



SPS Workshop 3rd term 2016-2017

Getting the most out of fieldwork

Instructor: Anselm Rink (Columbia University)

Organised by Irene Pañeda Fernandez and Ezgi Guler
Sponsored by Diego Gambetta and Klarita Gërxhani

1-2 June 2017
Seminar room 3, Badia Fiesolana

Credits: 10

Register [online](#)

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This two-day workshop is intended to help PhD students prepare their fieldwork in a hands-on manner. The goal is to get the most out of the field. What constitutes a good and flexible research design, and how does one get it off the ground? What are the most salient constraints (time, finances, bureaucracy, culture etc.)? We start off by discussing how to identify a relevant research question, how to translate it into a research design, and how to implement it in the field. Next, we go over two specific methods: field experiments and ethnography. We conclude by discussing ethical considerations and common challenges, including the management of finances.

Requirements:

By the end of the workshop, students should have a clearer idea on how to conduct their field research. To this end, students are required to write a mock donor application that synthesizes the research they plan to conduct (ca. 7 pages).

Day 1

Session 1: Research Design (9:00-12:00)

- Question (What is a good research question?)
- Theory (Translating questions into theory, and theory into empirics)
- Method (Choosing and combining methods)
- Case selection (Choosing case(s); frontloading field work)
- Discussion of participants' research interests and plans

Session 2: Field experiments (13:00-17:00)

- Flexible designs of field experiments (choosing the right design; measurement intervals)
- Statistical power (conducting power calculations in R)
- Measurement (designing large-N surveys; gathering administrative data)
- Implementation (using survey firms; training enumerators; electronic vs. paper-based surveys)
- When field experiments go wrong (attrition; switching IPs; funding crunches)
- Brainstorming good field experimental designs

Day 2

Session 3: Ethnography (9:00-12:00)

- Definition (What separates ethnography from regular qualitative research?)
- Participant observation (What is it and how do we make it systematic?)
- Qualitative interviews (Finding informants; gaining trust; getting reliable information)
- Measurement (Survey design; “randomize everything”; pre-testing)
- Quality control and supervision (Conducting sensible quality checks; using research assistants)

Session 4: Ethics and Practicalities (13:00-17:00)

- Pre-registration (writing flexible pre-analysis plans)
- Institutional Review Boards in-country and abroad (maneuvering through manifold legal reqs)
- Clearance and bureaucratic challenges (communication on the ground; visa & research permits)
- Financial resources (carrying and sending money; payment schedules)
- Tips & tricks to save money (what to bring and what to buy locally; optimizing transport)
- Safety considerations in risky settings (Embassy support; security protocols)