

**Embracing Messy Methods:
Digital, mobile and international research practices
May 24-26, 2018, Goethe University Frankfurt**

Researchers often feel that conventional handbooks have already conclusively laid down the research methods for our disciplines. However, when engaging in empirical work, we experience that the social worlds we study and the academic structures do not correspond with those of our predecessors. Especially in the global South, pervasive political and economic shifts as much as the changes in technologies and mobilities bring to the fore their limitations. Due to the immediacy of these ruptures, and frankly, because these toolkits were not designed for use in these contexts. Instead of following these guidelines, our research practices are perhaps better described as continuous process of improvisation, as messy. They require us to rely on those parts of established tool sets that appear useful, adapt approaches from other disciplines and tinker with new instruments that seem more promising. Our workshop neither aims at establishing new rules, nor writing handbooks for others to follow but rather to share and discuss the methods various scholars have experimented with to produce innovative research.

We, as researchers, are currently confronted with three key challenges: *Digitalization* allows for new modes of interaction, in which neither actors nor their practices can be observed by conventional means. Moreover, it radically expands possibilities for communication between researchers and their interlocutors. The changing character and intensification of *mobilities* in the global South call for multilevel, cross-national or transregional analyses. Identifying situated knowledge becomes a critical challenge, while simultaneously taking the global into consideration. We contend that similar changes impact us as researchers. Like working in transdisciplinary research groups the *internationalization* of research affects the ways by which we produce knowledge. It accentuates social differences among researchers, and therefore how we navigate institutional settings.

In an attempt to reconfigure the research toolkit, we intend to complement ongoing critical reflections of knowledge production. Specifically, ours is an invitation to embrace the messy methods that make-up our research practices – what our research process is rather than what it ought to be. We invite contributions that examine these topics across various disciplines, including African Studies, Asian Studies, Cultural Studies, Gender and Queer Studies, Geography, History, Literature, Media Studies, Political Science, Social Anthropology and Sociology.

Please submit your abstract of not more than 300 words and a biographical note of up to 150 words (as doc or pdf) to the organizers (Bachmann@em.uni-frankfurt.de) by March 15, 2018. Your draft paper (10 pages) should reach us by May 7, 2018. Discussions and findings from the workshop are intended for publication. Limited funding is available to cover selected participants' travel expenses and accommodation. The workshop is organized by the research programme Africa's Asian Options (AFRASO) at Goethe University Frankfurt.