International KOSMOS Workshop

“Identity, Agency and Fieldwork Methodologies in Risky Environments”

Programme

28-29 July 2016

Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Institute for Asian and African Studies, Invalidenstr. 118, 10115 Berlin
THURSDAY 28 JULY

9.00-9.15  Introductory Note

9.15-10.15  Key Note Lecture: Prof. Monique Marks (Durban University of Technology)
Ethical and personal dilemmas in doing ethnographic research in dangerous spaces

10.15-12.00  Panel 1: Ethnography in Conflict Zones

Impersonalising personal experiences:
Dialogue with the practices of fieldwork in Southeastern Bangladesh
Nasir Uddin (Ph.D) (University of Chittagong)

Freedom, Militancy and Extrajudicial Violence:
Methodological Aspects of Field Study in India’s Kashmir Valley
Mohammed Sirajuddeen (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

12.00-13.00  Lunch Break

13.00-16.00  Panel 2: Feminist Methodologies

Field, Ethics and Self: Negotiating Methodology in a Hindu Right wing Camp
Aastha Tyagi (Delhi University)

Learning Zoya's Language
Deepra Dandekar (Ph.D) (University of Heidelberg)

Environmentalist protection: Feminist interview approaches and participant risk for research with Chinese NGOs
Angela Leggett (Freie Universität Berlin)

16.00-16.30  Coffee Break

16.30-18.15  Panel 3: Safety, Positionality and Fieldwork

"We are your brothers, we will know where you are at all times": Fieldwork dilemmas amongst gangs, political strongmen and state officials in Karachi, Pakistan
Sarwat Viqar (Concordia University)

Risky closeness and estrangement in two fieldwork sites in Brazil
Dr. Andreza Aruska de Souza Santos (University of Oxford)
FRIDAY 29 JULY

9.00-10.00 Key Note Lecture - Prof. Nandini Manjrekar (Tata Institute of Social Sciences) The need to speak, the compulsion to record: Dilemmas of fieldwork in areas of conflict

10.00-13.00 Panel 4: Ethics and Research
Friendship, Complicity and Danger: an exploration of the ethical dilemmas in carrying out research in the sensitive region of Xinjiang, China
Dr. David O'Brien (University of Nottingham -Ningbo)

Coffee Break

Don't Use the Word 'Research': Doing Ethnography in a Politically Volatile Neighborhood in Nairobi, Kenya
Ashley Wilson (Washington University in St. Louis)

The Republic of Chicken and Satellites: Irreconcilable equations of citizenship, authoritarianism, poverty and fear
Dr. Julten Abdelhalim (Humboldt Universität Berlin)

13.00-14.00 Lunch Break

14.00-16.15 Panel 5: Fieldwork in Political Turmoil

Field notes from Cairo: excavating urban pasts in the present
Aya Nassar (University of Warwick)

Self-Perception and International Development Aid Negotiation: A Case Study of EPRDF's Ethiopia
Gabrielle Bayle (SOAS, University of London)

Liberating Effects of Political Protest: Reflections about Anthropological Fieldwork in Tibetan areas of China
Emilia Roza Sulek (International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden)

16.15-16.45 Coffee Break

16.45-17.30 Closing Session
Participants

Aastha Tyagi is an MPhil student at Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi. Her current research focuses on a Hindu right-wing women’s organisation in India. She obtained her MA in Media and Culture Studies from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and has a degree in English Literature from IP College, Delhi University. She has worked as an editor in Catch News and Junior assistant producer in ET NOW in India. Her publications include ‘Vasudeva Kutumb: Membership and Recruitment in the Rashtra Sevika Samiti’, SubVersions, November 2015; and Why we fight: 5 Muslim women tell their story, Catch news, 14/06/2015.

Dr. Andreza Aruska de Souza Santos is a Post-doctoral Research Associate at Urban Transformations, University of Oxford. Her activities include linking Newton funded ESRC cities research projects in Brazil, China, South Africa and India. Before arriving in Oxford she obtained her PhD in Social Anthropology at the University of St Andrews, MA in Social Sciences at the University of Freiburg, University of KwaZulu Natal and Jawaharlal Nehru University, and a BA in Political Science at the University of Brasilia.

