Visualizing the Hidden: A Digital Counter-Narrative of Natural Disasters

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Abstract

Natural disasters have been rampant around the world. With the advancement of technology, disaster news spreads promptly on television and social media. On the other hand, previous studies have shown that the way of broadcasting is not neutral; evacuees tend to be portrayed as victims in need of help, and diversity among them is undermined in the media narratives (Monahan & Ettinger, 2018; Sommers, et al., 2006). Some art practitioners/researchers have demonstrated the potential of cellphilming (filmmaking with cellphones) as an alternative storytelling method that can unsettle the dominant media discourse (Mandrona, 2016; Mitchell, et al., 2017). This paper introduces a case of collaborative cellphilming practiced with twelve university students in Kumamoto, Japan. Kumamoto was severely hit by huge earthquakes as well as heavy rain and floods successively, and many residents were displaced. When digital youth gather together for collaborative cellphilming concerned with natural disasters, what do they capture with their phone cameras and express in their film? How does cellphilming contribute to visualizing stories that are often missing from the disaster media coverage? In September 2022, a collaborative cellphilming project began, and a film *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)* was completed in January 2023. Applying the concept of a "critical voice" discussed by Goldberg (2021), I argue that cellphilming is effective as a digital counter-narrative for agitating the dominant media representation of those affected by natural disasters and expressing various views once hidden.

Keywords: disaster; filmmaking; media; representation; youth

Introduction

In recent years, natural disasters have caused great damage around the world, including floods in the United Kingdom, hurricanes in the United States, earthquakes in Indonesia, and wildfires in Australia. While people obtain disaster news worldwide easily and immediately with the advancement of technology, the existence of the dominant media representation

should not be overlooked. As disaster evacuees tend to be depicted as victims in need of help, their vulnerability is stressed, and furthermore, diversity among them is undermined in the media narratives (Monahan & Ettinger, 2018; Sommers, et al., 2006). For instance, Monahan and Ettinger (2018) investigate the characteristics of mass media dealing with disasters and indicate that "… media tend to devote a great attention and detail to unusual or violent accounts while giving much less or no attention to the mundane …" (p. 487). They also problematize the mainstream media (re)producing certain fixed images: "Research has consistently shown that media coverage of disasters tends to be rife with misinformation and reinforces myths about race, social class, violence and criminal activity" (Monahan & Ettinger, 2018, pp. 492-493). Focusing on the case of Hurricane Katrina, Sommers et al. (2006) uncover the problematic media representation and its effects on the viewers:

> Automatic associations between "Black" and "criminal" likely color the perceptions of journalists and news producers even if they do not harbor explicit prejudice. Moreover, beliefs about which stories will interest an audience may also be affected by race. For instance, the extent to which a Black suspect at-large is viewed as a greater public safety threat than a White fugitive may influence the coverage his story receives. Such portrayals can then bias public perceptions, reinforcing preexisting beliefs about race and crime …. (p. 45)

While the prompt dissemination of disaster news leads to speedy rescue and aid activities, the way of delivering it is not neutral.

To tackle such issues, as demonstrated by some art practitioners/researchers (Hogan & Butterfly Peace Garden, 2018; Jones, 2018a, 2018b), it is crucial to work creatively in collaboration with those who are under the influence of disasters. Hogan and Butterfly Peace Garden (2018) proclaim the importance of "… engaging in the making of living art, through imagination, story, painting, music, song, dance, ritual and theater" (p. 245) and outline their achievements:

> Inspired by lessons learned during 40 years of experience working with communities affected by war, natural disaster or disability in Canada, Sri Lanka and Cambodia, the Garden Path curriculum transforms dissociation and despair among young people into empathy and engagement with community renewal through practice and

cultivation of the arts. (p. 263)

In this way, the previous research has placed emphasis on working together with those affected by disasters without simply labeling them as victims. Moreover, Jones (2018a) attaches importance to their self-expression:

> By practicing our "visual voicing" skills in safe groups, we begin to build the necessary self-esteem to speak up about our needs, and speak out about our perspectives, performing acts that resist injustice and demand change. … The expressive arts help us practice the sharing of trauma, the expression of pain and anger, and even disobedient discourse. This can move us forward into creating better futures. (p. 298)

Thus, the scholars have exhibited the validity of art-making with disaster evacuees. On the other hand, little attention has been given to the potential of art practices employing digital media such as cellphones/smartphones and tablets. In the midst of natural disasters, cellphones/smartphones are widely used to gain and share information, seek help, and record what really happens (Paul et al., 2021). Some researchers have pointed out the significance of cellphilming (i.e., filmmaking with cellphones) as an alternative storytelling method that can unsettle the hegemonic narrative (Mandrona, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2017). Therefore, it is time to pay attention to the practice of cellphilming in relation to natural disasters.

