**Book Review**

# Emerging Feminist Peace from Below and Disaster Recovery

## Complex Cascades of Violence and Uncertainty as a Result of Earthquake Recovery

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## Introduction

Disasters are rarely neutral; their impacts, responses, and recoveries are filtered through social, political, and economic structures that determine who is protected, who is excluded, and who gets to rebuild (Few et al., 2021). In many contexts, particularly in the Global South, post-disaster recovery processes become sites of contestation where inequality is not only revealed but reinforced (Joseph et al., 2021). *Emerging Feminist Peace from Below and Disaster Recovery: A Quilted Ethnography* by Marjaana Jauhola and Shyam Gulhavi provides an incisive and unconventional lens into these processes. The book is a landmark contribution to feminist peace studies and disaster ethnography, bringing forward a textured narrative of post-earthquake recovery in Gujarat, India, with direct relevance to broader debates on sustainable development, spatial justice, and inclusive planning.

Part of the *Routledge Advances in Feminist Peace Research* series, the book disrupts dominant, technocratic, and often masculinist narratives of post-disaster recovery. Instead of focusing on policies from above or master plans dictated by institutions, it centers the lived experiences, bodily memories, and everyday resistances of marginalized communities, particularly women, Dalits, and Muslims. Drawing from years of immersive fieldwork in Bhuj, the authors stitch together stories from the neighborhood of *Haṅgāmī Āvās*. This post-earthquake resettlement zone was never intended to become permanent. In

doing so, the book not only documents recovery from disaster but reframes what peace means when told from below.

Visually, the book cover offers a metaphor for its approach. It features a layered patchwork of triangles in various pastel shades, echoing the form of a quilt. This is no coincidence. The authors introduce "quilted ethnography" not just as a methodology, but as a political stance. Quilting, a traditionally feminized and community-based practice, becomes a metaphor for interweaving fragmented voices, temporalities, and social locations into a coherent but non-linear narrative. This methodology challenges conventional academic storytelling and centers those who are often invisibilized in the formal apparatus of disaster management and urban planning.

The themes examined in this book strongly align with current global and regional priorities in sustainable development, particularly those reflected in SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). In contexts such as Indonesia, where natural disasters intersect with entrenched socio-political inequalities, the insights offered are particularly relevant (Setijaningrum et al., 2024). From the post-tsunami reconstruction in Aceh (2004) to the earthquake response in Palu (2018) and ongoing challenges in Jakarta's informal settlements, similar patterns of disconnect can be observed between top-down recovery mechanisms and the realities experienced by affected communities (Triyanti et al., 2023; Talib, 2024). This book offers critical analytical tools and a grounded framework for understanding and addressing such tensions in disaster recovery and urban planning.

This review focuses specifically on Chapter 9 of the book, titled *"Complex Cascades of Violence and Uncertainty as a Result of Earthquake Recovery."* The chapter captures how long-term exclusion is sustained not only through policy failures but through spatial design, communal politics, and gendered survival strategies. Through a close reading of this chapter, the review will explore how feminist ethnography can inform more just, inclusive, and responsive models of disaster recovery. Such readings are urgently needed in a world increasingly shaped by crisis.

Aimed at scholars, policy-makers, humanitarian practitioners, urban planners, and grassroots activists, the discussion targets those committed to designing and implementing inclusive post-disaster recovery strategies. It bridges academic theory with lived realities, offering perspectives that deepen both conceptual understanding and practical application. The book's insights are especially valuable for informing evidence-based research and context-sensitive recovery interventions.

**Permanent Temporality and the Structural Inequality of Urban Recovery**

Jauhola and Gulhavi begin Chapter 9 by introducing the concept of "permanent temporariness" in the context of post-earthquake recovery in Bhuj, Gujarat. They argue that the creation of temporary settlements like Haṅgāmī Āvās, without long-term planning for renters, informal workers, and marginalized castes and communities, led to entrenched dispossession. As they explain, "The construction of the temporary shelter neighbourhood without a long-term plan for the non-owning classes and castes of the city has contributed to the formation of permanent temporariness and dispossession amongst the residents" (Jauhola & Gadhavi, 2025a). In essence, the post-disaster recovery effort, rather than redressing social inequalities, institutionalized them through spatial exclusion and legal ambiguity.