Angela Leggett is a Ph.D. candidate at the Graduate School of East Asian Studies (GEAS), Freie Universität Berlin. In her current doctoral research, she explores Chinese environmental NGOs’ monitoring of corporate environmental responsibility. Angela's broader researcher interests include the influence of civil society organisations on government and business, transcultural higher education, and gender. After completing a Bachelor of Business, a Bachelor of Fine Arts, and Honours in Australia, Angela undertook a Masters in Contemporary East Asian Studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen. Her M.A. dissertation investigated Chinese NGOs’ online communications around Chinese consumer behaviour for “green” food. Previously she has worked in academic and industry contexts in Australia, Germany, South Korea and China.

Ashley Wilson is a Ph.D. candidate in the anthropology department at Washington University in St. Louis. She has conducted research and worked on various projects in a slum in Nairobi, Kenya. Her dissertation focuses on informal marriage and the economy. Her ethnographic study is funded by Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Study Abroad, and her demographic household census is supported by the Young Explorer’s Program through National Geographic.

Aya Nassar is a PhD candidate in the University of Warwick, Department of Politics and International Studies. Her research looks into the transforming space of the capital city Cairo during the first three decades of post-colonial Egypt. Before Joining Warwick she has been an assistant lecturer of Political Science in Cairo University. She has designed and taught a course on Contemporary Cairo (2012-2013). She has also been a researcher on several research projects; the most recent include one on the spatial narratives and memory in Bein Al-Sarayat, and another with the Arab Reform Initiative project on social movements with a focus on urban activism and urban rights post 2011. She has published on public spaces in Cairo, 2011, 2013. Most recently, she has co-organized the third graduate political geography conference in Warwick University (May 2016), convened a conference on: “politics and literature: problematizing authority”, Centre for Civilizational Studies and Dialogue of cultures’, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo
University in 2013, and was a co-organizer of “Cairo 2012 urban transformation workshop”, Center for Civilizational Studies and Dialogue of Cultures, in 2012.

**Dr. David O’Brien** is Assistant Professor at the School of Contemporary Chinese Studies at the University of Nottingham, Ningbo. He completed a PhD at the National University of Ireland, University College Cork which examined the construction of ethnic identity in northwestern China. His research interests include ethnic identity and policy, the Chinese political system as well as social science research methodologies, particularly in the Chinese context. Dr O’Brien’s cross-disciplinary research is based on many years of qualitative fieldwork and seeks to explore how ethnic identity continues to evolve in China and the interplay between state and individual interpretations of identity.

**Deepa Dandekar** (Ph.D.) is an Associate Member of the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context”, University of Heidelberg, Germany. She has researched on religion, gender and politics in South Asia and has published on women's reproductive health, childbirth rituals and deities and more recently on Sufi shrines and narratives of Muslim migration and travel in the Indian Ocean. She has published articles in many co-edited volumes and journals. Her book titled *Boundaries and Motherhood: Ritual and Reproduction in Rural Maharashtra* has been recently published by Zubaan Books, New Delhi. She has co-edited a book titled *Islam, Sufism and Everyday Politics of Belonging in South Asia*, published by Routledge Taylor and Francis Group that is expected in 2016. Dandekar is currently translating a 19th century Marathi biography, describing the conversion of an influential Christian missionary.

**Emilia Roza Sulek** is a social anthropologist, Mongolist and Tibetologist. She graduated from the University of Warsaw and received her PhD from the Institute for Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University of Berlin, where she also worked as a Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin and lecturer. In her dissertation, she analysed the consequences of an economic boom in trade in caterpillar fungus with a focus on agency and entrepreneurship demonstrated in a pastoral region of Golok, Western China. She has also written about processes of identity-making and oral history in the ethnically and politically complex borderland areas between the Tibetan plateau and China. Emilia is a book review editor in *Nomadic Peoples* and has recently received a nomination to a Vice-Chair of the Commission on Nomadic Peoples, International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. She is currently affiliated with the International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden.

