

Call for papers
Knowledge Production, Ethics, and Reflexivity in South Asia
AJEI Joint Workshop

**IISER (Bhopal) - CSH (Delhi) – IFP (Pondicherry) – Alliance Française de Bhopal
EHES-CESAH (Paris)**

5th, 6th, 7th MARCH 2024



Description of the Workshop

This workshop aims to discuss, outline, and debate young researchers' quests for Ethics and Reflexivity in their journey to produce knowledge. Knowledge production, ethics, and reflexivity are often framed as goals to inspire research at all stages, starting with the research design. Scientific skills and ethical qualities acquired in the field of social sciences and humanities research need a particular ethical reflection to acquire relevance: methodological rigor, evaluation, and selection of sources, context analysis, identification and choice of sample, selection of the field, disposition to non-judgmental observation, critical and non-prejudicial interpretation of data, responsibility in communicating results to stakeholders or public dissemination of the research, acquire in the social sciences and humanities a particular ethical relevance. These aspects, in addition to qualifying the methodology and its scientific value, are a constitutive part of the very integrity of research, whose ethical principles and rules of conduct direct the activity of all researchers.

A purported purpose is to highlight the possible implicit -often underestimated- risks arising from investigations involving human subjects and the main critical issues related to the possible invasiveness of the private sphere -that such studies entail- to contain and prevent discriminatory effects that may result. Hence, ethical criteria are indicated to facilitate the researchers in making choices and putting in place measures to concretely protect the dignity, autonomy, safety, confidentiality, and well-being of research participants and interlocutors.

As suggested by the title *Knowledge Production, Ethics, and Reflexivity in South Asia*, the workshop investigates methodological aspects applied in social sciences research, which include (but are not limited to) knowledge production, ethical concerns, fieldwork, and the researcher's reflexive approach to deal with the fieldwork, writing, and the crises that emerge from fieldwork and writing. To discuss these topics, we have identified four main sub-themes and research questions that intersect the methodological discussion with the environmental, political, and social dimensions.

→ How researchers' practices are evolving to integrate an ecological dimension? How can researchers rethink sustainability in the context of their work against the backdrop of the global Anthropocene? The first sub-theme, "Research and Environmental Issues," examines the way anthropologists, historians, literary and cultural studies scholars deal with the environment as a theme of research and the challenges they face.

➔ What is the role of memory in the transfer, preservation, and circulation of material practices and local knowledge systems in the face of increasing urbanization, mass migration, and erosion of identity and habitats? This subtheme addresses the interconnectedness of memory, entangled histories and affects, invoking shared heritage and practices against displacement, conflict, migration, and evolving dynamics of home and belonging in South Asia. Located broadly within the field of memory studies, here, we seek to engage with contemporary debates and interventions, encompassing ethical and methodological imperatives involved in such research and their dissemination.

➔ What are the predominant ethical dilemmas faced by researchers studying religion and religious figures in South Asia, and how do these challenges impact their methodological approaches? How do personal beliefs and the socio-political context in South Asia shape the ethical considerations of researchers studying religious practices and figures, and how is this reflected in their research outcomes and engagement with the communities they study? These questions are aimed at exploring the complex dynamics between personal ethics, scholarly research, and the socio-political fabric of South Asia in the field of religious studies.

➔ Is the work carried out by scholars (mis)used by politicians/interest groups? Is active participation necessarily a guarantee of scientific objectivity and impartiality? How can we comprehend and engage with this participation when the researcher is not merely a scholar but also a social and cultural activist? The third sub-theme, “The Use and Abuse of Research,” will apprehend the topic of “research and political/social impact,” especially related to scientific dissemination as the essence of knowledge production (output and outcomes of the political exploitation of scientific data. It also raises the question of the impartiality of researchers / their commitment to their subject and their field while being deeply involved, sometimes as an employee or as a social activist.

Output/ Expected results

This workshop will look at the construction of commonly shared research principles and the conceptualization of the researchers’ position and concerns, especially while conducting participatory research through a framework of intersectionality. The papers should offer interpretations of research practices (empirical or not), researchers’ self-perception, the construction of its approach and position, and risk evaluation that are deeply situated and grounded in processes of social-cultural-political-economic identity formations and expressions. More recently, the question of environmental protection as a pervasive and shared concern is emerging in researchers’ way of choosing and designing their fieldwork. Through intersectional readings of Knowledge Production, Ethic concerns, and Reflexivity, this workshop exposes and subverts the dominant discursive façade of standardization of the mere use of qualitative research approaches in social sciences, which often questions the objectivity and relevance of social sciences as a scientific discipline in the broader debate related to scientific dissemination and its application in current political designs.

Practical information / guidelines for attending the Workshop

We encourage participants to discuss *Knowledge production, ethics, and reflexivity* through empirical observations and case studies and/or submit methodological and theoretical reflections. We invite advanced post-graduate students (Masters) and Ph.D. Students from the Humanities and Social Sciences, particularly from the following disciplines to submit their proposals: Literary Studies, Social Anthropology, Sociology, History, Cultural Studies, Film Studies, Memory Studies, Art History, Geography, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Religious Studies, Political Science, Urban Studies, Science and Technology Studies (STS).

Participation Requirements:

Participants can be affiliated or independent researchers. No fee is applicable for joining the Workshop. You are free to join the AJEI association through our link. The lunch will be covered by IISER, which can also provide lodges on request with (affordable) prices reserved for scholars discussing their papers. Train ticket (2 AC & 3 AC) costs for participants will be reimbursed. Please note that neither AJEI nor IISER covers the expenses for attending the Workshop, such as flight tickets, and these should be supported by the candidates' affiliated institutions or by themselves.

For assistance related to participation expenses, please contact AJEI: ajei.office@gmail.com.

Program Outline:

The workshop will be held at The Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Bhopal (IISER Bhopal) Campus from March 5th to 7th, 2024. The program includes panel discussions, roundtables, and plenary sessions with senior researchers (convenors) and promotes peer learning.

AJEI members and volunteers will be present "on-site" to guide and help the delegates during the entire Workshop and online to assist them in planning their conference trip to India. Beyond the academic setting, you are invited to attend cultural events and programs, thanks to the partnership with Alliance Française de Bhopal:

-Visit the Bhimbetka archaeological site and other unique attractions located in the surroundings.
-Participation in the "Night of Ideas": a roundtable meeting at the Alliance Française with guest researchers, open to a larger audience.

-Visit an exhibition of Women artists from Madhya Pradesh to celebrate International Women's Day.

NB: The detailed program of the Workshop will be sent by the end of December 2023. AJEI and IISER volunteers will assist the selected candidates before and during the workshop.

Timeline:

1. Abstracts in English, from 250 to 500 words maximum, are expected by the **30th of November 2023** and should be sent to ajei.office@gmail.com
2. Successful applicants will be notified by **20th December 2023**.
3. Final papers of 8,000 words maximum should be submitted by **14th February 2024**.

The workshop will be held ONSITE ONLY at The Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Bhopal (IISER Bhopal) Campus from March 5th to 7th, 2024.

The workshop will be chaired by Drs. Renny Thomas and Anuparna Mukherjee (Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IISER Bhopal) in collaboration with Dr. Ingrid Le Gargasson (Director, AF Bhopal).

The workshop is organised by AJEI (Johan Krieg & Daphné Reguiessé), IISER Ph.D. scholars (Shajeem Muhammed Fazal & Pratiti Roy), and CSH New Delhi (Spoorthi Gangadikar & Florian Vigroux).