

PhD Block Seminar/Workshop: Thursday 28 October and Friday 29 October, 10:00-17:00

Field Work Preparation and Empirical Research Methods for Interdisciplinary Area Studies

Requirements

To register for the workshop, please submit the following to graduierenschule@ur.de by 26 September 2021

- 1 page expose (conceptual framework and research question(s))
- 1 page methodological approach
- max. 1 page current state & timeline of your PhD project
- 1 page current challenges in regard to sampling, methods, methodology, and field work

This hands-on seminar/workshop will introduce the participants to basic techniques for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing qualitative data, but also help the PhD candidates to reflect on their wider methodological approaches and data collection. For this, PhD students are required to share their current state and particularly the current fieldwork and data collection challenges in advance. This will allow us to zoom in and collectively discuss your individual field work plans, discuss ethical issues around doorkeepers, sampling, field work interaction with your research partners, how to protect and use sensitive data and information for your further work, next strategic and analytic steps, et cetera.

In addition, and based on the PhD candidates' individual projects, we will operate on two interrelated dimensions, one focused on the theoretical approaches to various types of qualitative research, the other focused on the practical techniques of data collection, such as: identifying key informants, selecting respondents, collecting field notes, conducting interviews, analyzing data, writing, reflecting on own positionalities, and presenting findings. We also will discuss briefly the related theories and methods of qualitative (spatial) practice through your and my input lectures, project and methods presentation and discussion based on your projects, complemented by literature discussions as well as practicing qualitative research techniques on each other. We will also talk about the practical issues involved in the design and implementation of qualitative research methods.

As a very hands-on seminar, based on your needs and projects, we will consider questions such as the following: How do you go about starting the field/archival work for my PhD project? How do I prepare archival or field work? How do you connect theory, research design, and data collection and what are the challenges in this context? How should one structure an interview schedule or (participant) observation? How many interviews are enough? How does one ensure reliability? How do we write good fieldnotes and how do we document information during challenging dynamic fieldwork? How do I sample my research and interview partners? How do I use my field work material in my dissertation writing?

As a last preparation before you go (again) into the field (particularly after a long pause due to COVID 19 regulations), the class is organized with the following objectives in mind: (1) To give you basic training in qualitative social and spatial research in the field of area studies. This requires exposing you to issues of conceptualization, theory, research design, and strategies for framing questions. (2) To consider the various domains or topical areas in social sciences and area studies, where qualitative work has made major contributions. This includes reflecting on the usage of qualitative method in interpretive, descriptive, and explanatory research. (3) To continue the discussions on the ethical responsibilities of qualitative researchers, who have closer contact with "subjects" and "informants" as rather "field partners" than other researchers typically do. (4) To think collectively and critically about the forms of writing (articles, dissertations, books, etc.) and professional presentations that graduates of interdisciplinary area studies must master to present qualitative work to their peers and the public.