Conducting Field Research in Contexts of Violent Conflict

An Annotated Bibliography

WP 1 “Governance and Conflict”
Working Paper No. 3

Nathalie Gasser

2006
Collaborating Institutions

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The overall aim of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) “North-South” is to enhance sustainable development in selected contexts through research partnerships involving institutions within Switzerland as well as their partners in developing and transition countries. By developing an understanding of syndromes of global change, identifying mitigation potentials, and supporting innovative solutions, the NCCR North-South aims to generate new knowledge, develop research capacities, and support societies in the South and East as well as in Switzerland.

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Preface

This annotated bibliography focuses on literature on strategies of how to conduct field research in social contexts where highly polarized conflicts prevail. This is a topic largely neglected by the literature on qualitative field research. The bibliography consists of literature that is mainly, but not exclusively, concerned with field research in violently divided societies. Reflections on the subject are shaped by two main disciplinary approaches: (1) by social anthropological research (2) by “applied” development-oriented research. From a historical perspective, social anthropology is the discipline from which the practice of systematic field research emerged, mainly through the method of participative observation. It is therefore not surprising that most of the literature dealing with the subject of field research in violence prone areas stems from this discipline. Despite an ever increasing body of literature concerning new anthropological theories and perspectives on violence on the one hand, and general methodological issues on the other hand, little is published on the practical implications and methodological challenges a social anthropologist is confronted with while conducting field research in a conflict setting. Sensitive methodological issues tend to be discussed in personal conversations between researchers rather than to be documented for a wider public. There are still few written reflections on the subject and the existing ones are thematically extremely heterogeneous, revealing individualised and often improvised field research strategies. As a consequence of a particularistic approach social anthropologists working in conflict settings tend to focus exclusively on one party of the conflict.


Another body of literature is concerned with strategies of field research in violence prone areas by practitioners working for non-governmental, governmental and intergovernmental organisations. This body of development-oriented literature offers ideas, methods and techniques for dealing with conflicts. Under a wide range of labels such as aid and development, human rights, community relations, peace and justice, emergency relief, conflict resolution and prevention, a heterogeneous set of interdisciplinary and action-oriented
methods and guidelines can be found. Compared with social anthropological texts, most of
the literature in the field of development research is clearly action-oriented and not based
on a particular theory. Instead of a theoretical foundation, this body of literature provides a
set of practical tools for those working in ‘dangerous fields’ such as Anderson (1999),
Fisher (2000), Huntington (2005), Reber (2005) and Stiefel (1998). As development re-
search takes a holistic approach, it mostly aims to take into account several of the conflicting
parties (or ‘stakeholders’).

This annotated bibliography provides an overview of the existing literature in both fields
described above. A thematic index of authors can be found at the end of the bibliography. ¹

Please note: With the exception of some abstracts written by the author, most abstracts are
excerpts from the original documents and are liable to the respective authors copyright.

¹ I would like to thank Tobias Hagmann for his suggestions and comments.
Annotated Bibliography

A


Statement of principles released by the American Association of Anthropology (AAA) to assist anthropologists when dealing with ethical issues.


The book’s primary goal is to challenge aid agency staff members to take responsibility for the way their assistance affects conflicts. The “do no harm”-approach should help aid agency staff to step back and look more closely at the conflict situation that they are operating in and seek lessons from past actions by other aid agencies to try and decrease the negative impact of aid and to ensure that aid is conducted in a conflict sensitive way. The book's target audience includes aid agency staff and the wider international development community and is not geared to a heavily academic audience.


This article examines the characteristics of recent ethnographies of "conflict zones," especially those that seek to bring an experience-near depiction of violence to the reader. These works are contrasted to older ethnographic treatments of violence. A number of critiques concerning these works are considered. The article concludes with a discussion of the several roles (methodological, conceptual, and moral) that the human rights movement has played in helping to formulate the agenda for the new ethnographies of violence and conflict.

