

Researching security communities of practice: Ethical concerns, challenges and coping strategies

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More recently, debates have proliferated about the ethical and methodological challenges that come with ethnographies of security and engagement with security professionals (de Goede et al 2019; Leese et al 2019; Rappert & Gould 2017). Building on these debates, this workshop is interested in concrete obstacles and ethical conflicts that arise when doing research on and with “security communities of practice” (Adler 2008; Bueger 2017) as well as the coping strategies that researchers have developed in their fieldwork.

Challenges can appear in mundane and multiple forms. For instance, what about the informal dinner conversation that was never supposed to end up as research data, and yet has produced important insights into the politics behind security legislation? Can it be justified to approach industry representatives at a trade show under the false pretense of being a possible client for their surveillance system, so that they would elaborate in detail on the technical capacities of their product? Or what about deliberately using gender or class stereotypes that we, as researchers, might be opposed to but that still seem useful in talking to informants?

We invite contributions that, building on field work experiences and drawing on critical security studies and STS, discuss the multiple ways in which how knowing about security and engaging with security milieus are co-productive of each other by focusing on one or more of the following themes:

- (1) investigating the contingent relations of researchers’ identities during various engagements with security professionals, the discourses they contribute to (unknowingly, strategically, or even by rejecting them), the representations of scientific ideals and requirements of confidentiality, as well as the different ways in which researchers are supported, mentored or hindered to conduct ethically sound but individually and politically challenging research in the field of security
- (2) focusing on ethical concerns in security studies, such as procedural ethics (e.g. how is informed consent dealt with as a requirement in social science?), situational ethics (e.g. the relationships between researchers and their informants; the situatedness of the researcher in a particular context that requires different forms of openness and engagement), or relational ethics (e.g. the responsibility of the researcher to decide which information to publish and to navigate the conflicting logics of valuations in science and security, for instance publication output and confidential information)
- (3) exploring the productive overlaps between IR/critical security studies and other fields, in particular STS and anthropology, and addressing the different ways and strategies of dealing with the messy and often secluded field of security during empirical work by exploring novel forms of collaboration and engagement with practitioners

Please submit your **abstract of max. 250 words** here:

<https://eisa-net.org/ewis-2020/abstract-submission/> and select “Workshop U”

The **deadline** for submissions is **13 January 2020**

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Nina Klimburg-Witjes (nina.witjes@univie.ac.at) and Matthias Leese (matthias.leese@sipo.gess.ethz.ch)