

SHAKE THOSE METHODS! – THE ART OF DOING RESEARCH

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Katja Wehde studied English, German and Education at the University of Dresden as well as Cultural Studies during a DAAD-funded stay at the English and Foreign Languages University in Hyderabad, India. After her B.A., she completed a Master’s degree in Transcultural Studies at the University of Heidelberg. In 2014, Katja Wehde has been awarded a doctoral scholarship from the *International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture* in Giessen, Germany, where she is currently working on her doctoral project entitled “Translating Transcultural Objects: Narratives of Otherness in Educational Measures of Ethnographic Museums in Germany and Great Britain.”

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As artist, curator and scholar Raul Gschrey looks into socially and politically relevant topics in a multifaceted way. In the past years he has examined the phenomenon of visual surveillance and explored artistic subversions. He is co-curator of the video gallery “con[SPACE]” in Frankfurt that focuses on urban space. His long-term exhibition and publication project “grenzlinien/borderlines” deals with irregular migration in a European context. He is teaching at the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences and working on his PhD thesis at the *International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture* (GCSC) and Internationales Promotionsprogramm (IPP) in Giessen, Germany.

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Shake Those Methods! – The Art of Doing Research

In the winter term 2015/16, the [GCSC](#) research area ‘[Visual and Material Culture](#)’ held a number of meetings on the application of the research methodology while conducting research in the study of culture. As the immediacy of practical application of the research methods leaves a strong imprint on the ideas and knowledge that appear in academia, we wanted to report on our discussions in the light of the theoretical concept of ‘emergence.’

Our starting point of discussion was the misconception that research proceeds in linear and homogeneous ways. Applying methods in research is often regarded as (or confused with) the application of a concrete set of practices that will solve a clearly defined problem. Research, on the contrary, is often messy, spontaneous, chaotic, surprising. Methods and research material emerge in a continuous process of negotiation.

Therefore, rather than taking the dogmatic and deterministic script of methodologies for granted, the group of graduate students strove to explore the ways in which different methodological considerations can bring out the excitingly complex nature of fieldwork, whether in archives, online, or in informants’ homes. In that way, ‘emergence’ of a method (its spontaneous evolvment during the fieldwork) was taken as a structuring principle for analyzing conducted research practices.

Over the course of several research sessions, our group discussed different methods and their potentials: given that every type of fieldwork is different, there is an array of topics, data, and people that emerge when applying a particular research method. Such analysis also highlighted the need for explicit self-reflexivity, in which we perceive the researcher as one of the defining components of the research — it is up to the researcher what questions are asked, what people are approached, and which photographs are chosen to illustrate the situation.

In our discussions, our main objective was to move away from the reductionist approach that sees methods as ‘a tool,’ and rediscover them as a set of conditions that allow knowledge to emerge. Each of the sessions was hosted by one of the research area’s members; the most interesting discussions, questions, and constructed frameworks were outlined in the reports. We hope that you as a reader will find these issues interesting.