

EDITORIAL

Interdisciplinary Disability Research in the Time of a Pandemic

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Over the last few years, the *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* (SJDR) has continued to publish high-quality and innovative research articles, contributing to the interdisciplinary field of disability research. This editorial briefly reflects on some of the work the editors have pursued over this time and plans going forward.

The editorial team is currently being renewed as two editors come to the end of their term in the role. Janice McLaughlin and Hisayo Katsui have been working as editors for SJDR for five very productive years. The two new editors replacing them are Merja Tarvainen from the University of Eastern Finland and Stephen Macdonald from Sunderland University; they will work together with Karin Ljuslinder and Chief Editor Inger Marie Lid and editorial assistant Eero Saukkonen.

We publish approximately 30 open access articles per year. Funding by the Joint Committee for Nordic research councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences, NOP-HS Scientific Journal Grant and the Nordic Network of Disability Research (NNDR) means that authors without access to publication funds do not have to pay Author Processing Charges (APC). Many of the articles are based on empirical research but also make theoretical contributions through their reflections on their findings. More recently we have published several articles on access to higher education and plan for this to continue. The rights of students with disabilities to education is an important area for further research investigation. We have also published more articles discussing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and 2021 marks 15 years since the CRPD was launched by the UN in 2006. This anniversary reminds us that much more research is needed on its implementation to consider whether its existence is actually leading to change in the lives of people with disabilities.

One key innovation in the last year has been the publication of special sections on key topics in disability research. Our first two are: *Crippling Time* and *Disability in the Global South*. *Crippling Time* was published in 2020 and draws from ideas emerging in critical disability studies to consider how normative conceptions of time shape daily life in ways that problematically position people with disabilities as unproductive. *Disability in the Global South* was published in the summer 2021 and explores the rich methodologies emerging from Global South scholars and research practices. Increasing the presence of new researchers, topics, and perspectives, particularly from outside the Global North, is a key commitment going forward. Our next special issue picks up on the need to explore the significance of the CRPD and will explore questions such as: What is the implementation status of the convention in different political and social contexts? Are there barriers to implementation and what new knowledge and approaches are needed to ensure greater progress? The CRPD is comprehensive, specific, and challenging and has aspects that requires critical exploration through both empirical studies and theoretical perspectives. We aim for the special section to be a venue where such vital work is brought together. A call for abstracts will be launched in 2021.

The pandemic we have been living with since winter 2020 has been experienced differently by different researchers and students living in different contexts and with different needs. Some have found more time to do research, others less, due to more teaching and supervising, as well as family responsibilities and the challenges the pandemic has created for people with disabilities. Researchers and students have lost access to the empirical field, due to the lockdowns in different countries; at the same time research innovations have developed in response, some of which – though not all – have enhanced the opportunities for researchers and participants with disabilities. The situation remains critical and challenges disability research in the future to explore the consequences of the pandemic for people with disabilities, researchers, and their families.

As the Lancaster Disability Studies conference and the NNDR conference are further postponed to 2022 and 2023, many researchers have lost a regular forum to exchange ideas and work together as a community. This was the reason why SJDR, together with the NNDR Board and the new *International Journal of Disability and Social Justice*, invited PhD students to an online event on March 24th this year. The event was attended by more than 70 participants, most of them PhD students, while several key scholars in disability studies took part in the event as reviewers and chairs.

Unfortunately there were significant issues with the accessibility of the online event. In particular, despite a participant requesting closed captions, this was not provided. We are very sorry for what happened and have looked into things further to ensure it does not happen again. We will make sure that automatic captioning is available at future events and commit to dealing more responsively with requests from participants. We are creating guidance for future events on what we will provide as a minimum and processes for requesting additional support. This will clarify what our responsibilities are when arranging online events in the future while remaining attuned to changes in technological possibilities and alternative approaches that can support particular needs.

While we wait for face-to-face conferences to return, we are exploring the possibility of another event for PhD students undertaking disability research with the *International Journal of Disability and Social Justice* and the NNDR board during the winter of 2021–2022. You will find updated information at our webpage as plans develop. We will try our best to keep our work standard high during the pandemic time and beyond.

The journal's editorial board was also renewed in 2020. One aim was to increase the number of representatives from disability rights organisations, reflecting our view that inclusive participatory approaches should also be present in review processes.

Looking to the future, we will continue to publish articles that ensure international disability research is relevant, critical, innovative and sustains a diverse research community. We aim to continue to represent the broad spectrum of interdisciplinary disability research authorship possibilities and promote wider access to the academy and research activity.

Interdisciplinary disability research is much needed as we, hopefully, move out of the pandemic. The socio-economic position and rights of many citizens with disabilities in different countries have been badly affected. As editors we will work to further encourage publication of relevant new research in the field of culture, humanities, social science, and human rights.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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