Kumamoto, Japan has undergone huge earthquakes as well as heavy rain and floods successively. Because of these disasters, the infrastructure has been damaged, and numerous residents have been displaced from their homes (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2021). Among the evacuees, there is the digital generation using cellphones/smartphones for daily communication and sharing photographs and videos together on social media. When digital youth gather together for collaborative cellphilming concerned with natural disasters, what do they capture with their phone cameras and express in their film? How does cellphilming contribute to visualizing stories that are often missing from the disaster media coverage? This paper explores the possibilities of collaborative cellphilming as a digital counter-narrative in the post-disaster context.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I draw upon Goldberg's concept of a "critical voice." Goldberg (2021) points

out the power of making art collaboratively as a means to agitate the norms:

> Everyday living hustles people along paths paved by experiences and dominant so-
> cial practices. In order to "fit into" society, many of us negotiate the paths—even
> using the dominant practices to secure some position for our own gain. … Creating
> collaborative art projects … provides an opening through which students can move
> beyond the walls of such potential acquiescence …. (p. 282)

She then delineates the significance of a "critical voice" cultivated through collaborative art-making:

> In considering the phrase *critical voice*, I am trying to identify the qualities of a stu-
> dent or teacher's voice that is at once reflective, empowered, questioning, informed,
> and respectful of voices different from itself. Developing a critical voice encourages
> an individual to explore beyond the walls of convention, opening the possibility to
> create and recognize their own sense of potential while resisting demands of disen-
> franchisement. (Goldberg, 2021, pp. 282-283)

Applying Goldberg's concept is useful for this study since it enables us to see the youth collaborating for cellphilming as dynamic knowledge producers. A created film reflects their critical voices that transcend the normative view of disasters such as "victims suffering from massive destruction." I argue that the cellphilming youth produce a digital counter-narrative destabilizing the dominant media representation and presenting an alternative perspective to the viewers. Hence, the concept of a "critical voice" is essential for conceptualizing this study and practicing collaborative cellphilming in the post-disaster context.

There are various forms of displacement resulting from many different disasters as described by Esnard and Sapat (2018):

> Population displacement, the forced removal or uprooting of people from their home
> or country, is a global phenomenon triggered by multiple causes, including physical
> and socioeconomic vulnerabilities, exposure to natural hazards, civil war and eth-
> no-religious conflicts, environmental and natural resource degradation, landlessness,
> food insecurity and megaproject developments …. (p. 431)

In this study, I focus on natural disasters, especially earthquakes and floods, which occurred in Kumamoto. These two types are both large-scale and damaging. Clements and Casani (2016) give a detailed account of the impact of earthquakes:

> One of the most powerful and potentially devastating forces of nature is the energy contained in the earth's surface. Enormous tectonic plates comprising the earth's crust constantly slide together. There are points where stress accumulates. The violent shaking of an earthquake results from the sudden release of this energy and can collapse buildings, fracture roadways, and create tsunamis. Fatalities can easily reach into the thousands from a single event with additional hundreds of thousands of lives impacted. (p. 224)

They also refer to one of the disasters becoming common around the world: "Floods are nature's most widespread disaster. … These disasters are growing in frequency worldwide due to a variety of human and environmental factors …" (Clements & Casani, 2016, p. 270). These two types of natural disasters have repeatedly happened in Kumamoto, and a large number of people have long experienced displacement (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2021). Hence, there is a need to work creatively together with those who have gone through these incidents. According to Jones (2018b), creativity is key in the post-disaster context:

