

Working Group

The Qualitative and Fieldwork

Department of Social Political Sciences

ABSTRACT

The Qualitative and Fieldwork Working Group (Qualifie) is a knowledge exchange and community hub for researchers, fellows and faculty members with an interest in fieldwork, ethnography, interviewing and qualitative methodology more broadly. We are part of the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute in Florence.

Qualifie understands itself as a student-led training and learning initiative. It is designed as a reading and discussion group as well as a networking forum for anyone interested in implementing qualitative methodology.

CONTACT

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Academic Year 2023

- 21 February 2023, “[Far-right environmentalism in Eastern Europe](#)”
- 25 May 2023, “[Mind mapping in qualitative data analysis, An interdisciplinary approach](#)”
- 11 May 2023, “[CANCELLED: Field notes, field diaries, What to write and how to make use of them](#)”
- 07 June 2023, “[The importance of storytelling in academic research, Milena's story, polarisation, and the anthropologist as political storyteller](#)”

Academic Year 2022

- 26 October 2022, “[Fieldwork, Activism and Research](#)” with Prof. Alexander Koensler (University of Perugia)
- 3 November 2022, **Informal Get-Together**
- 16 November 2022, [Conceptualising the Field](#)
- 7 December 2022, [Self-Care and Institutional Pressure during Fieldwork](#)
- Thursday 27th January 2022, “[Visual Methodology in Migration studies](#)”
- Wednesday 23rd February 2022, “[Methodological Triangulation](#)”
- Wednesday 09 May 2022, [Combining Political Theory and Ethnography](#)
- Wednesday 30th March, 2022 : “[Interpretivist Interviewing](#)”
- Wednesday 20th April, 2022 : “**The Ethics of Hidden Agendas**”
In field research, we are often forced to hide aspects of our research from our participants. This begs the question of what the ethics of such hidden agendas are, and what best practices we can identify. To answer these questions, we invite two field researchers, one working with ethnographic methods and the other with experiments, to talk about the subject from their respective standpoints.
- Thursday 5th May, 2022 : “**Grounded Theory in Political Science**”
Grounded Theory is an established approach to inductive theory generation. It advocates a continuous comparative method for (usually) qualitative data analyses resulting in the discovery of theory from data. The systematic approach has been effectively used in many social science disciplines, yet it remains scarcely used in political sciences. In this session we ask: how can we effectively apply grounded theory approach in political science research? What are the pros and cons of the approach and the best examples of its use in political science? We will discuss these questions with a help of an established scholar specialising in grounded theory.

Academic Year 2021

Seminar Series: A Hitchhiker's Guide to Epistemology, Theory and Methods

The Qualitative and Fieldwork Working Group (Qualifie) at the SPS department is a student-led teaching initiative and a forum for all types of researchers interested in broadening their understanding and practice of qualitative methods. Throughout the academic year we organise a series of speaker events, paper discussion sessions and run an Ethnography Book Club in order to supplement the educational offering of the SPS department.

In the first term of this academic year we aim to delve deeper into the philosophy and epistemology of social sciences in relation to research methodology. How do our epistemological priors influence the methods we employ and the way we conduct our research? What comes first - epistemology, methods or both? Can we mix epistemologies according to our research questions?

We seek to operate on a diverse philosophical landscape that allows for new perspectives of doing social science, encourages thinking outside of the box, and stifles reflection on our ways of doing research. In each of our five meetings, which form a selection rather than an exhaustive whole, we will highlight one epistemological approach and discuss how to operationalise it methodologically.

We are very happy and honoured to be joined by an excellent set of scholars who work across a range of epistemological traditions and employ diverse methodologies. In this way, we seek to create a learning environment where we can discuss both larger philosophical, ethical and meta-theoretical points, as well as their practical and tangible effects on doing research. Consequently, the meetings are organised in a form of a short lecture by the invited speaker, followed by an open debate on the theme of the event.

- Wednesday 6th of October 2021: [Interpretivism: Ethnography, Causality and Theory Driven Participant Observation](#). (Internal event only)
The session will commence with a discussion on the core tenets of an interpretivist perspective. We will then discuss whether and how ethnography and causality can work as complementary, not counterposed projects.
- Wednesday 20th of October 2021: “[Post-positivism, Fieldwork and proving causality](#)” (Internal event only)
Our second session will focus on post-positivist perspective. We will moreover discuss how post-positivism interacts with fieldwork and how we can consequently prove causal relations and mechanisms.
- Wednesday 10th of November 2021: “ [Feminism, Participatory Action Research and Constructivist Grounded Theory Method](#)” (Internal event only)
For the third session of the term, we have invited Giada Bonu (SNS) for a focus on the bridge between feminism and participatory action research from a methodological and epistemological perspective. The nexus of positionality, self-reflexivity and shared research-design building process will be explored through empirical example retrieved from a 4-years research project on feminist spaces in urban contexts between Italy and Spain.

- Thursday 25th of November 2021: “[Post-humanist Epistemology and its Implications on Research Methods](#)”
- 24th of November 2021: “[International Relations Working Group and the Qualitative and Fieldwork Working Group: Rethinking causal explanation in interpretive international studies](#)”(Internal event only)
This session will discuss Ludvig Norman’s recent article on causal explanation in interpretive research. His article develops a model for causal explanations amenable to interpretive International Relations (IR) research. A growing field of scholars has turned toward causal inquiry while stressing the importance of shared understandings, identities, and social practices for their explanations. This move has considerable potential to strengthen the contributions of interpretive approaches to IR.
- Wednesday 8th of December 2021 : “**Post-Colonialism and the Decolonisation of Political Science**”
In this session, we will discuss the core tenets of a post-colonial perspective, zooming in particularly on the question of how a post-colonial commitment bears on the decolonisation of science and practically doing research.
- **Qualitative and Fieldwork Working Group: Provisional Seminar**
The Qualitative and Fieldwork Working Group organises this student-led seminar series to provide a complementary learning facility to the qualitative research methods courses offered at the EUI. In doing so we build upon the existing curriculum on offer but concentrate on specific aspects of qualitative research. We aim to provide a hands-on approach by inviting experienced speakers to present and answer questions about a particular approach or method.