

(Un)thinking Research Practice:
Decolonizing Theory,
Mobilizing Methodologies,
and Open-Ended Becoming(s)

Workshop

Epifania Amoo-Adare



Crossroads Studies

Competence Network Crossroads Asia

Editors: Ingeborg Baldauf, Stephan Conermann, Claus Erik Bech Hansen, Anna-Katharina Hornidge, Hermann Kreutzmann, Katja Mielke, Dietrich Reetz, Conrad Schetter and Martin Sökefeld.

Cover Photo: Anna-Katharina Hornidge

Partners of the Network:



**Bonn International Center
for Conversion (bicc)**



Universität Bonn
Institut für Orient- und
Asienwissenschaften (IOA)
Zentrum für
Entwicklungsforschung (ZEF)



Freie Universität Berlin
Zentrum für Entwicklungs-
länderforschung (ZEMF)



**Zentrum Moderner Orient
(ZMO)**



**Humboldt Universität zu
Berlin**
Zentralasienseminar



**Ludwig-Maximilians-
Universität München**
Institut für Ethnologie



Imprint

Competence Network Crossroads Asia

Project Office

Center for Development Research/ZEFA

Department of Political and Cultural Change

University of Bonn

Walter-Flex Str. 3

D-53113 Bonn

Tel: + 49-228-731722

Fax: + 49-228-731972

Email: crossroads.coordination@gmail.com

Homepage: www.crossroads-asia.de

**(Un)thinking Research Practice:
Decolonizing Theory, Mobilizing Methodologies,
and Open-Ended Becoming(s)**

Lecturer: Dr. Epifania Amoo-Adare

Workshop

Duration: Monday and Tuesday, 9 and 10 May 2016

Time: 11.00 to 17.00 and 10.00 to 17.00 (including breaks)

Venue: Advanced Performance and Scenography Studies (APASS)

1. Workshop Description:

The premise of this workshop is that a critical pedagogy on the space of research knowledge production, and its related forces of (re)production, is a necessary condition for any intervention in (and of) that space. Consequently, we propose to challenge widespread understandings of research space and knowledge production as a binary researcher-researched structure that is given and fixed, in other words: a structure that is developed for and not a context that is developed by the various actors in the research process. We contrast this convention with an understanding of research space as both, a manifestation as well as a vehicle of the productive relations of power-knowledge.

More specifically we will look at the significance of the multiply-identified and mobile “research bodies,” as agents, interacting in various networks of relationships (and things) within, and beyond, a given society. We will utilize conceptual frameworks, derived from critical social theory, de-colonial thinking and being, feminisms, and geography to discuss questions such as: How does a spatially-oriented critical reading of the world inform our social construction of knowledge(s) on it? What is the relationship between spatiality, knowledge and power? How does (hegemonic) knowledge production arise as a consequence of struggles over (academic) place? How is the researcher implicated in appropriating, re-constructing and/or dismantling existing knowledge structures?

Here, we highlight the importance of positionality, threshold theories, and the open-ended becoming of researchers for better contestation of power-knowledge regimes that reify and universalize context-specific ontologies, cosmologies, ecologies, epistemologies, philosophies on existence, etcetera. Additionally, we will discuss critical perspectives, with a focus on border consciousness, positionality, the mobility paradigm, and decoloniality; all of which work to enhance our development of a more critically conscious research praxis. This will also include brief discussions on research method, as relates to questions of mobilizing and decolonizing methodologies, plus other modes for enabling the development of threshold theories as part of a process of (un)thinking hegemonic research practice and moving towards open-ended becoming(s), beyond the binaries of the researcher and the researched.

2. Workshop requirements:

Reading of Literature: Please try to read all of the obligatory readings in advance of the workshop as these will form the basis of the class presentations and discussions. You can also try to read some of the suggested literature, time permitting. The same goes for the suggested viewing, although some of these YouTube videos will be shown during the workshop. Additionally, a Critical Response Guideline has been provided at the end of this syllabus in order to facilitate your process of critically reading the literature (see page 7).

Workshop Presentations: For the first day of class, **please bring in a 'cultural artifact' that represents some aspect of your life.** This artifact can be something inherited, bought or found. It can be a photograph or any other object that is significant to you and forms a part of your identity, role, and/or heritage. Be prepared to share the meaning of this artifact with other workshop participants as a way of introducing yourself and one of the things that is important to you.

Workshop Participation: It is expected that all will participate in the discussions. This is seen as an opportunity to explore ideas, make connections, and share a collective questioning curiosity with each other in ways that encourage us to flourish, while also being challenged. In other words, during discussions we should aim to create a learning community within which we challenge each other's ideas and positions with utmost sensitivity and respect so as to enable mutual growth.