> As our planet flirts with existential crises, people find themselves more frequently on the move—escaping war, genocide, pandemic, tsunami, earthquake or climate change. These survivors may face layer upon layer of loss, including the disappearance of everything with which they once identified—their home and their possessions, their family, their role in their community, their country. Who they are, who they love, what they own and where they live and belong are sometimes lost overnight. Luckily there are some methods and practices available to help people integrate these changes, through creative actions. (p. 9)

Thus, Jones (2018b) emphasizes the advantages of creative practices for disaster-affected people. This study lays stress on creativity and introduces a case of collaborative cellphilming practiced with digital youth in Kumamoto. Drawing upon the concept discussed by

Goldberg (2021), I intend to show how cellphilming in the university classroom cultivates the student filmmakers' critical voices and encourages them to present new knowledge through their digital counter-narrative.

Methodology

In this study, I practiced cellphilming in collaboration with twelve university students (aged from 20 to 21) in Kumamoto that was severely hit by enormous earthquakes as well as heavy rain and floods. On April 14, 2016, there was a huge earthquake of magnitude 6.5 in Kumamoto. Beyond expectations, a larger one of magnitude 7.3 hit the region after two days (Japan Meteorological Agency, 2016). In 2020, in the phase of recovering from the earthquakes, the heavy rain caused rivers including the Kuma River, one of the three most rapid rivers in Japan, to overflow (Kyodo News, 2020). Because of these disasters, the infrastructure has been damaged, and a large number of residents have been displaced from their hometowns (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2021). In addition, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the opportunity of face-to-face teaching and learning was lost. In the difficult situation as such, my seminar students specializing in intercultural communication at a university in Kumamoto (Table 1) and I began a collaborative cellphilming project in September 2022.

Table 1. List of student filmmakers

Pseudonyms listed in order of appearance in the film
Kaitlyn
Ah
Hank
Saburou
Momo
Benname
Mary
Choco
Anne
Strawberry Bonbon
Margot
Chanko

After the COVID-19 restrictions were eased, we met in the classroom every week. As a brainstorming process, the cellphilm production members inquired into the traits of Kumamoto based on the culture iceberg model (Hall, 1976/1989). This model is useful for distinguishing the following two—the cultural elements above water, which are clear and easy to see and the ones below water, which are hidden and difficult to see. The students continued brainstorming and examined critically what was hidden from the media. Hank, one of the student filmmakers, points out the unbalanced media coverage of natural disasters:

> The media show only superficial parts. For example, when an earthquake happens, they show what happens and how the government gives an aid. In contrast, the media don't show the background like people's feelings and values.

Several students state that the Kumamoto dialect is missing from the general media reports. For instance, Margot talks about a dialect word frequently used in Kumamoto:

> I think the ways of thinking and tendency of people in Kumamoto are not shown on TV or newspapers such as the word "*wasamon*" in the Kumamoto dialect. It means people who like fashionable or popular things. The reason why the word came out is the tendency of Kumamoto. I think this is not shown in the media.

Digging deeper into the media representation, some students throw light on the hidden cultural elements. Choco, for example, refers to the belief systems in relation to the media narratives:

> Some beliefs are not shown in the media. Kumamoto is an area which has a lot of disasters like earthquakes. People in Kumamoto are under threat of earthquakes and leave the bridge destroyed by the earthquake as it is not to forget the fear as we showed in the movie.

In this way, the student filmmakers explored the unique aspects of Kumamoto, which were hardly depicted by the media.

In contrast with the missing representation of Kumamoto and its people, they

considered what to capture by their cellphones/smartphones and carried out filming individually. In December 2022, we gathered in the classroom, watched each member's footage, exchanged ideas, and fixed a shot sequence (see Figures 1-12).

Figure 1. Shot #1 by Kaitlyn. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*. 2023. © The Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

Figure 2. Shot #2 by Ah. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*. 2023. © The Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

Figure 3. Shot #3 by Hank. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*. 2023. © The Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

Figure 4. Shot #4 by Saburou. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*. 2023. © The Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

Figure 5. Shot #5 by Momo. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*. 2023. © The Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

Figure 6. Shot #6 by Benname. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*. 2023. © The Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

Figure 7. Shot #7 by Mary. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*. 2023. © The Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

Figure 8. Shot #8 by Choco. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*. 2023. © The Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

Figure 9. Shot #9 by Anne. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*. 2023. © The
Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

Figure 10. Shot #10 by Strawberry Bonbon. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*.
2023. © The Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

Figure 11. Shot #11 by Margot. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*. 2023. ©
The Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

Figure 12. Shot #12 by Chanko. Still extracted from *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*. 2023. © The Studio of Nonfiction, 2023.