B


The concern with ethics in North American cultural anthropology discourages political economy research on unequal power relations and other ‘dangerous’ subjects. US anthropologists define ethics in narrow, largely methodological terms – informed consent, respect for traditional institutions, responsibility to future researchers, legal approval by host nations, and so on. The responsibility of the researcher to uphold ‘human rights’ or to document political repression and suffering is not merely dismissed by mainstream anthropology as a partisan issue outside of the realm of scholarship, but is actually condemned as ethically problematic. The growing postmodernist deconstructivist approach within US anthropology allows ethnographers to obey their discipline’s narrow ethical dictates through a reflexive investigation of the hermeneutics of signs and symbols devoid of political economic social context. Drawing on his fieldwork experiences in Central America, the author argues that anthropologists have a historical responsibility to address larger moral issues because their discipline’s traditional research subjects – exotic others in remote Third World settings – are violently being incorporated incorporated into
the world economy in a traumatic manner that often includes starvation, political repression, or even genocide. Meanwhile, in the name of ethics, North American anthropologists continue to ignore or avoid the human tragedies engulfing their ‘research subjects’.


Abused women are a very sensitive group with whom to conduct research. As such, researchers need to be aware of this inherent sensitivity and should design their research accordingly. The ethics of social research, the implications of conducting research on sensitive topics, the possible exposition of the participants to stressful moments for the sake of the interview are important issues to be taken under serious consideration by the researcher prior to undertaking the fieldwork. However, during the fieldwork the researcher might face issues which she had paid less attention to while designing the inquiry, namely issues of dealing with the anxiety that the interviews would expose on herself too. It is well recognised in the literature that the rights and safety of the participants must be of paramount importance to the researchers in every research project. Still, the researcher's 'safety' should not be underestimated or be given little attention. This paper based on the experience of conducting research with abused women documents the issue of researcher's anxiety which was a salient issue throughout the study. Documenting the research process, from the research design through to issues which arose after the fieldwork, the paper draws attention on the issue of anxiety experienced by the researcher in various stages of the research, including prior, during and after leaving the field, and provides ways that these were dealt with.


How does an ethnographer write about violence? How can he make sense of violent acts, for himself and for his readers, without compromising its sheer excess and its meaning-defying core? How can he remain a scholarly observer when the country of his birth is engulfed by terror? These are some of the questions that engage Valentine Daniel in this exploration of life and death in contemporary Sri Lanka. In 1983 Daniel "walked into the ashes and mortal residue" of the violence that had occurred in his homeland. His planned project--the study of women's folk songs as ethnohistory--was immediately displaced by the responsibility that he felt had been given to him, by surviving family members and friends of victims, to recount beyond Sri Lanka what he had seen and heard there. Trained to do fieldwork by staying in one place and educated to look for coherence and meaning in human behavior, what does an anthropologist do when he is forced by circumstances to keep moving, searching for reasons he never finds? How does he write an ethnography (or an anthropography, to use the author's term) without transforming it into a pornography of violence? In avoiding fattening the anthropography into prurience, how does he avoid flattening it with theory? The ways in which Daniel grapples with these questions, and their answers, instill this groundbreaking book with a rare sense of passion, purpose, and intellect.

Daniel describes an event witnessed by one of his informants in the fieldwork context of Sri Lanka: A daughter witnessed her father's murdered body being dragged away, tied to an army jeep, in the midst of the applause and cheering of soldiers. In one instance she asks the author to write about the way her father came to his brutal death and in the another instance she asks him never to write about her father at all, because the way he was killed was a direct negation of all he had lived by. Daniel reflects on how writing can be commensurate with this kind of divided responsibility? He suggests a theory of representation and a mode of writing.


Short paragraph about "Writing and Violence" (pp. 31-33): What is the form through which violence may be written about when the foundation is that it exceeds limits? Does it tear the facts of violence out of context? Does the author stand in relationship of a voyeur to the narratives of suffering? While there cannot be a single answer to the nature of this responsibility Das argues that one cannot simply hide behind the axiological neutrality of Max Weber and should take responsibility.


Qualitative research ethics discussions have established a sound knowledge and practice base that offers advice on the protection and rights of research informants. This paper, although it supports the primacy of informant safety, will highlight less visible research debates. The potential for vulnerability and harm of the social work researcher will be explored. The value of achieving heightened empathy and emotional resonance with research participants is considered a process, which the author suggests is likely to increase the richness of research data, but may also accentuate the researchers vulnerability or distress. The author's experience in personal research with vulnerable informants and being a social work research supervisor will be used to reflect on processes and practices, which she claims may make social work researchers particularly vulnerable to conflict and distress. Data from her recent research which explores the experiences of social work researchers will be used to illustrate these issues.


