

CALL FOR PAPERS

RED LINES, RED TAPES: ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN SENSITIVE RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Conference of ERC Abortion Figurations Project

30 November - 2 December 2023, University of Warsaw

Organizing committee: Marta Bucholc (University of Warsaw), Carmeliza Soares Da Costa Rosário (Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen), Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg (Carleton College, Northfield), Marta Gospodarczyk (University of Warsaw), Lirio Del Carmen Gutierrez Rivera (Universidad Nacional de Colombia)

Submission deadline: 30 June

Submission form: <https://forms.gle/Xz8Ceqc2BgPYmL4ZA>

Notification of acceptance: 20 July 2023

Venue: Faculty of Neofilology, University of Warsaw, Dobra 55, Warsaw

Mission Statement

Is there a golden standard of research ethics in studies that cross institutional, national and regional borders to look at things that are private, clandestine or just difficult to grasp? Throughout social sciences, the tension is growing between the need to know more and more about our realities, reaching beyond the easily accessible aspects of our lives, and the need to protect human beings from suffering, harm, damage, exposure, or discomfort that scientists' striving for knowledge can cause. Despite vast global differences in norms, sensitivities, practices, and framings, social-scientific research ethics show a tendency towards increasing standardisation and institutionalization. This current tendency should make it easier to draw ethical red lines. On that, we can all agree. But too often, this chance of consent comes at a price: today, institutional red tape extends far into our research field.

In sensitive research, where red lines are particularly important, institutionalized ethical standards help prevent social-scientific studies from taking an unacceptable course. They foster caution, attentiveness and self-reflection. Ethical awareness takes a long time to grow and proliferate, and the role of institutions, procedures and professional exchange in fostering it is pivotal. However, the expansion of regulation in research ethics can also stand in the way of producing meaningful new knowledge, not by eliminating risky practices, but by discouraging researchers to reflect on which risks may be worth their consideration. This is particularly true whenever, in sensitive cross-cultural studies, researchers need to leave their ethical comfort zone, whereupon they frequently find their institutions, professional association and funding agencies unwilling to follow.

The goal of this conference is to reflect on these and other matters related to the challenges which sensitive research poses to our ethical imagination. We invite researchers in any discipline of social

sciences and humanities in the very broadest meaning of the term to share their reflections on the role of research ethics in their work, based on their experiences in the field, in writing, in their organisational careers, as policy-makers, as experts, or in any other capacity. This conference is designed as a forum of exchange for practitioners committed to the promotion of ethical awareness and responsibility. We invite the contributors to point out the areas to be developed further, to exercise productive critique of the existing solutions, and to engage with various disciplinary, regional, and cultural perspectives in order to revisit the question of red lines and red tapes.

The following topics would be of particular interest (accounts coming from the Global South as well as Eastern Europe are especially welcome; the list is intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive):

- institutionalizing research ethics (histories, pathways, agents of influence, structures of resistance and support);
- global and regional trends in research ethics in social sciences and humanities (comparisons between various institutional models and standards, agents and processes in the development of research ethics);
- research ethics as a field of struggles for recognition;
- law and ethics: legal compliance as an ethical issue;
- caught between loyalties (how to solve conflicting loyalties in fieldwork involving divergent loyalty norms);
- power-abuse in sensitive research (imposition, emancipation and unexpected consequences of power struggles in research practice);
- benefit-sharing in social sciences and humanities (concepts, best practices, limitations);
- expert's dilemmas (modes of assessment, sharing expertise and providing feedback in research ethics);
- researchers at risk (the role of ethical considerations of the researchers' own risk);
- interdisciplinary research cooperation: the clash of ethical imaginations?
- sharing ethical awareness (teamwork in complex, multicultural research collectives).

This conference is the first public event of the Abortion Figurations ERC Consolidator project based at the University of Warsaw (<http://abortion-figurations.uw.edu.pl/>). Many of the topics which we will discuss we have experienced already or anticipate coming across as a team conducting cross-continental, comparative, cross-cultural, interdisciplinary research of abortion debates, stretching between sociology, law, and linguistics. We are very much looking forward to learning from all the speakers in this conference, and we will contribute our experience as a part of the common reflection on challenges that we and other researchers studying sensitive topics are facing.

We are looking forward to receiving your abstracts (up to 300 words) sent by the end of June 2023 via this online form: <https://forms.gle/Xz8Ceqc2BgPYmL4ZA>

Please note that the conference will be held on-site. Conference sessions will be live-streamed.

Conference registration fee will be EUR 75, a reduced rate of EUR 50 will apply for students and independent researchers.

Please kindly direct any questions to the following address: red_lines_conference@is.uw.edu.pl

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