**Gabrielle Bayle** holds an MA in the International Relations of the Horn of Africa and the Middle East from the University of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia (2007-2009). She wrote a dissertation on humanitarian diplomacy in Ethiopia where she interviewed a vast sample of humanitarian actors. She also holds an Msc in International Politics from SOAS, University of London (2010-2011). She has held a number of positions in the international development and human rights sector; such as research and communication consultant (foundation for the Future, Amman, Jordan, 2011-2012), programme administrator (OrphanAid Africa, Paris, 2006) and pedagogy coordinator (CampusFrance, French Embassy to Guinea, 2014-2015). She is currently a British Red Cross volunteer with the Family Reunion programme for Refugees.

**Dr. Julten Abdelhalim** is a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Asian and African Studies in Humboldt University, Berlin. She obtained her Ph.D in political science from Heidelberg University
Mohammed Sirajuddeen is a Doctoral Fellow at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. His research interests include 'Governance and State', 'Armed Conflict and Political Violence', 'Identity', 'Security Studies', 'Genocide Studies', and 'Vigilantism'. Earlier in 2014 he had visited the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC), Justus-Liebig-University, Giessen, Frankfurt, Germany to present a research study titled 'Suspect Community or Communities Under Suspicion?: Tracing the Story of Indian Exceptionalism' at the International Conference 'States of Exceptionalism-Globalization, Difference, Power' held during May 8 & 9-2014. He was bestowed with 'Best Research Paper Award' at the 'National Student Academic Congress 2014- Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi, India. As a part of research assignments he had visited Germany, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates and also scheduled to visit Israel.

Prof. Monique Marks currently heads up the newly established Urban Futures Centre at the Durban University of Technology (UFC@DUT). Initially trained as a social worker, she has a doctorate in Sociology from the University of Natal, and writes predominantly in the field of criminology. She has published widely in the areas of youth social movements, ethnographic research methods, police labour relations, police organizational change and security governance. She has published five books: Young Warriors: Youth Identity, Politics and Violence in South Africa; Transforming the Robocops: Changing Police in South Africa; and Police Occupational Culture: New Debates and Directions (edited with Anne-Marie Singh and Megan O'Neill); The Spaces In Between; and Police Reform from the Bottom Up (edited with David Sklansky). She has also published over 47 peer reviewed articles and numerous reports. She sits on a number of journal editorial boards as well as the Board of Trustees of the Safer South Africa Foundation. Her research is mostly ethnographic and takes place in spaces that are considered compromising or unsafe.

Prof. Nandini Manjrekar is Professor and Dean, School of Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Her research interests are in the areas of sociology of education, education in conflict areas, gender and schooling and women's studies. She is a former Executive Council member of the Indian Association of Women's Studies, and presently Joint Secretary, Comparative Education Society of India. She is also a joint editor of the journal Comparative Education Dialogue (Sage). She has been active in the civil liberties and women's movement in Gujarat and been part of fact-finding teams into the violence in Gujarat in 2002. She has worked on the politics of textbooks and curricula (co-author, 'The Hindutva View of History: Rewriting Textbooks in India and the United States' (Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, 2009), 'Ideals of Hindu Girlhood: Reading Vidya Bharati's Balika Shikshan' (Childhood, 2011) and was principal researcher and author of 'Textbook Regimes: A Study of Nation and Identity in Gujarat' (Nirantar, 2010). Her recent research contribution was a commissioned paper by the Transnational Research Group, German Historical Institute London, titled 'The Neighbourhood and the School: Education, Marginalisation and the State in Gujarat' (www.perspectivia.net). She is currently on a visiting fellowship to the GHI, London (July-August 2016).
Nasir Uddin (Ph.D) is a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chittagong. He studied and did research at the University of Dhaka, University of Chittagong, Kyoto University, University of Hull, Delhi School of Economics, Ruhr University Bochum, VU University Amsterdam, Heidelberg University and the London School of Economics. His research interests include indigeneity, and identity politics; dialectics between colonialism and post-colonialism; notions of power and state in everyday life; the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and South Asia. His forthcoming edited books are Futures of Indigeneity: Spatiality, Identity Politics and Belongings (Berghahn, 2016) and The State against Indigeneity: A Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Orient BackSwan, 2015).