3. Workshop outline:

Monday, 9 May 2016, 11.00am – 1.30pm (2.5 hours)

Welcome to Postnormal Times: Critical and Decolonial Readings of the World

Obligatory Reading:

Freire, P. (1991). The importance of the act of reading (L. Slover, Trans.). In C. Mitchell & K. Weiler (Eds.), *Rewriting literacy: Culture and the discourse of the other* (pp. 139-145). New York: Bergin & Garvey. (Original work published 1983)

Grosfoguel, R. (2013). The structure of knowledge in westernized universities: Epistemic racism/sexism and the four genocides/epistemicides of the long 16th century. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 11 (1), 73-90.

Sardar, Z. (2010). Welcome to Postnormal Times. *Futures* 42, 435-444.

Suggested Viewing:

US Shocked Andorra Not in Africa - Onion News. YouTube Video retrieved at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3q_igrvnC_4

Suggested Reading:

Anzaldua, G. (2012). *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute (Original work published in 1987) (Chapter 7, *La Conscienza De La Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness*)

Garcia, M. G. (2006). Towards a Decolonial Horizon of Pluriversality: A Dialogue with Walter Mignolo on and around the Idea of Latin America. *Lucero* 17, 38-55.

Gordon, L. R. (2011). Shifting the geography of reason in an age of disciplinary decadence. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1 (2), 95-103.

Mignolo, W. D. (2009). Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26 (7-8), 1-23.

Mignolo, W. D. & Tlostanova, M. V. (2006). Theorizing from the borders: Shifting to geo- and body-politics of knowledge. *European Journal of Social Theory* 9 (2), 205-221.

Sardar, Z. (2015). Postnormal Times Revisited. *Futures* 67, 26-39.

Teo, T. (2010). What is Epistemological Violence in the Empirical Social Sciences? *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 4 (5), 295-303.

Monday, 9 May 2016, 2.30pm – 5.00pm (2.5 hours)

Positionality and the Situating of Knowledge(s)

Obligatory Reading:

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies* 14 (3), 575-599.

Rose, G. (1997). Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in Human Geography*, 21 (3), 305-320.

Suggested Viewing:

Anderson, J. (Sept 26, 2013). Qualitative Methods and Positionality. Pedagogy through Podcast Series YouTube video retrieved at: <http://youtu.be/2u-hQTV31w8>

Suggested Reading:

Bourke, L., Butcher, S., Chisonga, N., Clarke, J., Davies, F., & Thorn, J. (2009). Fieldwork stories: Negotiating positionality, power and purpose. *Feminist Africa: Body Politics & Citizenship*, 13, 95-105.

Chiseri-Strater, E. (1996). Turning in upon ourselves: Positionality, subjectivity, and reflexivity in case study and ethnographic research. In Mortenson, P. & Kirsch, G. (Eds.), *Ethics and representation in qualitative studies of literacy* (p. 115-133). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

England, K. V. L. (2010). Getting personal: Reflexivity, positionality and feminist research. *The Professional Geographer*, 46 (1), 80-89.

Moya, P. M. L. (2011). Who we are and from where we speak. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1 (2), 79-94.

Sheppard, E. (2002). The spaces and times of globalization: Place, scale, networks, and positionality. *Economic Geography*, 78 (3), 307-330.

Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6 (3), 374-385.

Takacs, D. (2003). How does your positionality bias your epistemology? *Thought & Action: The NEA Higher Education Journal*, 27-38.

Tuesday, 10 May 2016, 10.00am – 12.00pm (2 hours)

Social Construction of Space-Time, Place and Gender

Obligatory Reading:

Hoeschler, S. (2011). Place: Part II. In J. A. Agnew & J. S. Duncan (Eds.). *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Human Geography* (pp. 245-259). Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Thrift, N. (2009). Space: The fundamental stuff of human geography. In N. J. Clifford, S. L. Holloway, S. P. Rice & G. Valentine (Eds.) *Key concepts in geography* (pp. 95-107). London: Sage Publications.

Suggested Viewing:

Greene, B. (2012) *What is Space?* YouTube Video retrieved at:

<https://youtu.be/pKO2DI2dupY>

Vest, J. L. (Dec 11, 2012) Social Construction of Gender. YouTube video retrieved at:

<http://youtu.be/befMiBKPyJ8>

Suggested Reading:

Agnew, J. (2011). Space and place. In J. Agnew & D. Livingstone (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of geographical knowledge* (chapter 23). London: Sage Publications.

Cresswell, T. (2011). Place: Part I. In J. A. Agnew & J. S. Duncan (Eds.). *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Human Geography* (pp. 235-244). Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Oxford, England: Blackwell. (Original work published 1974) (Chapters 1-2: Plan of the Present Work, and Social Space)

Keith, M., & Pile, S. (1993). Introduction: The politics of place. In M. Keith & S. Pile (Eds.), *Place and the politics of identity* (pp. 1-40). New York: Routledge.

