



Online-Workshop “Considering Ethics and Safety in Field Research in the Global South”

07.-08.12.2020 (half-days), zoom conference

In this workshop, we aim to focus on ethics and safety during field research from both researcher's and interlocutors' perspectives. With participants' active participation and bringing in their own inquiries, we aim to critically assess our role as researchers in conducting research in the Global South. We will discuss and reflect issues on power, identity and positionality in the field and thereby focus on two main aspects: 1) Ethics: How do I see myself and how am I seen? How should I deal with unequal power relations in non-Western and post-colonial contexts? 2) Safety: How do I guarantee my own safety? How do I protect my research partners? How are research ethics and safety related? The online-workshop will take place virtually via Microsoft Teams/Zoom and will feature two keynote speakers followed by Q&A as well as participant presentations focusing on individual research projects and inquiries that can be discussed in a safe environment amongst peers.

Keynote Speakers:

- ❖ [Prof. Dr. Timothy Williams](#) (Bundeswehr University Munich) “Research Ethics in Field Research in the Global South”
- ❖ [Ilyas Saliba](#) (WZB/GPPi): “Safer Field Research in the Social Sciences”

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Preliminary Program

Day 1 – Ethics 07.12. 2020	09:00 – 09:15am	Welcome & Introduction (Hosts/Organizers)
	09:15 – 10:30am	Keynote 1: “Research Ethics in Field Research in the Global South” Prof. Dr. Timothy Williams (Bundeswehr University Munich) (45 minutes) Q & A (30 minutes)
	10:30 – 11:00am	Virtual Coffee Break
	11:00 – 13:00am	Participants’ Presentations (30 minutes): “Challenges and chances of localized ethics in field research in the Global Souths” (Samantha Ruppel, HSFK) “Positionality and trust” (Viviana García Pinzón, GIGA) “‘If someone tries to discuss it, there is a very fast end of discussion’ - When researchers ask sensitive questions.” (Stephanie Jänsch, Helmut-Schmidt-University) Discussion (90 minutes)
Day 2 – Safety 08.12.2020	09:00 – 10:15am	Short Welcome and Wrap-up Keynote 2: “Safer Field Research in the Social Sciences” Ilyas Saliba (WZB/GPPi) (45 minutes) Q & A (30 minutes)
	10:15 – 10:45am	Virtual Coffee Break
	10:45 – 12:45am	Participants Presentations (30 minutes): “Safety from local violent conflict, from aggression towards the research team and on the road. Experiences from field research in Indonesia” (Daniel Geissel, GIGA) “Sexualized harassment during fieldwork” (Katja Girr, Uni Bonn) Discussion (90 minutes)
	12:45am – 01:00pm	Wrap-Up / Closing (Hosts/Organizers)

Keynote 1: “Research Ethics in Field Research in the Global South”

Timothy Williams speaks on the issue of ethics in field research conducted in the Global South, drawing on his own field research experience on violence dynamics and post-violence contexts in Cambodia and Rwanda. He explores **ethical questions and responsibilities** that arise from social relations with **interviewees, research assistants** and the **state** during field research, as well as responsibility for the **researchers themselves**. Four inter-related areas form the backbone of his discussion: power, vulnerability, security and data. **Power** relations in fieldwork are impacted by the researcher’s positionality with varying access to economic resources, mobility, security or political agency between the researcher on the one side and interviewees and research assistants on the other; disparities can be exacerbated when working in the Global South. Further, it is pivotal to reflect on facets of **vulnerability** that result from these power dynamics, including how the presence of the researcher can change social dynamics in communities or create false expectations with interviewees, as well as how extractive data collection often is. Any reflection on ethics must consider various **security** dynamics surrounding physical security, mental health as well as data security; threats are stronger in authoritarian contexts necessitating special techniques, but threats are always intersectional and any strategy in dealing with them must reflect this. Furthermore, mental health considerations are an often-overlooked issue. Finally, the nature of the collected **data** is discussed, reflecting on testimony as data and whose data this then is. Ultimately, there are no blueprints for how to deal with these ethical questions, but the talk attempts to flag some of the most pressing issues and concludes with **strategies** for how to think about the questions and conduct field research in the most ethically reflected way possible.

Timothy Williams is a junior professor of insecurity and social order at the Universität der Bundeswehr München in Munich, Germany. Previously, he was a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Conflict Studies at the University of Marburg, where he also concluded his PhD in 2017 (*summa cum laude*) that has since been acknowledged with two awards, one by the university of Marburg, the other by the German Peace Psychologist Association. His research deals with violence, focussing on its dynamics, particularly at the micro-level, as well as its consequences for post-conflict societies and the politics of memory these evoke. He has conducted extensive field research in Cambodia and Rwanda and has been awarded the Emerging Scholar Prize of the International Association of Genocide Scholars in 2017. Timothy has published in *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *International Peacekeeping*, *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, among others, has co-edited a volume on perpetrators (with Susanne Buckley-Zistel, 2018, Routledge) and has authored the forthcoming book *The Complexity of Evil. Perpetration and Genocide* (2020, Rutgers University Press).

Keynote 2: “Safer Field Research in Social Science”

Ilyas Saliba will start by explaining why a guidebook on safer fieldwork practices is necessary and what motivated him and his co-authors to write such a book, drawing on their accumulated fieldwork and supervision experiences. Following the structure of the book he will then go through the three stages of fieldwork analytically differentiated in the book, namely: before, during and after the field. In each section Saliba will give an impression of the analytical tools and guiding questions provided in the book and draw on examples from his own fieldwork experiences in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. In the first section on **fieldwork preparation** he introduces how to conduct a risk assessment for a planned fieldwork mission and discusses mitigation strategies based on someone’s own or a team’s capabilities and vulnerabilities in a specific fieldwork context and for a specific research project. We will also discuss the risks associated with different methods of data collection in the field by means of various examples. **During field work**, the second section, one must deal with logistical issues and familiarizing yourself to the field site, as well as the importance continuing risk assessment and mitigation while on a fieldwork mission. In the third part dealing with **safety after the field** we will discuss risks involved in analyzing and publishing the gathered data and how to mitigate those. We will elaborate on professional debriefings and how to identify trauma or emotional stress that may occur after in relation to a fieldwork mission. The fourth part summarizes two chapters in the book on **digital and data security**. We will discuss risks connected to digital and data security and introduce some concrete tools and strategies to mitigate such risks and avoid your data or communication to end up in the wrong hands. Finally, Saliba will put forward some critical points on the **role of academics and in particular academic institutions** in enabling safer fieldwork for social scientists and bringing this debate into universities and research centers.

Ilyas Saliba is a political scientist, PhD candidate, political analyst and human rights advocate. Trained at Hamburg University, University of Gothenburg, Free University Berlin and ETH Zürich, he also joined the European University Institute, Nuffield College at Oxford University and the American University in Cairo as a guest researcher. He gained experience in advocacy, teaching, research, editing and communication through employments at respected organizations, such as Amnesty International, the Global Public Policy institute and the WZB Social Science Research Center Berlin. Generally, in his research he focuses on Human Rights in the MENA Region, Democratization, Authoritarian Regimes and Political Violence. Recently, he co-authored the book “Safer Field Research in the Social Sciences. A Guide to Human and Digital Security in Hostile Environments” (2020 Sage UK) and co-developed a global Academic Freedom index in partnership with the “Varieties of Democracy”- dataset, together with Janika Spannagel and Katrin Kinzelbach. He has furthered published on academic freedom for example in the journal “Interdisciplinary Political Studies” and the Mediterranean Yearbook (2018).