

Becoming Fluent in Fieldwork: (Un)learning What Is Good/Ethical/Responsible Fieldwork

Wednesday, 23 June 2021 18:00 (1h 30m)

This roundtable looks to disrupt the conventional understanding of doing good, ethical and responsible fieldwork (Sidaway 2000; Jazeel & McFarlane 2007; Mason, Brown & Pickerill 2012). We propose a conversation about the ongoingness of doing fieldwork and the politics of imagining different worlds that this entails. By foregrounding the processual nature of becoming fluent – rather than fluency – the roundtable engages with recent developments in international relations that conceptualise fieldwork as interpretive and always in flux in messy and processual ways (Eliasoph 2005; Carabelli and Deiana 2019; Kušić and Zahora 2020). Building on and further developing these interventions, the participants discuss two focal questions:

1. Given the proposed processual nature of fieldwork, how do we develop and maintain fieldwork fluency, understood as a continuous praxis of fieldwork?
2. How does becoming fluent shape our understanding of what good/ethical/responsible fieldwork is, and what are the different ways of negotiating this in our respective fields?

Becoming fluent in fieldwork entails developing reflexive expertise: a process of continuous (un)learning, figuring out, of negotiating and relating – a balancing act between the planned and the unplanned (Cerwonka & Malkki 2007). This process entails negotiating and making decisions about what is good/ethical/responsible research, and how to navigate tensions between possible definitions (Ackerly & True 2008; Adedi Dunia et al. 2019). As we approach fieldwork as a continuous process in which we constantly work at our praxis, the roundtable critically interrogates how we (un)learn together with our research participants, beyond conventional understandings of ethics in field research (Torre et al. 2018; Nagar 2014).

In sharing their journeys of becoming fluent in the field, the participants present reflexive and ongoing engagements with fieldwork as a continuous process that contributes to our understanding of academic, individual and collective efforts to negotiate research ethics, practices of care and fieldwork praxis.

References

- Ackerly, Brooke, and Jacqui True. 2008. "Reflexivity in Practice: Power and Ethics in Feminist Research on International Relations." *International Studies Review*, 10 (4), 693-707.
- Adedi Dunia, Oscar et al. 2019. "Moving Out of the Backstage: How Can We Decolonize Research." *The Disorder of Things*, 22 Oct. 2019, https://thedisorderofthings.com/2019/10/22/moving-out-of-the-backstage-how-can-we-decolonize-research/#_ednref3.
- Carabelli, Giulia, and Maria Adriana Deiana. 2019. "Researching in Proximity to War. A Love Story." *Journal of Narrative Politics* 5 (2): 91-101.
- Cerwonka, Allaine, and Liisa H. Malkki. 2008. *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Eliasoph, Nina. 2005. "Theorizing from the Neck Down: Why Social Research Must Understand Bodies Acting in Real Space and Time (and Why It's So Hard to Spell Out What We Learn from This)." *Qualitative Sociology* 28 (2): 159-169.
- Jazeel, Tariq and Colin McFarlane. 2007. *Responsible Learning: Cultures of Knowledge Production and the North-South Divide*. *Antipode*, 39, 781-789.
- Kušić, Katarina, and Jakub Záhora, eds. 2020. *Living and Knowing in the Field (of IR), E-IR*.
- Mason, Kelvin, Gavin Brown and Jenny Pickerill. 2012. *Epistemologies of Participation, or, What Do Critical Human Geographers Know That's of Any Use?* *Antipode*, 42 (2), 252-255.
- Nagar, Richa. 2014. *Muddying the Waters: Coauthoring Feminisms Across Scholarship and Activism*. Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: University of Illinois Press.
- Sidaway, James. 2000. *Recontextualising Positionality: Geographical Research and Academic Fields of Power*.

Antipode, 32 (3), 260-270.

Torre, M. E, Stoudt, B. G., Manoff, E. and M. Fine. 2018. "Critical Participatory Action Research on State Violence: Bearing Wit(h)ness across Fault Lines of Power, Privilege and Dispossession," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th edition), edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 492-515. California: Sage Publications.

Track Classification: Interpretivism in International Relations Working Group