In addition to these activities, the cellphilm production members composed a script and assembled the texts and the images into a film (Figure 13). In this film project, I served as an editor by placing the video clips in order as decided by the production team, adding their voices to the film, tuning music to the images, and creating end credits.

[Introduction]
Where comes to mind when you think of charming places in Japan?
Tokyo, Kyoto, Hokkaido, Okinawa … Japan has many attractive places.
However, there are few people who come up with Kumamoto.
Actually, Kumamoto is full of charms!

Shot #1 placed
Let's go on a journey to Kumamoto! **(Overlapping Shot #1)**

[Body]
When you hear the word "nature", what do you imagine?
Shot #2 placed

Shot #3 placed
This scene is caused by a natural disaster. **(Overlapping Shot #3)**

Shots #4-5 placed
Let's move on to attractive places by steam locomotive!

Shots #6-9 placed
We can see many kinds of nature like mountains, animals, and wild plants.
Nature is everything in the physical world that is not controlled by humans.

[Conclusion]
Shot #10 placed
Are you enjoying the trip to Kumamoto?
The journey is coming to an end.
How do you feel at the end of your trip?
Lonely? Good experience?

Shots #11-12 placed
Among the various charms of Kumamoto, local cultures are hidden.
Imagine the lives and people in Kumamoto.
If you think about hidden cultures, you can expand your fields of interest.
Because all of the oceans and the sky are connected.

Figure 13. Structure of *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*.

Film *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*

After collaborating for five months, a film *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*, bilingual in English and Japanese, was completed in January 2023. It is in the form of a travelogue taking the viewers out for a trip to Kumamoto. The script (Figure 13) shows what the student filmmakers intend to convey to the viewers. Chanko expresses the intention clearly:

> I want to show the hidden charms of Kumamoto to the viewers. The nature of Kumamoto will heal the viewers and also teach them the threat of nature. This movie tells them many important and wonderful things.

An aspiration to set forth their vision is found in the film title and the production name that they created. Anne indicates what "Kumavel" represents and why the production team coined this new word:

It means traveling in Kumamoto will be more normal in the near future. Most foreigners who come to Japan want to visit big cities like Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto. But Kumamoto is unbeatably attractive. I hope "Kumavel" will become a word everyone knows like *kawaii, mottainai*, and so on.

Saburou explains in detail the production name that was carefully made:

"The Studio of Nonfiction" represents that the movie only shows the real, non-edited features of Kumamoto. Although there may be some harsh realities, like the broken bridge in Aso, it shows with no filter, the meaning that we are honest about the things we show in Kumamoto, to our audience.

In this way, the long-term collaboration resulted in the formation of their vision as a production team.

At the same time, the created film exhibits the diversity of the student body. Each student filmmaker recorded a view that she/he wanted to covey to the viewers and created a keyword for it respectively (Figures 1-12). The following accounts show a wide range of views included in the film:

Kaitlyn: The word "departure" means starting a journey. The theme of this short movie is to travel around the city of Kumamoto. I recorded an airplane that was taking off. The time I filmed this video was around 3:30 p.m., so the sun was low, and the contrast with the plane was beautiful.

Ah: I recorded the clouds flowing over the mountains of Aso in the morning. The keyword I came up with is "silence." The view of the mountains and the clouds I took shows its beauty without any sound, and you can find the majestic nature. I thought this video would convey the charm of Kumamoto's nature directly to the viewers.

Hank: I filmed a bridge in the South Aso City. It has been in the same shape as when the earthquake happened in 2016. "Threat" means that nature is a threat to human beings. The reason why this keyword came to mind is I felt that nature is usually

beautiful and gives people healing and comfort, but when disasters such as earth-quakes and torrential rains occur, nature can be a threat that can take people's place to live, livelihood, happiness, memories, and lives instantly.

