



Perspektiven auf globale Politik

AFK-EUPRA – 22: METHODS FROM THE MARGINS – DE-COLONIZING ELEMENTS OF METHODOLOGY IN CONFLICT RESEARCH

12. März 2017 · von jungeafk · in AFK-EUPRA 2017 · [Hinterlasse einen Kommentar](#)

AFK-EuPRA – Panel 22:

Methods from the Margins – De-Colonizing Elements of Methodology in Conflict Research

Chair: Alke Jenss (University of Bielefeld, Germany) & Hanna AlTaher (University of Marburg, Germany)

Presenters:

Gianna Schlichte (Goethe University Frankfurt/Main, Germany): Engaging in Radical Relationality as an Irritating (Im)Possibility

In my paper I claim that methodology inspired by postcolonial theory not only unearths how Western international institutions perpetuate hegemonic truth claims, but that at the same time engaging in a “learning to learn from below” might sense irritations within these truth claims which can open up spaces to think beyond truth in a sense of a justice to come. (Derrida 2002) Since the (mis)understanding of knowledge production as truth finding is constitutive of both, the scientific and the legal discourse, the engagement in such research accordingly has the potential to unfold a twofold deconstructive force.

The approach is informed by Spivak’s thoughts on the (im)possibilities of representation (Spivak 1988) and the respective hyper-reflexivity combined with trauma-theoretical conceptions of ethical listening



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(Felman and Laub 1991) and forms the basis of my engagement in the practice of victim representation at the International Criminal Court.

Sensing and accepting silence and the notion of re-turning the gaze, are integral to both theoretical/methodological approaches. Whereas silence is reflective of the impossibility of representation of traumatic violence within the symbolic order it is at the same time reflective of the “‘non-speakingness’ of the subaltern, its refusal to answer or submit to the gaze and questioning of the ethnographer”, the international lawyer. (Kapoor 2008, p. 120). Consequently, the questions arise, which narratives are stabilized by othering the African traumatized victim, and how the inherent epistemic violence manifests in the practice of victim representation. At which point are these narratives de-stabilized, irritated and how? Finding temporal answers to these questions require a sentient (Frank Adloss and Loic Waquant 2015) researcher who is open to irritation and getting lost (Lather 2007), as well as a lawyer who dares to unlearn the law.

Hanna AlTaher (University of Marburg, Germany) & Alke Jenss (University of Bielefeld, Germany): A Dialogue of various voices? Taking Away the Centre

Three basic elements should be part of researching in contexts where power asymmetries and colonial connotations are relevant (which applies to many, if not the majority of research contexts in conflict studies): a thorough reflexivity of the researcher’s own role and social conditioning, the construction of research as a political act as it intervenes in scientific and political discourse, and the fact that (especially empirical) research is a product of many (Kaltmeier 2012, Abu Lughod 1991) . In this contribution, we will be thinking about possibilities and imperatives to decenter the role of the researcher – what centre, which margins are we talking about, anyway? In which ways can our methodological reflections on seeing research as dialogic or resulting from a multiplicity of voices actually change narratives of conflict? In what ways are we able to challenge entrenched power relations by collaborative research, by decolonizing methodology, and by introducing mechanisms of ‘sharing’ (Smith 1999)? The contribution will follow a ‘call and response’-pattern as an alternative means of presentation.

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