This condition reflects what Oren Yiftachel (2009) calls "gray spaces," zones of urban uncertainty where residents are neither fully included nor completely excluded from legal and social systems (Gawlewicz & Yiftachel, 2022). This aligns with broader spatial justice theories (Soja, 2010, as cited in Nordquist, 2013) and intersectionality frameworks (Crenshaw, 1989, as mentioned in Carastathis, 2014), which emphasize how overlapping systems of oppression, such as caste, gender, and class, shape unequal recovery outcomes. Integrating these perspectives allows a more nuanced understanding of how spatial planning and policy choices produce enduring exclusion.

Residents of Haṅgāmī Āvās were granted Navi Sharat land tenure, which lacked the legal transferability and permanence of Juni Sharat titles given to wealthier groups. Although the area was eventually incorporated into the Bhuj municipality, its residents remained deprived of essential infrastructure, public investment, and political visibility. The authors argue that this fragmented incorporation reproduces a form of urban invisibility, where communities exist on the map but are excluded from rights and resources.

Spatial exclusion was further exacerbated by caste and religious segregation within the neighborhood itself. Residents from dominant Hindu castes were settled closer to key access roads and public services, while Muslims and Dalits were pushed to the geographic periphery. The authors cite Virmani (2010), who recorded the disintegration of social cohesion due to this enforced demographic mixing: "There is no community feeling either," remarked one resident, describing the alienation caused by forced proximity among culturally disparate groups. Thus, even the architectural logic of recovery uniform housing blocks, random allocations undermined community resilience and deepened psychological displacement.

Ultimately, the chapter reveals that disaster recovery, when driven by technocratic priorities and property-based criteria, risks hardwiring inequality into the urban fabric. Programs intended to support renters, for example, reached only a fraction of eligible households due to poor design and bureaucratic hurdles. These patterns are not unique to India; they mirror recovery experiences in post-disaster Indonesia, where informal settlers often fall outside state protection (Lines et al., 2022). The authors' feminist ethnography underscores the importance of inclusive, justice-oriented planning in disaster recovery, emphasizing that sustainable development is not only about rebuilding, but about recognizing and rectifying historical injustices embedded in space, policy, and power.

### Gendered Exclusion and Everyday Survival during the COVID-19 Lockdown

In Chapter 9, Jauhola and Gulhavi detail how the COVID-19 lockdown exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities within Haṅgāmī Āvās. As an informal settlement already lacking basic infrastructure and legal recognition, the neighborhood was especially vulnerable to the disruptions caused by pandemic restrictions. Daily wage earners lost their livelihoods overnight, and residents struggled to access essential goods and services. One woman recounted, "We are managing everything by whatever we are getting with the ration card. If the shops are closed, I go to Bhid gate on foot… because they do not let men go outside. So only ladies can go outside" (Jauhola & Gadhavi, 2025b). His testimony captures the double burden placed on women, who became frontline managers of survival during a time of widespread economic paralysis.

Relief efforts implemented during the lockdown were inconsistent and often bypassed informal neighborhoods. Government aid programs tended to prioritize those with documented addresses or formal property titles, criteria many Haṅgāmī Āvās residents did not meet. The authors describe how some areas received rations and cash transfers while others, particularly those on the geographic and social periphery, were left without support. This fragmented distribution reinforced pre-existing disparities rooted in caste, class, and religious identity. It revealed a policy gap in India's welfare mechanisms while the state projected a message of national solidarity, its interventions lacked precision and justice in practice.