Sarwat Viqar is a PhD candidate in an interdisciplinary social science program in Concordia University, Montreal. Her thesis covers the fields of anthropology, history and political science. Full-time faculty in the Humanities/Philosophy/Religion Department at John Abbott College in Montreal. Her research work is focused on the everyday dynamics of urban environments, urban history and governance and gender and place. Her publications include: "Constructing Lyari: Place, Governance and Identity in a Karachi Neighbourhood." South Asian History and Culture, 5 no. 3 (2014): 365-383; Anwar, N & Viqar, S. "Producing Cosmopolitan Karachi: Freedom, Security and Urban Redevelopment in a Postcolonial Metropolis." South Asian History and Culture, 5 no. 3 (2014): 328-348.
Abstracts

Impersonalising personal experiences: Dialogue with the practices of fieldwork in Southeaster Bangladesh [Nasir Uddin]

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) located on the borders of Bangladesh, India and Myanmar has always been represented as the region of ethnic conflicts and insurgency in South Asia. It is a home to eleven indigenous groups known as Pahari with significant cultural distinctiveness from Bengalis. Since their migration to the CHT, the Pahari had been politically independent, and economically self-sufficient. However, the intrusion of the British (1860-1947), Pakistan (1947-1971) and Bangladesh (1971 to date) gradually pushed them to the margin of the state. Denial to the demand of separate ethnic identity in Bangladesh led them to form an organisation named *Jono-Samhati Somiti* (JSS) or “People’s Solidarity Association” resulting in violent ethnic conflicts since the state responded to it with military operations. Since then, the CHT has been viewed as the region of ethnic conflict and ethnic insurgency as killing, abduction, raping and frequent communal riots between the Pahari and Bengalis featured the region. The conflict was officially ended in 1997 with a Peace-Accord, but it did not work out accordingly and hence the CHT is still at the stage of multifaceted conflicts. Given this context, I have done fieldwork for three years in the CHT between 2004 and 2015 where I have experienced some critical issues regarding my positioning that include the question of identity, unequal power relations, gender sensitivity, security issues and ethnographic ethics. This paper focuses on my personal experience of doing ethnographic fieldwork in a risky environment where I encounter critical issues, which are not my personal problems of fieldwork, but the problems of the praxis and epistemology of contemporary anthropology.

Freedom, Militancy and Extrajudicial Violence: Methodological Aspects of Field Study in India's Kashmir Valley [Mohammed Sirajudddeen]

By dwelling on my field research in India's conflict torn Kashmir Valley which specifically dealt with the spiral of extrajudicial violence perpetrated by security agencies, the paper would first analyse the discourses on 'freedom, militancy and state violence'. The research on various forms of state violence such as enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, sexual violence and torture in Kashmir Valley forms a distinct area of socio-cultural dealing which can be termed as 'sensitive' or a 'risky' field. It gives light on the information gathered which are politically and socially sensitive in India. The dissemination of knowledge from such a venture points to the security of the individuals as well as groups involved in the sample. Therefore, after elucidating briefly, the objectives and methodology of my field study, the paper then goes for a detailed elaboration of the research procedures followed to maintain the ethical dimensions of the empirical analysis. It focuses on the variables on the basis of which my interviews with the people were carried out, the interactions born out of informed consent, different dimensions of anonymity, confidentiality, sensitivity, and the methods of data collection. Consequently, a broader theme is on the ethical as well as identity dilemmas that I confronted, which are mainly the issues of self representation, emotional challenges of field work in volatile conflict ridden atmosphere, the advancements and limitations of research, and the inherent challenges in the transmission of the findings.
Field, Ethics and Self: Negotiating Methodology in a Hindu Right wing Camp [Aastha Tyagi]

My experience on the field was for my MA my research on a Hindu right-wing women’s organisation in India. There were questions right from the standpoint on the research topic to methodology on field. Establishing contact with the Hindu right-wing men who at the first chance questioned my intentions for the research to the constant negotiation of responses during the right-wing camp for young women were some of the repeated questions that I had to negotiate. I was constantly dealing with the minefield terrain where I had to balance my concern for the young women attending these camps, without becoming patronizing and losing sight of my research, without letting my valuations bias the research, but at the same time and importantly, being conscious of my own beliefs, interviewing men and women who gave the impression that the Hindu right-wing was anti-girls and women. Also, always plaguing me was the worry about the safety of my family and respondents once the data had been compiled.