The Senoi Semai of Malaysia have acquired a reputation for being one of the most non-violent peoples known to anthropology. This essay explores the question of Semai violence through interviews with men who have committed homicide while in a state of possession, and an interview with a participant in a 1949 massacre of Chinese villagers that was carried out in retaliation for a raid on a Semai village by Chinese Communist insurgents. In Semai storytelling violence is recounted with relish, while first-person accounts of violent acts are descriptively revealing but emotionally neutral. This essay attempts to represent a Semai narrative and to set it into several of its many contexts, including the author's fieldwork.

In *Fieldwork Dilemmas* ten anthropologists disclose the political and physical dangers inherent in field research. Focusing on former socialist states, they vividly depict the upheavals of everyday life in eastern Europe, revealing how their informants and the communities in which they live undergo political and economic dislocations, plummeting living standards, emerging gender inequalities, and ethnic and nationalist violence.


This book describes ACORD’s (international African-based NGO) research 'Gender-sensitive Design and planning in Conflict-Affected Situations', carried out during 2000 and 2001 in five communities living in the shadow of violent conflict in Juba (Sudan), Gulu (Uganda), Luanda (Angola), Timbuktu (Mali) and the Lower Shabelle region (Somalia). It also includes analysis of data collected earlier in Eritrea and Rwanda. Two main questions are examined in this book: what is the impact of war on gender relations? And can gender relations contribute to conflict? The analysis in this book explores the term 'gender relations' and unvels it into: gender 'roles', 'identities', 'ideologies', and 'institutions/power structures,' examining how each of these changes are as a result of war. It finds that, while gender is a factor in perpetuating violence, it is a factor in rebuilding social relations and peace. This book also addresses the challenges in methodologies and tools for research in turbulence. The aim is to develop flexible and sensitive research methods that go beyond information collection into engaging in joint reflection with communities about issues confronting them. Agencies should no longer continue to work only 'in' conflict rendering practical services, but also 'on' it with communities to analyze and address the factors which perpetuate it.


“The most intellectually high-powered essay (...), who sees all efforts by theorists to posit “closure” as an act of totalizing violence which contributes to the objectification of victims. Rather the task of the fieldworker is to be a witness-emissary, to tell the story of those destroyed, and ultimately to become physically transformed by the experience, offering a redemptive vision into the inchoate. This is a striking vision, one which gives the ethnographer great moral responsibility. Yet Feldman tends also to romanticize violence as the source of the desired protean anti-totalizing impulse.” (Excerpt of Review: Lindholm, Charles (1999). CSSH, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 601-602).

This source book is for people working in areas affected by conflict and violence. Easy to use, well laid out and including helpful visual materials it provides a range of practical tools, processes, ideas and techniques for tackling conflict. These tools have been developed over a number of years by the organisation "Responding to Conflict (RTC)" in collaboration with practitioners from around the world. Part I is a guide to understanding conflict, including down to earth techniques for conflict analysis and the critical issues that must be taken into account - power, culture, identity, gender and rights. Part II explains how to build effective strategies to address conflict, including how to influence policy within organisations. Part III focuses on action: intervening directly in situations of acute conflict, addressing the consequences and working on the social fabric which conditions the emergence of conflict. Part IV introduces the skills involved in the necessary processes of evaluation and learning in order to improve future interventions. The book embodies and reflects the rich diversity of over 300 practitioners from some 70 countries who, in RTC "Working with Conflict" courses, have pooled their variegated experience and adapted these methods to suit a wide range of situations. Examples and cases in the book are drawn from around the world - including Cambodia, Afghanistan, South Africa, Kenya, Northern Ireland and Colombia.

G

Gaigals, Cynthia and Manuela Leonhardt (2001). *Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development.* International Alert, Saferworld and IDRC (online publication).

