

RESEARCHING CONFLICT

Doing Fieldwork in Divisive and Violent Contexts

International workshop convened by the *Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding* at the Graduate Institute, Geneva

Maison de la Paix
5-7 June 2019



Organizers

Oliver Jütersonke, *The Graduate Institute, Geneva*
Ann Laudati, *University of California, Berkeley*
Stéphanie Perazzone, *Université de Genève*
Charlotte Mertens, *University of Melbourne (in absentia)*



WORKSHOP SUMMARY

This workshop intends to bring together both junior and senior scholars from a range of professional backgrounds and disciplinary traditions, working in different regions of the world and utilizing a variety of methodological tools to address the growing interest in the practicalities, ethics, and ‘sensitivities’ of conducting fieldwork in divisive or violent contexts. The aim of the workshop is to not only bring our shared experiences and expertise to bear on emerging discussions and debates on the conduct of fieldwork in challenging environments but to rethink, and in the process, re-center, and interrogate current intellectual debates on how we research (societal) conflict from a critical and inter-disciplinary lens.

Although disparate, the topics covered during those two days are deeply interrelated and rooted in the ‘real-life’ experiences of the participants as they seek, and sometimes struggle to, understand, interrogate, document and analyze conflict and dynamics of violence in a diversity of contexts and societies. Three overarching themes connect the various panels and group discussions presented below. First, presenters are to reflect, critically, on the unequal relations of power that have structured the ‘researcher-researched’ interactions both within daily experiences through the problems of affect, race, privilege and researcher positionality, and within the broader field of academic institutional life. Second, the discussion will also revolve around greater methodological issues of defining ‘conflict’ and elaborating on ways to foster research sensitivity via ethical concerns and risk mitigation, and tend to long-term research schemes and histories. Finally, the workshop participants will turn to the various patterns and challenges of knowledge production as they may probe, encounter and observe [international] actors of conflict and post-conflict intervention and research ‘brokers’ in conflict and sensitive environments.



PROGRAMME

Wed, 05.06

Venue : Auditorium A2, Maison de la Paix | Chemin Eugène Rigot, 2

18.30 – 20.00 **Opening Keynote Speech**, *followed by drinks reception*

‘Conflicting Fields | Real-World Dilemmas of Collecting Data in Difficult Circumstances’

By Dennis Rodgers, The Graduate Institute, Geneva
Peace Medie, University of Bristol



Thur, 06.06

Venue : Room S8 | Maison de la Paix, Chemin Eugène Rigot, 2

9.30 – 9.45 **Welcome Word** by Oliver Jütersonke (Graduate Institute, Geneva)

10.00 - 10.45 **Group Discussion I | Interrogations in and of ‘the Field’ of Dangerous Research**

10.45 – 11.15 Coffee Break

11.15- 12:45 **Panel I | Current Challenges in and to Research in Conflict Areas**

Chair & Discussant: Dennis Rodgers (Graduate Institute, Geneva)

Ursina Bentele (swisspeace)

Conflict Sensitivity and Research: A methodological approach

Martina Santschi (swisspeace)

Field Research in Conflict-Affected South Sudan: Reflections on challenges, risk mitigation and engagement with policy and practice

Romain Malejacq (Radboud University Nijmegen)

Research in Extremis: Navigating risk as a target of political violence

12.45 – 14.00 Lunch Break

14.00 – 15.30 **Panel II | Workers and Workings of Conflict Sites**

Chair & Discussant: Stéphanie Perazzone (University of Geneva)

Henri Myrntinen (International Alert)

Outsourcing Risks, Outsourcing Ethics: Doing conflict-related research at a distance in the NGO sector

Gauthier Marchais (Sussex University)



The Data is Gold, and we are the Gold-Diggers': Whiteness, race and contemporary academic research in eastern DRC

Janine Bressmer (The Graduate Institute, Geneva)

Searching for 'Threat': Navigating nuances in research on humanitarian security management

15.30 – 16.00

Coffee Break

16.00 – 17.30

Group Discussion II | Navigating an Emotional Terrain: From risky to reflexive method (Participants are asked to present a photograph from their fieldwork)

19.00 – 23.00

Conference Dinner



Fri, 07.06

Venue : Room S8 | Maison de la Paix | Chemin Eugène Rigot, 2

9.30 - 9.40 **Morning Refresh by the Organizers**

9.40 – 11.00 **Panel III | Histories of Researching Conflict**

Chair & Discussant: Ann Laudati (University of California, Berkeley)

Emery Kalema (Stellenbosch University)

Searching the Mulele 'Rebellion' (DR Congo): Historian, Ethics, and Fieldwork realities

Didier Péclard (Université de Genève)

Disentangling history and politics from the Nation. Methodological and ethical challenges of research in and on the Angolan Civil War

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee Break

11.30 – 13.00 **Panel IV | Straddling the Field: Positioning of Non-Western Research**

Chair & Discussant: Stéphanie Perazzone (University of Geneva)

Peace Medie (University of Bristol)

Identity and Power in Post-Conflict Fieldwork: Studying law enforcement officers in Cote d'Ivoire

Surer Mohamed (University of Cambridge)

The Field's Gaze: Navigating place and positionality as a situated researcher

Swati Parashar (University of Gothenburg)

Research Brokers, Researcher Identities and Affective Performances: The insider/outsider conundrum

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch Break



14.00- 15:30 **Panel V | The Workings of Embeddedness: Carrying Power Around**

Chair & Discussant: Ann Laudati (University of California, Berkeley)

Luisa Enria (University of Bath)

The Embedded Outsider: Fragility and Injustice in Research Across Crises in Sierra Leone

Alice Baroni (The Graduate Institute, Geneva)

Failed Struggles: Researching Hegemonic Neutralization at the Researcher-Activist Encounter

Caitlin Ryan (University of Groningen)

Dignity, responsibility, and structural violence: Thinking differently about 'safety and risk'

15.30 – 16.00 Coffee Break

16.00 – 17.00 **Group Discussion III (Optional) | A Shifting Terrain : Discussing Next Steps**

17.00 – 17.30 **Closing Speech and Thanks** | Stéphanie Perazzone & Ann Laudati