The questions that I am hoping to explore through this workshop are the interactions between the researcher and the respondents. Where is the space for emotionality, honesty and ethics and how do these interact in a ‘risk’ field site? How does one approach the research when the site throws up questions about the researcher at a personal level and thus, this has the potential to affect data interpretation, does one retreat or stay on? What happens to the data and ethics then? What is the place of identity and ideology in a site that embodies an antagonistic stance? How far should one ‘blend-in’?

Learning Zoya’s Language [Deepra Dandekar]

When I started researching Sufi shrines in Western India, I was talked into learning Urdu by my department. It was part of how mainstream discourse sincerely believes that all Indian Muslims transact in Urdu, or how all Muslim women wear the Burkha as part of their identity politics in order to express their citizenship as Indian minorities. These stereotypes extend to women’s social life as we continue to believe that Muslim women, due to their endangered citizenship would never adopt any cultural action as means of seeking reprieve from other varieties of hegemony. Muslim women’s Urdu is therefore condensed to their Burkha-like citizenship: endangered identity politics and minoritisation. When I discovered learning Urdu with Zoya, I encountered all these superficial stereotypes, as she remained initially wary, considering the history of systemic violence against Muslims in Maharashtra. But these were to soon dissolve with my strenuous efforts at learning her language, which ironically, I couldn’t use. Sufi writings are dispersed across too many languages and scripts in Western India and to reduce Sufism to Urdu, would be to reduce every relationship such as I had with Zoya to North-Indian minority citizenship and identity politics, encased in Urdu. Identity politics between Zoya and me, was therefore established through patriarchal transactions. My reasons for being told to learn Urdu remained similar to hers, being educated in Urdu-medium for being a Muslim. Patriarchies that reduced every Muslim to Urdu and enforced Hindus wanting to engage with Muslims into learning Urdu first, only replicated majoritarian identity politics.

Environmentalist protection: Feminist interview approaches and participant risk for research with Chinese NGOs [Angela Leggett]

Environmentalism has emerged as an arena in which Chinese civil society is particularly active, with potential for policy, market and social influence still unimaginable in other areas. Growing presence of Chinese environmental NGOs has been both enabled by, and a driving force of, institutional change over more than two decades. While the political sensitivity of environmental research and
safety concerns for environmentalist participants have certainly dissipated somewhat since the 1990s, ethical considerations remain crucial for my own research around Chinese NGOs and corporate environmental responsibility. China has become an increasingly “safe” and open place for foreign scholars to conduct even un-chaperoned research (Heimer and Thøgersen 2006). Yet, the legitimisation and potential influence of environmental NGOs presents a new dilemma for contemporary fieldwork; participatory methods and publication of findings may affect – for “better” or “worse” – the activities and results of organisations and their members. In this paper I ask how methodological approaches affect researcher positionality and participant risk for environmentalist fieldwork in China. Reflecting on interactions with NGO representatives and other stakeholders in Beijing, Kunming and Shaoxing during 2015 and 2016, I present feminist interview techniques as one means of reconciling the tension between the academic urge to more deeply understand participants’ experiences and the ethical desire to avoid impacting their safety or organisational activities. I see contemporary value in extending application of feminist methodology beyond explicit gender research, and am also critically reflective of ever-present power dynamics and exploitative potential. Reflections on fieldwork around environmental NGOs in China provide insights into the benefits and potential pitfalls of feminist methodology in broader politically sensitive research areas.