This report aims to provide a critical overview of the approaches to development being defined by donors, academic institutions, as well as NGOs and agencies charged with the delivery of effective aid and development programmes in conflict-prone and conflict-affected areas. Seeking to highlight the range of different approaches and to identify both their strengths and limitations, the report concludes by identifying some of the important policy issues to be addressed if conflict-sensitive development approaches are to have broader relevance and impact. The report draws on the findings of Saferworld’s and International Alert’s research, policy dialogue and field work on approaches to peace and conflict-sensitive development, as well as a consultative meeting held in Ottawa in November 2000 attended by government, academic and civil society experts from around the world.


Women anthropologists working in areas of conflict and risk must address specific practical and philosophical concerns, including the ethical issues involving the exposure of patterns of crime and violence in a community, limitation of movement and constant surveillance, and mistrust relating to the anthropologist's background. These issues are addressed in the context of the author's field research with a transnational migrant community in the Dominican Republic.

Linda Green analyzes “fear” in a personal and political context. The culture of fear and that has reigned in Guatemala since the 1960s has unravelled the social fabric by infusing distrust into friendships and family ties. Fear has entered the social memory and the social practices. Silence and secrecy are the concomitants ethnographers face when they want to carry out fieldwork in a country that is still under authoritarian control, where counterinsurgency units have a free hand and death squads intimidate and assassinate citizens and foreigners alike. Green sketches the eerie calm yet visceral disquiet of everyday life under repression. The culture of subterranean terror in the town of Chicaj fuses with the routines of fieldwork as Green herself is summoned to the military commander who controls the area. (…). Sharing her experience with the widows of Guatemala, she learns of the importance of silence as a strategy of survival as well as an instrument of repression. Coming to grips with fear does not mean succumbing to the state of normalcy and routinization on which it thrives but to endure its ambiguity in memory and defiance.


A critical self-reflexive article about the author’s field research in the central Andean Highlands of Peru. While not intending to conduct field research in a society at war, once in the field the author is caught up in the violence of an emerging conflict. Violence, death, distrust and fear were commonplace. She was forced to alter fieldwork goals and methods. The author reflects, very personally, on making and accepting her mistakes and about taking responsibility towards the field. She suggests how fieldwork informs important phenomena in ways otherwise impossible to see and survey.


Henry discusses research in a situation of conflict between the government and trade unions in Trinidad. She was able to establish a rapport with both sides and discusses how she got around attempts to get her to abandon her neutrality. The article offers a set of strategies when dealing with specific fieldwork related situations and problems.


The author conducted field research in the Los Angeles Police Department. Whereas most officers initially were wary and sceptical of his presence most of them grew friendly and helpful with time. Herbert analysis his relation with the informants and how he fictionally transformed from “spy” to “okay guy”. He further discusses the validity of data in the context of his fieldwork experience.

The report addresses the issue of special risks to anthropologists during fieldwork and to identify the variety and relative severity of risks that confront anthropologists in the field. It identifies three significant categories of frequent and serious risks to anthropologists: malaria, hepatitis and accidents with vehicles. Other useful inclusions in the book are suggestions on various emergency communication devices, an annotated bibliography of the most useful health and safety guides and an interesting discussion on the spatial issue of dispensing health care in the field.


DFID (Department of International Development) and GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit) established a joint Risk Management Office (RMO) in 2002 to enable DFID and GTZ programmes to work safely and effectively without exacerbating the conflict. Since then, it has become increasingly clear that good development practice has a crucial role to play in helping staff to stay safe and work effectively. The RMO has developed the SEDC approach by merging good development practice, Risk Management and Do No Harm. It is the first time that these concepts have been merged. RMO has adapted the concepts of Risk Management and Do No Harm, which are usually associated with humanitarian work, to the development context. It has taken the RMO a year to design and test the SEDC analysis.


The author discusses the issue of dealing with emotions during field research. He concludes, that dealing with emotions during field research and talking to others (participants and other researchers) does not have anything to do with professional weakness and, on the contrary, it allows us to gain deeper knowledge about and ourselves and others.


