colonialism, discrimination, or domination
- Critical reflections on islander and researcher agency within island studies, including autoethnographic approaches
- Critiques of established research traditions and representations of islands

- Discussions of pluralities of knowledges and experiences within island societies as well as practical applications of these knowledges and experiences.

This special section will be published in November 2023 in *Island Studies Journal* (*ISJ*, <https://islandstudiesjournal.org>), but individual papers will be published online ahead of print as and when they complete the peer review and editorial process. *ISJ* is a web-based, freely downloadable, open access, peer reviewed journal that publishes papers advancing and critiquing the study of issues affecting or involving islands. It is listed and abstracted in Scopus and Web of Science (Social Science Citation Index).

For further information or if you are interested in submitting a paper, contact: Adam Grydehøj ([agrydehoj@islanddynamics.org](mailto:agrydehoj@islanddynamics.org)) or another of the special section coeditors. Manuscripts should be between 5,000 and 10,000 words must be prepared in accordance with the *ISJ* submission guidelines: <https://islandstudiesjournal.org/guidelines/>.

The deadline for final submission is 30 November 2022. All papers will be subject to peer review. Submissions take place through *ISJ*'s ordinary online submission system, and authors should make sure to enter the name of the special section 'Taking a stand in island studies' in the appropriate place in the submission form. Authors are strongly encouraged to read Nadarajah et al.'s (2022) editorial introduction prior to writing their paper.

## References

- Baldacchino, G. (2008). Studying Islands: On Whose Terms? Some Epistemological and Methodological Challenges to the Pursuit of Island Studies. *Island Studies Journal*, 3(1), 37-56.
- Nadarajah, Y., Burgos Martinez, E., Su, P., & Grydehøj, A. (2022). Critical reflexivity and decolonial methodology in island studies: Interrogating the scholar within. *Island Studies Journal*, 17(1). Epub ahead of print. <https://doi.org/10.24043/isj.380>