"We are your brothers, we will know where you are at all times": Fieldwork dilemmas amongst gangs, political strongmen and state officials in Karachi, Pakistan [Sarwat Viqar]

The objective of this paper is to foreground some of the ethical dilemmas and risks involved in fieldwork in a contested and violent political environment. In conducting an ethnography of public spaces in Karachi’s inner city, I encountered the threat of violence on an everyday basis. These encounters led to an ethical questioning of my role as a researcher as well as my responsibility as a citizen in an environment that I knew well. Two factors of positionality in particular – ethnicity and gender- emerged as significant in this process. Thus in this paper I explore how my own ethnic and gender identity both foreclosed as well as created opportunities in the field with the threat of violence as a pervasive undercurrent. In addition I am also attentive to the fact that my visible presence as a female researcher in public space, of a specific ethnic and class identity also had effects and consequences for my interlocutors. At various times, my field associates and respondents had to take on the roles of justifying my presence in the field or actively protecting me from the threat of violence. Through an awareness of these dynamics I aim to raise questions about the nature of subjecthood and citizenship in a contested postcolonial environment.

Risky closeness and estrangement in two fieldwork sites in Brazil [Andreza Aruska de Souza Santos]

In this presentation, I discuss the impact intimacy and distance has on conducting ethnographic field research, based on my own experiences in two Brazilian cities. I first address the pitfalls I encountered researching the Nova Luz region, a transportation hub and run-down residential area in São Paulo’s city centre, also known as crackland for its drug trade and consumption. In Luz I was confronted with everyday hostility, in an environment of unknown others and ever changing cityscape: new dwellers and by-passers, police removal of drug users and house eviction and demolition in deteriorated buildings. The second part of the presentation contrasts this experience to living in Ouro Preto, another Brazilian city, where the city centre is a UNESCO World heritage site. In a place where houses do not change and residents are long established in the city, the closeness and network of information produce the challenge of studying acquaintances, whose lives
and stories cannot be anonymised, just as the researcher ceases to be an anonymous entity. Drawing from 15-month fieldwork in these two distinct contexts, I discuss how research questions and findings are often limited by personal possibilities and positionalities.

**Friendship, Complicity and Danger: an exploration of the ethical dilemmas in carrying out research in the sensitive region of Xinjiang, China [David O’Brien]**

This paper will give an overview of my experiences carrying out ethnographic research in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China, with a particular focus upon the ethics of involving friendship groups in research practices. Xinjiang is a region I first lived in over 13 years ago; my research uses a grounded theory approach to explore the constructions of ethnic identities in urban areas. My paper explores ethical issues of carrying out research in a region which the Chinese government deems as highly sensitive, especially since a serious outbreak of ethnic violence in 2009, and subsequently has clamped down on any form of independent research being carried out in the region. This paper seeks to explore issues raised when researching in a sensitive area (as both region, and topic), particularly when this involves the need for the researcher to depend upon networks of friends. It is only through friendships that participants can be approached to discuss sensitive issues and their own sense of identity, since this requires a certain level of trust between researcher and participant; however this also raises important dilemmas as regards to research practices. This paper will discuss the central questions posed by involving friendship groups in sensitive research, that is: the use of friends as gatekeepers; the dangers of bias and the impact upon one’s identity as a researcher; and the respect for participants’ agential decisions to be involved (or not) in such research projects.

**Don’t Use the Word ‘Research’": Doing Ethnography in a Politically Volatile Neighborhood in Nairobi, Kenya [Ashley Wilson]**

Kenya’s 2007 presidential elections led to what was widely termed “ethnic violence,” resulting in over 1,000 deaths and 600,000 displacements. Kibera, one of the world’s largest slums located in the capital of Nairobi, is home to the opposition leader’s stronghold and saw a disproportionate number of murders and displacement. Conducting ethnographic research in Kibera months before the 2017 election presents a multitude of methodological challenges. In this paper, I reflect on two enhancements to ethnographic methods in risky environments: quantitative research and genuine collaboration with local researchers, community members, and grassroots organizations. Questions of ethnicity and land tenure are treated with great suspicion among Kibera residents, making quantitative research difficult and risky. Data from past demographic surveys have been used to justify the demolition of informal homes, garner political support, and increase taxes of the working poor. Given these abuses, Kibera residents are wary of participating in “research.” Yet, these same residents express the desire for more accurate representation of their lives.