Massey, D. (1994). *Space, Place and Gender*. Cambridge, England: Polity. (Part III, Space, Place and Gender)

Relph, E. (2009). A pragmatic sense of place. *Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology*, 20 (3), 24-31.

Soja, E. W. (1985). The spatiality of social life: Towards a transformative retheorisation. In D. Gregory & J. Urry (Eds.), *Social relations and spatial structures* (pp. 90-127). Basingstoke, England: Macmillan.

Tuesday, 10 May 2016, 1.00pm – 3.00pm (2 hours)

The Mobility Paradigm and its Politics

Obligatory Reading:

Cresswell, T. (2010). Towards a politics of mobility. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 28, 17-31.

Urry, J. (2007). *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (Chapter 1, Mobilizing Social Life, and Chapter 3, The Mobilities Paradigm)

Suggested Viewing:

Cresswell, T. (December 2, 2013) Politics of Mobility. YouTube video retrieved at: <http://youtu.be/HQgwwlEnnpA>

Suggested Reading:

Brickell, K. & Datta, A. (2011). Introduction: Translocal geographies. In K. Brickell & A. Datta (Eds.), *Translocal geographies: Spaces, places, connections* (pp. 3-13). Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Cresswell, T. (2011). Mobilities II: Still. *Progress in Human Geography*, 1-9.

Cresswell, T. (2010). Mobilities I: Catching up. *Progress in Human Geography*, 35 (4), 550-558.

Cresswell, T. & Uteng, T. P. (2008). Gendered mobilities: Towards an holistic understanding. In T. P. Uteng & T. Cresswell (Eds.), *Gendered Mobilities* (pp. 1-12), Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate.

Massey, D. (1991). A global sense of space. *Marxism Today*, 24-29.

Sheller, M. & Urry, J. (2006). The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and Planning A*, 38, 207-226.

Tuesday, 10 May 2016, 3.30pm – 5.00pm (1.5 hours)

Academics of the Heart: Mobilizing and Decolonizing Methodologies

Obligatory Reading:

Rendon, L. I. (2000). Academics of the Heart: Reconnecting the Scientific Mind with the Spirit's Artistry. *The Review of Higher Education* 24 (1), 1–13.

Zahara, A. (2016). Refusal as Research Method in Discard Studies. *Discard Studies*. Retrieved April 4, 2016, from: <http://discardstudies.com/2016/03/21/refusal-as-research-method-in-discard-studies/>

Suggested Viewing:

Lima, M. (May 21, 2012) Power of Networks, RSA Animate. YouTube video retrieved at: <http://youtu.be/nJmGrNdJ5Gw>

Suggested Reading:

Craun, D. (2013). Exploring Pluriversal Paths Toward Transmodernity: From the Mind-Centered Egotry of Colonial Modernity to Islam's Epistemic Decolonization through the Heart. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 11 (1), 91-113.

Darder, A. (2015). Decolonizing Interpretive Research: A Critical Bicultural Methodology for Social Change. *The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives* 14 (2), 63-77.

Finley, S. (2008). Transformational Methods. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 886-889). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Keating, A. (2013). *Transformation now! Toward a post-oppositional politics of change*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press. (Introduction, Post-Oppositional Resistance? Threshold Theories Defined and Enacted)

Mountz, A., Bonds, A., Mansfield, B., Loyd, J., Hyndman, J., Walton-Roberts, M., Basu, R., Whitson, R., Hawkins, R., Hamilton, T., & Curran, W. (2015). For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14 (4), 1235-1259.

Nnaemeka, O. (2004). Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way. *Signs* 29 (2), 357-385.

Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

Shahjahan, R. A. (2014). "Being 'lazy' and slowing down: Toward decolonizing time, our body, and pedagogy." *Educational Philosophy and Theory: Incorporating ACCESS* 47 (5), 488-501.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous people*. London: Zed books.

4. Critical Response Guidelines

A text can convey information to us, but usually when we read a text we respond not to the information (or facts) but to the ideas (interpretations, conclusions, assertions) that the author presents. When we respond to a text critically we are questioning the author's ideas, methodology, assumptions, techniques, strategies or choices.

A critical response, then, results from questioning. Here are some **general** questions that you can use as a model to formulate specific questions about a specific text.

- * What is the problem or question that motivates the author?
- * From what context is the author writing?
- * What argument is the author putting forth? What is the thesis?
- * What contradictions do you find in the text? Why are they there? How do they affect your understanding of the argument?
- * What evidence does the author use to support his or her assertions? Why?
- * How is the text structured? How does the structure affect your understanding of the author's argument?
- * What kinds of connections can you bring to the text? How has your own experience informed your reading of the text?
- * What do you see as the key passages in this text? Why are they important? How do they work with the rest of the text to convey the author's meaning?
- * What assumptions do you bring to the text? To what extent has the author considered your needs as a reader?

Note: You do not need to use every single question, plus you might have questions of your own making.