Saburou: I took a video of a beautiful spot I passed by when I was hiking in Aso. The keyword "freedom" refers to the feeling or idea of being unrestricted or un-bound in some way. The natural setting in the video of the opening in the mountain evokes a sense of openness and vastness, which can be associated with the concept of freedom.

Momo: I made a film of a scene with two horses eating food in Aso. For those of us who live in Kumamoto, it feels normal, but all in all, it's special. I think this scene is rare and special for some people. So, I decided to use the word "special." I want to convey the charm of Kumamoto to everyone.

Benname: I recorded a steam locomotive of Hitoyoshi. There are railroad tracks near my house and I have many opportunities to see trains running. "Headway" means *zenshin* in Japanese. By steam locomotive, we go somewhere and enjoy the view from the window, and I wanted to use a positive word for our movie. So I selected this word.

Mary: I recorded the cosmos fields in Aso and the surrounding landscape. The key-word means "lovely" or "to want to protect." I chose this keyword because the pink, white, and red colors of cosmos are lovely, and the other reason is that cosmos is a flower that blooms only in fall. Its beautiful appearance can only be seen for a short period of time, so I chose this word which means "to want to protect."

Choco: I filmed a scene of a beaver because the appearance was peaceful, and people who watch this video will be healed. My keyword is "healing." That means making people feel happy and healthy. I came up with this word because there are a lot of nature and animals in Kumamoto, and it will be a healing spot for people who visit Kumamoto.

Anne: I recorded a river in Kurokawa Onsen, a hot spring resort. During the season I visited, there were autumn leaves. And the water of the river was so clear. "Healing" means helping to make us well. I chose this keyword because I think nature makes many people relaxed. I think people can reduce their daily stress and get healed a little by watching my video and feeling nature.

Strawberry Bonbon: I recorded a Japanese sweet store (*dagashiya*) near the Kumamoto Castle. I especially took a video of Japanese toys supplied in festivals and drawing lots (*kujibiki*). People can connect those toys to Japanese festivals. I put the keyword "excitement" for it. I think Japanese festivals make people imagine the enjoyment.

Margot: I filmed the beautiful sea of Amakusa. The reason is that I felt this was a big charm of Kumamoto, and we have to maintain it. Moreover, nature is an uncontrollable thing, so sometimes it brings some benefits and sometimes frightens us. Because the sea and the sky are connected throughout the world, we can go abroad by using airplanes and ships. It's creating human-to-human connections. That's why I chose "connection" as my keyword.

Chanko: I wanted to capture a video of fireworks going off with spectators watching for the first time in years. I was really excited by the countdown before they were launched. Fireworks are a proud creation of humans. I believe fireworks represent the power of human creation. So I chose this keyword.

As illustrated here, *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)* reflects the diverse voices of the student filmmakers living in post-disaster Kumamoto. This carefully constructed travelogue invites the viewers to take notice of the great variety of cultural values that are alive and upheld by the residents of Kumamoto.

Discussion

Several advantages emerge from collaborative cellphilming in the classroom. First of all, working together face-to-face brings the students a sense of satisfaction. As previously discussed (Hara, 2022), the university students encountered hardships due to the abrupt

changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some production members compare their learning during and after the pandemic:

> Ah: I think a face-to-face style makes us communicate more easily. I can catch seminar members' feelings directly, so we can do our work more quickly.

> Kaitlyn: I think a face-to-face class is much better than an online one. When we meet directly, we can exchange our thoughts and opinions easily. I learned the importance of group work. It is better to talk with each other than thinking alone.

> Mary: It is different from an online class. I like a face-to-face class because I can ask immediately when I have some questions. Also, it is fun to talk to each other, looking at each person's facial expressions.

> Strawberry Bonbon: It was very fun to do group works, presentations, and a movie project in person, compared to online. The year we entered university was the start of the pandemic, so we didn't have opportunities to communicate face-to-face until we became third-year students.

It becomes clear here that the student filmmakers have a liking for assembling in the classroom, and it activates both verbal and non-verbal communication among them.

Secondly, practicing collaborative cellphilming promotes their learning and creativity in the post-disaster context. Some students describe their experience in encoding and disseminating their message to the viewers in and outside Japan:

> Choco: I learned Kumamoto has a strong connection of people and this region is connected to the world. I was able to find the charms of Kumamoto and how to show its attractions to other people.