The lockdown also intensified feelings of surveillance and stigmatization, especially for Muslim communities. Fear of police enforcement, coupled with rising Islamophobic rhetoric in public discourse, made everyday mobility a source of anxiety. The authors argue that this environment of suspicion and control reflects how state responses to crises can replicate patterns of authoritarianism, particularly in marginalized urban spaces. Residents were not only physically restricted but also socially and politically policed, deepening their alienation from state institutions that ostensibly existed to serve them.

Despite these challenges, the chapter highlights how community-based forms of care and solidarity emerged as critical lifelines. Women organized informal food-sharing systems, exchanged information about available aid, and provided emotional support within their networks. These grassroots actions illustrate the agency and resilience of marginalized populations during times of crisis. For sustainable development planning, this underscores the need to move beyond centralized, top-down approaches. Recognizing and enabling community-led responses can lead to more equitable and context-sensitive solutions in future crises.

**Electoral Politics and the Institutionalization of Exclusion**

In the final section of Chapter 9, Jauhola and Gulhavi extend their analysis of structural marginalization by examining how electoral politics in India further entrenched exclusionary narratives. The authors focus on the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, where the ruling party leveraged identity politics to mobilize votes, particularly through rhetoric that framed Muslims and other minority groups as threats to national progress. One notable quote from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign speech encapsulates this strategy: "They will raid every farmer's house… search the closets of women and see how much jewellery they have. They will give all these assets to the vote bank of their choice" (Jauhola and Gadhavi 2025a). This statement not only stokes fear but also positions people with low incomes and minorities as undeserving beneficiaries of state welfare.

The authors argue that such populist messaging is part of a broader strategy to weaponize development for political gain. Rather than addressing real issues of poverty and inequality, electoral narratives often rely on scapegoating vulnerable communities. In this context, neighborhoods like Haṅgāmī Āvās become political symbols cited as spaces of disorder or dependency while receiving little in the way of actual investment or inclusion. These political tactics reflect a developmentalism that is not about equitable progress but about controlling public perception and reinforcing dominant group interests.

This political instrumentalization of vulnerability mirrors broader patterns in disaster recovery and urban planning. The selective visibility of marginalized communities, visible enough to be blamed, invisible when aid is distributed, creates a cyclical exclusion that is hard to escape. The authors highlight how promises made during election seasons, such as infrastructure upgrades or legal recognition, often evaporate once votes are secured. In Haṅgāmī Āvās, despite repeated electoral engagements, residents continue to live with poor services, precarious tenure, and minimal participation in local governance. These conditions reflect a broader democratic deficit wherein the voices of the urban poor are routinely sidelined.

Ultimately, Jauhola and Gulhavi call for a redefinition of peace and development that moves beyond the rhetoric of nationalism and elite-led growth. They advocate for a feminist peace framework, one that is rooted in everyday struggles, intersectional justice, and community solidarity. This approach directly challenges dominant planning logics and electoral agendas that ignore or exploit the vulnerabilities of marginalized groups. For sustainable development planning in democratic but unequal societies like India and, by extension, Indonesia, his chapter offers a critical reminder that true resilience must be political, participatory, and profoundly inclusive.

**Conclusions**

Chapter 9 of Emerging Feminist Peace from Below and Disaster Recovery offers a profound critique of post-disaster recovery practices through the lens of feminist ethnography. By tracing the lived experiences of residents in Haṅgāmī Āvās, the chapter exposes how spatial planning, legal frameworks, and urban policy often institutionalize exclusion, particularly for non-owning, lower-caste, and minority communities. The concept of "permanent temporariness" becomes a powerful analytical tool to understand how temporary shelter solutions can evolve into long-term structural marginalization. The authors also examine the compounding impact of the COVID-19 lockdown, which intensified vulnerabilities for women and informal workers, revealing how top-down crisis responses often fail to reach those most in need. Yet, amid systemic neglect, community-led strategies, particularly those organized by women, emerge as key sources of survival and resilience.

