



University of
Zurich ^{UZH}



Facing Methodological Challenges in Asian Studies

Graduate Student Workshop
Online via Zoom, University of Zurich
November 19, 2020



Regional social science studies with a focus on Asia are no longer at the margin of universities' degree programs. China's economic rise and Japan's soft power appeal are just two examples for the growing public and academic interest in Asia and have led to the creation of a myriad of new study programs and research institutes around the world. Given that Asian studies are interdisciplinary in nature, research and writing require a fine balance of knowledge on the country or area in focus and sound training in social science methods. Furthermore, methodologies and theoretical concepts developed in non-Asian contexts confront students with the difficulty to choose the right one among a range of possible research designs and methods and to be sensitive to a potential Eurocentric bias at the same time.

This workshop offers a platform for discussing research methodologies and writing for social science projects on all areas in Asia. Invited doctoral students will have the opportunity to present a chapter of their dissertation and receive feedback by an expert of their area of study. Potential challenges in research methodologies might include, among others

- How to select and devise unconventional research designs, i.e. comparative studies, multi-sited ethnographies and online ethnography, mixed methods designs
- How to deal with foreign-language resources, communication issues and translation? How to reflect on potentially arising misinterpretation or bias in the analysis, what are the implications for interpretation?
- How to collect and interpret data, especially on sensitive issues, as an outsider to the sample group (non-native speaker, foreigner, gender, age, other personal bias)
- How do we research social phenomena in and of Asia in times of the globalization of risks (e.g. pandemics) that obstruct the execution of research designs or deny fieldwork on site?
- How do we decide for an approach to data analysis? When is it useful to combine methods of analysis or even change a method within the ongoing research project?

Keynotes:

"Two or three things I know about methods in area studies research"

Prof. Dr. Cornelia Reiher (GEAS, Freie Universität Berlin)

"Positionality and Ethnographic Research"

Prof. Dr. Nicolas Martin (IAOS, UZH)

Discussants:

Prof. Dr. Cornelia Reiher (GEAS, Freie Universität Berlin)

Prof. Dr. Mareile Flitsch (Völkerkundemuseum/ISEK, UZH)

Prof. Dr. Nicolas Martin (IAOS, UZH)

Convenors and contact:

Dr. Helena Hof (helena.hof@aoi.uzh.ch)

Dr. Fynn Holm (fynn.holm@uzh.ch)

Nora Gilgen (nora.gilgen@aoi.uzh.ch)