As anthropology turns toward the cultural issues of the 21st century, more and more ethnographic fieldwork is and will continue to be conducted in regions fraught with conflict, instability, and terror. Despite a growing literature that seeks to develop new theories and perspectives for the study of violence, little mention is made of the practical matters of survival in perilous field sites and how the anthropologist’s experience of violence in the field should be considered. What is needed is a pragmatic strategy for dealing with threats to the safety, security, and well-being of anthropologists and informants who work amid the menace of violence. Drawing on my own fieldwork in Haiti, I suggest the adoption of new tactics for ethnographic research and survival in dangerous fields—strategies that challenge the conventional ethics of
the discipline, reconfigure the relationship between anthropologist and informant, and compel innovation in negotiating the exchange of data under hazardous circumstances.


Two recent books have shown the fruitfulness of approaching the analysis of political violence and terror based on a set of general anthropological ideas about meaning formation, cosmology and ritual. One of these works in particular reveals links between what may be described as the cultural construction of political violence in modern industrialized contexts and the shaping of particular spatial and bodily symbolism among social actors. The other book has contributed to the field of cross-cultural studies of political violence by examining connections between the making of particular concepts of the past - or history - among groups of actors, and the suffering and perpetration of political violence. This study sheds general light on the relationship between collective remembering of violence and spirals of ethnic violence. This review essay also briefly assesses a third book, i.e. a collection of essays which discuss different aspects of what it means in theoretical, methodological, and ethical terms to carry out research based on fieldwork when political violence in the field is, or has until recently been, commonplace. Together the three volumes can be said to reveal central features of recent trends among anthropologists who investigate political violence. (Review essay of Feldman (1991), Maliki (1995) and Carolyn Nordstrom/ Antonius C. G. M. Robben (1995)).


This paper emerges out of the authors’s fieldwork among the Dalits in Jehanabad district of Bihar, India, where caste and class violence has claimed hundreds of lives since the 1970s. The Marxist rebels, the private armies of the upper caste landlords and the police have turned this region into what is known as the 'killing fields of Bihar'. Conducting fieldwork in a context of an ongoing caste and class war has thrown up a number of questions that challenge the conventional fieldwork practices in anthropology and opens new avenues for exploration. This paper, after laying out the context of the research, examines and discusses the issues of the researcher's identity, anthropological objectivity, ethics, fieldwork methods and personal commitment in the 'fields under fire'.


Lee introduces researchers to the subject of sensitive research and addresses the question of what makes research contentious. He considers the relationship between research and issues of social or political power, the capacity of research to encroach on people's lives, and the potential implications researching sensitive topics may have for the researcher. Covering both quantitative and qualitative methods, Lee offers advice on such key questions as the choice of methodologies for sensitive research and the problems of estimating the size of hidden populations. He also examines the political and ethical problems inherent in the relations between the researcher and the researched, and in the disclosure, dissemination, and publication of research.

How can researchers gain access but mediate personal safety in the midst of violent social conflict? Under what conditions does danger occur and what can a researcher do to evade it or manage it? In “Dangerous Fieldwork” Lee examines the kinds of danger researchers face and provides strategies for reducing risk in perilous situations. He presents experiences of researchers who have worked among various groups such as outlaw bikers, youth gangs and those infected with HIV. He also discusses the hazards of working with informants in inherently dangerous occupations. The under-documented, but increasingly important subject of sexual harassment and assault is addressed as well. In this volume the author avoids adopting an alarmist stance toward potentially dangerous fieldwork. Instead he emphasizes the importance of carefully appraising research settings for possible danger. Dangerous Fieldwork is invaluable reading for all researchers, especially those interested in qualitative methods in the fields of anthropology, sociology, criminology, nursing and health care, drugs and alcohol and law.


In an interview conducted by Beatriz Manz the anthropologist and priest Ricardo Falla, who has dedicated his life to assisting and chronicling the lives of Mayas living under political duress in Guatemala, and gives an account of his long-term fieldwork. According to Falla, fieldworkers are witnesses, but they need a coherent theoretical approach to understand what has been witnessed. With a sense of moral grounding, Falla insists that fieldworkers must be able to make judgements and choose sides.