In its final sections, the chapter links disaster recovery to political processes, showing how electoral rhetoric during the 2024 Indian elections weaponized development narratives and reinforced communal divisions. Haṅgāmī Āvās residents, already marginalized spatially and economically, became subjects of political scapegoating rather than recipients of meaningful inclusion. Jauhola and Gulhavi argue that peace and recovery cannot be achieved through technocratic or nationalist frameworks alone; instead, they must be grounded in justice, participation, and the acknowledgment of everyday struggles.

While the book excels in presenting a rich ethnographic account, a potential limitation lies in its primary focus on Gujarat, which may require readers to draw their own inferences when applying the

concepts to different socio-political contexts. Additionally, the "quilted ethnography" method, though innovative, may present challenges for replication in contexts with limited longitudinal access or different cultural norms. Nevertheless, its conceptual and methodological contributions make it highly adaptable for comparative disaster studies.
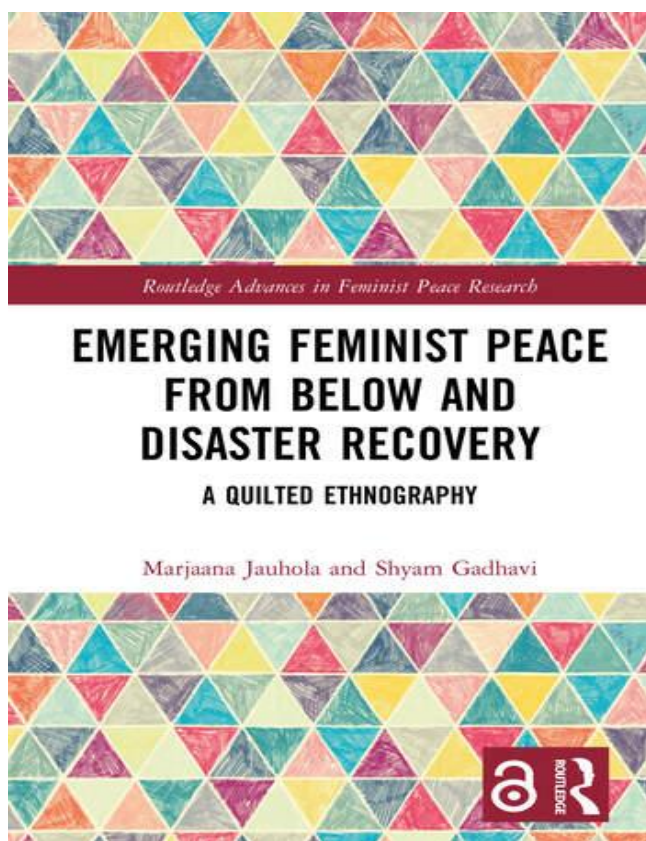
The implications extend beyond India and Indonesia. Comparable patterns of exclusion and grassroots resilience have been documented in post-earthquake Nepal, post-hurricane Puerto Rico, and typhoon recovery in the Philippines, suggesting the global applicability of the authors' framework. This makes the book a valuable reference for any context where disaster recovery intersects with entrenched inequalities.

### Rate the Book

This book merits a five-star rating for its intellectual depth, methodological originality, and ethical commitment to amplifying marginalized voices. By employing a "quilted ethnography," the authors skillfully stitch together lived experiences, spatial analysis, and feminist critique to expose the deep-rooted injustices in post-disaster recovery. The narrative is both accessible and theoretically rich, making it valuable not only for academic audiences but also for practitioners and planners in the field of sustainable development. Its insights are timely and transferable across contexts, offering a critical framework for rethinking urban resilience and inclusive planning in regions grappling with inequality and vulnerability.

For policy-makers and development practitioners in Indonesia, the book offers valuable guidance for reforming post-disaster housing policy, improving tenure security, and promoting inclusive urban planning. Its insights highlight practical approaches that address the root causes of inequality rather than reinforcing them. Such perspectives are crucial for designing recovery programs that foster long-term resilience and social justice.

### The Cover book



Routledge Advances in Feminist Peace Research

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**A QUILTED ETHNOGRAPHY**

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