> Margot: I become aware that this movie conveys the cultures of Kumamoto and cultural differences between Kumamoto and viewers' countries.

Indeed, collaborative cellphilming entails displaying the creative ability to the fullest. It is

not easy to put creativity into practice, as one of the production members mentions:

> Anne: I have learned the difficulty of making something. Even in order to decide what to shoot, it took a long time for me, and I participated in a lot of discussion. But through the project, I experienced a sense of accomplishment.

In this way, the cellphilming project calls for the efforts of the students and those of the facilitator from its commencement to completion.

Thirdly, collaborating to make a film enables the student filmmakers to elevate their critical voices. Upon the completion of the film in January 2023, they analyzed it using the culture iceberg model. Their analyses suggest that *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)* represents the various stories missing from the disaster media coverage:

> Chanko: The cultural elements shown in the movie are symbols and history. The symbols of Kumamoto in the movie are Mt. Aso and the beautiful sea. The history of Kumamoto in the movie includes the bridge broken by the Kumamoto Earthquake and the Koshi Park.

> Momo: This movie expresses the elements of the cultural background, history, values, language, and symbols. You cannot see a view from a place that is not famous. The scenery from a little-known place may be more beautiful than from a place featured in the media. The scenery that we usually see causally is wonderful, and Kumamoto is full of charms. I've changed the way I see things.

> Saburou: I noticed we have many beautiful features in Kumamoto. Although I've been in Kumamoto for my whole life, there were some places that I didn't know. This made me think that I should appreciate my surroundings more, even if it feels like a normal thing in my everyday life.

The comments of the production members above show that creating and communicating new knowledge through their digital counter-narrative leads to a new realization of their standpoint.

Lastly, the realization resulting from making *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)*

together helps the students to develop their own visions:

> Benname: Above water, we can see the beauty of nature and the cuteness of some animals. Below water, we cannot see but can feel the cheerful voices of us. Kumamoto is going to become a more famous prefecture because there are a lot of delicious food, beautiful places, and meaningful places. I want to help Kumamoto as a government employee.

> Hank: I think that Kumamoto will become stronger and a fascinated place. It's because Kumamoto's land and people are on the way to recovery as the same as before, and we received a lot of support from kind people. So we're going to do the same and give something in return to those people.

It is reasonable to suppose here that the student filmmakers recognize the interconnection of the past, present, and future through collaborative cellphilming and grasp living in post-disaster Kumamoto positively. Hence, creating *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)* collaboratively in the classroom enhances the students' learning, creativity and critical voices, and furthermore, it allows them to become active producers of new knowledge transcending the dominant media representation of natural disasters.

Conclusion

This paper has problematized the dominant media representation (re)producing certain fixed images of people affected by natural disasters. As a digital counter-narrative, I have introduced a case of collaborative cellphilming practiced with the university students living in post-disaster Kumamoto. Their critical examination of the media narratives has revealed the unbalanced way of broadcasting and the lacking information of the cultural elements cultivated locally. Taking the form of a travelogue, *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)* reflects the diverse voices of the production members and invites the viewers to see the great variety of scenes that are missing from the disaster media coverage. This collaborative film project has exhibited the following advantages: 1) activating both verbal and non-verbal communication among the students; 2) promoting their learning and creativity in the post-disaster context; 3) elevating their critical voices; and 4) helping them to develop their own visions.

　　　By cellphilming collaboratively, the student filmmakers nourish their critical voices and turn to producers of new knowledge beyond the normative view of disasters such as "victims suffering from massive destruction." Thus, *Kumavel (Kumamoto+travel)* created by the cellphilming youth living in post-disaster Kumamoto functions as a digital counter-narrative destabilizing the dominant media discourse and presenting an alternative view to the audiences. For future studies, it is suggested to pay attention to the viewers and investigate how they will react to the created film. It will be meaningful to examine the similarities and differences between the student filmmakers' intent and audience response in order to advance a digital counter-narrative practice. The number of natural disasters has been increasing, and it is predicted that more and more people will be affected on the global scale (McGrath, 2021). Working creatively together with people under the influence of disasters is becoming increasingly important for reflecting very diverse views and visualizing the hidden.

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