This paper describes and evaluates “Explorative Expert Interviews” as a conflict sensitive research method. Conflict sensitive research methods seek to 1) minimize bias through a dual approach (two researchers, one on each side of the conflict), 2) increase trust through accountability and transparency, 3) guarantee the safety of the researchers and researched through confidentiality, and 4) enhance applicability and acceptability of conflict management options through participatory conflict analysis. The method of explorative expert interviews presented in this paper is based on qualitative interview literature, mediation and conflict transformation approaches, and experiences from the “Environment and Cooperation in the Nile Basin” (ECONILE) project. The method can be used to gather different conflict perceptions, develop hypotheses, trace causal mechanisms and brainstorm management options. It is suitable for building a network of experts for follow-up conflict management projects. The method is not useful to test generalizable hypotheses or find “hard” causal effects.

The author discusses the issue of “interviews in a hostile environment” exemplified with a case study among Palestinians.


Drawing on his fieldwork experience among mountain climbers and survivalists the author defines the forms of secrecy experienced in fieldwork and contrasts the appropriateness of secrecy and disclosure in research from positivist and symbolic interactionist perspectives. From the positivist point of view secrecy is an anathema, but interpretative sociologists recognize that secrecy is present in all social actions but perfected in none of them.


Richard Mitchell explores the ethical and practical quagmire of revelation and concealment in the field and attempts to arrive at a more useful set of norms for fieldworker behaviour than the bureaucratic solutions in existence. What should the researcher tell, and not tell, informants? Is fieldwork inherently an activity requiring covert behaviour by the researcher and subject alike? Are honesty and openness at odds with effectiveness in the field? Drawing from his own work with mountaineers and survivalists, as well as examples from the successful and unsuccessful fieldwork of others, the author examines these questions and concludes that secrecy is "risky but necessary business.


In connection with fieldwork in Algeria, that for nearly a decade has been experiencing murderous violence, the author undertakes to show how an anthropologist can attempt to uncover logic in the surrounding chaos. In a conflict where a statement constitutes a fundamental risk and a personal opinion a heresy threatened by death, the work of the researcher, though difficult, is not impossible. The article tries to depict the motivations, the stakes and anxieties and the risks such work entails.

N


Drawing on her fieldwork in Bolivia the author argues that anthropologists can no longer retreat into the deceptive pose of neutrality. Anthropologists are now, as Nash points out, at the crossroads in defining a participation-observer perspective more adequate to the load that revolutionary stress is putting on their role in the field. Science advances only by honest declaration of the convictions that influence the data gathering and analysis.

Carolyn Nordstrom describes how she has struggled and continues to struggle with the senselessness of the violence inflicted on the population of Mozambique by Renamo’s war. Anthropologists themselves like those among whom they work cannot remain removed from the impact of witnessing tragedy but must struggle with the implications of working in a context where violence throws into dramatic relief core questions about human nature and culture. Nordstrom rejects apologetic rationalizations of warfare in a radical move by striking out Reason as it applies to war. Instead of reasoning away her bewilderment or surrendering to the inevitable distortions and constrictors of reasonable narration, she focuses on the poetics of the cultural discourse of the victims of war who create their worlds anew with the shards of their broken homes and lives.


In this provocative and compelling examination of the deep politics of war, Carolyn Nordstrom takes us from the immediacy of war-zone survival, through the offices of power brokers, to vast extra-legal networks that fuel war and international profiteering. She captures the human face of the front lines, revealing both the visible and the hidden realities of war in the twenty-first century. ‘Shadows of War’ is grounded in ethnographic research carried out at the epicentres of political violence on several continents. Its pages are populated not only with the perpetrators and victims of war but also with the scoundrels, silent heroes, and average families who live their lives in the midst of explosive violence. War reconfigures our most basic notions of humanity, Nordstrom demonstrates. This book, of crucial importance at the present moment, shows that war is enmeshed in struggles over the very foundations of the sovereign state, the crafting of economic empires both legal and illegal, and innovative searches for peace.


This book consists of a collection of essays written by anthropologists who have experienced the unpredictability and trauma of political violence firsthand. The book uses theoretical, ethnographic and methodological points of view to illuminate the processes and solutions characterizing life in dangerous places. The essays describe the first, often harrowing experience of violence, the personal and professional problems that arise as troubles escalate and the often surprisingly creative strategies used by people to survive. The articles are written under the influence of the “interpretive turn” in social anthropology and represent challenges to scientific concepts of objectivity.

