



METARESPS Online Roundtables

Methodological Aspects of Research Ethics and Safety in Political Studies

Convenors: Ester Sigillò and Alice Mattoni, Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Bologna

This cycle of roundtables aims at discussing research ethics and safety in political studies, from an interdisciplinary perspective. In recent years, academic ethical boards have been established in order to guarantee ethical and safety standards for research participants involved in any given project. The academic community has witnessed a significant variance in the appropriateness and comprehensiveness of such procedures, from overly loose guidelines to others increasingly constraining. While there is a general reflex among academics to consider the ethical review as just another bureaucratic constraint, well-designed ethical reviews can be extremely useful in encouraging scholars to reflect on the overall research process in which they and the other research participants are involved in. Each of the five sessions gather participants that come from political science, international relations, public policy, political sociology, political communication and political anthropology. No matter the research field in which they are located, scholars studying politics face numerous ethical dilemmas and safety concerns, especially when they locate their investigation in unstable political contexts or when they decide to include vulnerable groups of people as subjects in their research. The roundtables' discussions will also cover the ethical challenges of doing fieldwork in the digital era, since the increasing importance of digital media brought forward a new set of ethical concerns related to the use of social media platforms, big data, and artificial intelligence to gather and store data on political phenomena.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

The roundtables are online and open to the whole academic community, via Zoom platform. **The Zoom link and access details will be provided only to registered participants. Please register [HERE](#).** For further information you can contact: ester.sigillo@unibo.it

After panel speakers' presentations (10 minutes each), all the participants may intervene in the discussion. The roundtables' format allows the creation of an open space of interaction that encourages everyone's contribution to connect the issues of ethics and safety with diverse approaches and perspectives related to data collection, data analysis, writing and dissemination in political studies.



PROGRAMME

SETTING ROLES AND RULES: ACTORS AND FRAMINGS

February 17 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM (CET)

Welcome and opening remarks: Filippo Andreatta (Università di Bologna), Alice Mattoni (Università di Bologna) and Ester Sigillò (Università di Bologna)

Main Themes

Risk (and ethical) preliminary assessments before fieldwork; mitigation strategies; negotiating written consent forms with national and international institutions and with the ethics boards.

Speakers

Virginie Collombier (European University Institute), Alia Gana (CNRS), Alice Mattoni (Università di Bologna), Francesco Strazzari (Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna)

Chair

Ester Sigillò (Università di Bologna)

ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND SECURITY ISSUES DURING FIELDWORK

March 24 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM (CET)

Main Themes

Doing safe research and behaving ethically in unstable political contexts; negotiating field access in illiberal contexts; dilemmas on full research disclosure; cultural and political cleavages; gender issues; privacy protection; Everyday ethics and safety in risky environments; handling relationships with local authorities.

Speakers

Stephan Malthaner (Hamburg Institute for Social Research), Caitlin Procter (European University Institute), Laura Ruiz de Elvira (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement), Ilyas Saliba (Global Public Policy Institute), Massimiliano Trentin (Università di Bologna)

Chair

Francesco Strazzari (Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna)

ETHICS AND SAFETY IN DISSEMINATION AND RESTITUTION

April 14 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM (CEST)

Main Themes

Risk assessments after the field; ethical and safety issues related to dissemination; publication and ethnographic restitution (leave/send data/products to local communities?); mitigating the risk of information misuse and dealing with unexpected findings.

Speakers

Benoit Challand (New School for Social Research), Georges Fahmi (European University Institute), Gennaro Gervasio (Università Roma Tre), Kevin Kohler (Leiden University), Ester Sigillò (Università di Bologna)

Chair

Alia Gana (CNRS)



DIGITAL SECURITY AND DATA PROTECTION

May 12 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM (CEST)

Main Themes

Online surveillance, censorship, data storage and transfer, doing fieldwork in the digital era.

Speakers

Jannis Grimm (Freie Universitat Berlin), Kevin Macnish (University of Leeds), Stefania Milan (University of Amsterdam), Sebastian van Baleen (Uppsala University)

Chair

Michele Grigolo (Nottingham Trent University)

POWER AND ETHICS IN POLITICAL STUDIES

June 23 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM (CEST)

Main themes

Discussing the role of international institutions; the notion of ‘vulnerable subjects’ in unstable contexts; gender issues and inequalities; data holding and power; the soft power of ethical guidelines; researcher ethical responsibility; research reciprocity; the positionality of the researcher.

Speakers

Luigi Achilli (European University Institute), Francesco Cavatorta (Laval University), Francesco Moro (Università di Bologna), Alessandra Russo (Università di Trento)

Chair

Alice Mattoni (Università di Bologna)

The roundtables are organized with the support of the Department for Social and Political Science, University of Bologna and inspired by the research work conducted in the framework of the BIT-ACT ERC Funded Project (StG 2018802362)