**The Republic of Chicken and Satellites: Irreconcilable equations of citizenship, authoritarianism, poverty and fear [Julten Abdelhalim]**

In 2013, shortly after the military coup in Egypt, I started my postdoctoral project to understand the dynamics of citizenship as a minority. The result was an utter failure to break the ice and enter the field as a Muslim woman among the Copts in Egypt. I was met with suspicion; having studied abroad, and hence was regarded as a potential spy, or a recruited agent of some vague foreign anti-Egyptian forces. I shifted my focus to study the dynamics of transition to citizenship status in poor
urban dwellings. This paper deals with ethnographic material conducted during a six-month fieldwork period in different areas of Egypt and the dilemmas of ethics and positionality related to research in authoritarian settings.

Field notes from Cairo: excavating urban pasts in present [Aya Nassar]

Researchers of the Middle East increasingly find themselves in unpredictable situations, with outbursts of crises that interrupt an almost permanent state of exception. Moreover in a context of the post-colonial state in general, the relationship between the state and its archive is a paradox as Mbembe reminds us; whereby some states can try by destroying the archive to defer the testimony of the past and write time (or build space) anew (Mbembe, 2002). This presentation is based on a five months field visit to Cairo, as part of a doctoral research on post-independence Cairo and its spatial-political order. It aims to offer a reflection on conducting fieldwork in politically turbulent contexts. Researching the recent past of the Egyptian capital city meant that I had to excavate the past through my everyday encounter and movement within the city. While the 1952 state of Egypt did not destroy any archives, it has bureaucratically and politically reorganized a power/knowledge relationship that effectively incapacitates it. In my presentation I reflect on the fragmented archives I worked with, and their constitutive spaces. I also explain how urban space itself, moving through it, and navigating the political and security turbulences that disrupt it, were integral to my methodology. By interrogating these research practices I examine my own navigation between the “archives of the city” and the “city as an archive”.

Self-Perception and International Development Aid Negotiation: A Case Study of EPRDF's Ethiopia [Gabrielle Bayle]

Analyses of development aid lending to Ethiopia tend to argue that the country is a fierce negotiator and a strong advocate of self-determination when it comes to domestically allocating international aid funding and drafting one's own development project. My research seeks to argue that being an ally on the global war on terror and a guarantor of regional stability in the Horn of Africa, two arguments that are often presented as central, do not provide the explanation for Ethiopia's success. I take as an assumption that the context of its success matters less and that the analysis of the Ethiopian authorities' discourse about themselves and donors sheds light on a certain sense of self-perception and identity formation which provides a better reading of the country's ability to negotiate aid. This analysis plans to build on a qualitative research on the specificities of state formation and identity in Ethiopia and more generally on the space for agency of the African state. In order to make sense of my puzzle, I plan to conduct interviews in Addis Ababa with members of the donor community as well as with Ethiopian authorities. I will be faced with a number of ethical challenges due to the different forms of political pressure put on donors and researchers in the country. These will range from visa considerations to various ways of data collection and anonymisation.

Liberating Effects of Political Protest: Reflections about Anthropological Fieldwork in Tibetan areas of China [Emilia Roza Sulek]

Between 2007 and 2010 I conducted doctoral research in a pastoral region in the Northeastern Tibetan plateau, Qinghai Province, China. This research has been interrupted in March 2008 by the outbreak of political protests preceding the Olympic Games in Beijing. I could not resume my research until spring 2009 when I finally returned to the field. What situation did I find there and
what has changed during that troubled year? How did the political protests with the following crackdown and arrests impact my field research? This paper brings answers to the above questions and addresses complicated relationships between the researcher and her informants during fieldwork in the politically sensitive Tibetan-inhabited region of China. It reflects upon both the measures taken to protect safety of the informants as well as the effects of the constant air of insecurity on the research results. How does a position of the researcher change during fieldwork in such politically turbulent times and what other events can play a role in reversing the hierarchical order between the researcher and her informants? This paper asks which implications impact methodology and ethics in the field, and in which situations and for which research topics ‘guerilla interviewing’ (Gold 1989) and ‘guerilla fieldwork’ (Iselin 2014) could be a better choice.

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