This article consists of letters of the anthropologist Myrna Mack who died in 1990 at the hands of Guatemalan soldiers in downtown Guatemala City as she left her office to go home. The letters are prefaced by Elisabeth Oglesby, who worked with Mack for five years in Guatemala before her murder.


Olujic writes about her perturbed departure from California to the war-torn republic of Croatia. She describes a departure for the field that is at the same time a coming home. She returns after an absence of two decades to a motherland that no longer corresponds to her childhood memories. She emphasises the ethical dilemmas of the ethnography of violence and socio-political conflict by reminding us of its dire consequences. The researchers should be careful, Olujic stresses, in asking victims of violence to tell their story when we are unable to relieve the reliving of their traumas. It is possible to give a voice to the victims of violence, but it is impossible to restore their lives.


Pieke reflects about responsibilities and personal safety in his description of unexpected ethical dilemmas when he engaged in the protests in Tian’anmen Square in Beijing in May 1989. The protests kept him from executing his initial research plan. After having decided to switch attention to the protests, he was likely to put his hosts — his colleagues at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences — in a vulnerable situation. When he finally felt free to do research among the rallying students, he was asked to become a human shield. Pieke shows that the exercise of discussing and conveying the haphazard conditions under which fieldwork in locations under siege is conducted is intriguing. However, his account fails to take account of the practical issues that emerge from doing fieldwork under fire and that challenge the conventional ethics of fieldwork under fire.

Today aid workers are increasingly exposed to risks when working abroad. In order to improve the safety and security of its staff the executive board of Caritas Switzerland has passed the present binding guidelines “More Safety and Security Abroad”. The guidelines provide practitioners with a series of recommended measures for improving safety and security in the field and when travelling abroad.


This book draws on the lessons of a decade of peacemaking and conflict management in some of the most troubled regions of the world. The purpose of the book is to provide current and prospective aid workers with practical guidelines. It adresses the problems that fieldworkers are confronted with on a daily basis, such as managing stress, security issues, ethical issues but also working processes such as how to design mediation processes and monitoring. It is divided in four parts: (1) Preparing for the Field, (2) Working in the field, (3) Surviving in the field.


Both victims and perpetrators of violence have a personal and political stake in making the ethnographer adopt their interpretations of the cause and dynamics of the violence. Antonius Robben encountered these problems in his research into the contested historical reconstruction of Argentina's "dirty war" as told by its chief protagonists and survivors. Because of the high political and emotional stakes of this violent conflict, he was exposed to strategies of persuasion and concealment used by generals, bishops, politicians, former guerrilla commanders, and human rights leaders. Robben uses the term "ethnographic seduction" to describe these strategies. He turns a frank and probing eye on the question of how the sophisticated rhetoric of Argentine military officers affected his critical sensibility and how the anguished testimonies of their victims enwrapped him in silence and sorrow. Ethnographic seduction disabled his ethnographic gaze as his interlocutors tried to entice him away from a deeper understanding of the troubled 1970s to a surface of reason and emotion. Tossed between compassion for the victims and a sincere attempt to understand their victimizers, Robben slowly begins to apprehend the analogies between the seduction techniques used on him by the architects of repression and the dirty war practices of disappearance, deception and terror wielded on the Argentine people. This awareness allows him to expose the transparency of dictatorial power, recognize the perfidiousness of its domination and empathize more deeply with the victims of repression.

Robben and Nordstrom argue that violence is a dimension of living and confirm what is stated by others: violence is a cultural phenomenon. Little can be said about violence outside the constraints of society and culture. In the introduction, Robben and Nordstrom focus on the three principal concerns of the book: 1) "the everyday experiences of people who are the victims and perpetrators of violence" 2) "the relationship between field-workers and the people studied, including the distinct research problems and experiences of ethnographers who study situations of violence" 3) "the theoretical issues that emerge from studying topics, that involve personal danger". According to the them, doing "fieldwork under fire" involves "a number of responsibilities above and beyond those associated with more traditional ethnography: responsibilities to the field-worker's safety, to the safety of his or her informants and to the theories that help to forge attitudes toward the reality of violence, both expressed and experienced.". Little research has been done so far on this subject. The authors aim at helping "ethnographers of violence and socio-political conflict" to recognize and solve problems occurring during their fieldwork as well as taking away some of the anxieties of doing fieldwork in violent contexts and encourage further research on this topic. The editors organized the sequence of chapters to "follow the trajectory of the actual field encounter, starting with the researchers initial confrontation with violent events, moving through the complexities of actual fieldwork and ending with his or her return from the field with finished notes in hand, or return to the field for second insights".


Rodgers discusses the practical implications of doing participant observation in violence–prone areas exemplified in his PhD research in Nicaragua. The basic question he considers is whether it is legitimate or even necessary for anthropologists to engage in violence and with the violent in the context of researching a phenomenon or to what extent should anthropologists in Nietzsche’s words “make danger a calling”.


This publication seeks to contribute to the theoretical refinement and practical realisation of conflict conscious journalism as a tool for use by media practitioners in conflict-affected areas. With this goal in mind, the handbook is designed to be both a practical everyday guide for those already familiar with the subject, as well as an introduction for those unfamiliar with such practices. A conflict sensitive journalist applies conflict analysis and searches for new voices and new ideas concerning the conflict. He or she reports on who is trying to resolve the conflict, looks closely at all sides and reports on how other conflicts were resolved. A conflict sensitive journalist takes no sides, but is engaged in the search for solutions. Conflict sensitive journalists choose their words carefully.

Sangarasivam presents a self-reflexive analysis of her "fieldwork under fire" in Sri Lanka. Sangarasivam, herself an expatriate Tamil, investigates the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). The author briefly discusses her struggle with her multiple identities and argues for methodologies that recognize the researcher as an informant himself. She further discusses interactions between political engagement and research.


In this article, Scheper-Hughes calls for a 'militant anthropology': "The new cadre of 'barefoot anthropologists' that I envision must become alarmists and shock troopers-the producers of politically complicated and morally demanding texts and images capable of sinking through the layers of acceptance, complicity and bad faith that allow the suffering and death to continue without even [a] pained cry of recognition". According to Scheper-Hughes political activism has to be an integral part of anthropology amidst horror.


Reports about field research usually describe the methods and techniques of the research. Less often do they tell of the researchers social and emotional experiences: anxiety and frustration, as well as exhilaration and pride in achievement. In this book field researchers discuss their personal experiences and less prominently the methodological decisions and choices behind their studies of society.


The paper engages in the discussion of conducting research in war zones, initiated in Disasters by Barakat and Ellis. It looks specifically at possibilities for research in the war zones of Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia during the 1980s and notes the ways in which this context differs from the wars in former Yugoslavia, to which Barakat and Ellis mainly refer. The authors suggest that the unique context of every internal war and the institutional actors that converge around this context, create both the potential and the demand for particular kinds of information, especially when humanitarian programmes involving international donors are under way. De-contextualising research in war zones fronts the specific context in which it occurs, to derive general guidelines can thus be problematic.

Simons describes the outburst of street violence in Mogadishu on July 14, 1989. She carefully explores conflicting rumours that buzzed around the capital. Rumours are often the only source available for ethnographic information in violent situations, instead of well-informed informants, who have been the core of ethnographic research. Simons shows that rumours provided people in Somalia with a perspective in an unstable situation. Rumours are important for the coherent historical narrative constructed in hindsight and therefore deserve as much ethnographic attention as the events that remain present in the collective memory.


The paper addresses an area largely neglected in the literature on research methods and the experience of fieldwork in anthropology - namely, the methodological and subjective issue of the dangers anthropologist face while in the field. It begins with a brief review of the literature on methods with reference to this issue, and a discussion of some factors that have contributed to the fact, that certain problems of physical safety for fieldworkers have become more prominent today than ever before in the past. The second part of the paper illustrates some of these problems by presenting the example of fieldwork/research in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The author begins with the experiences of other researchers in Belfast, and then discusses his own experience, focussing on dangerous aspects and how these were managed through a conscious effort at impression management. The third part of the paper returns to a more theoretical or abstract level, presenting recommendations for managing some of the dangers inherent in conducting fieldwork in violent or dangerous social contexts. This is followed by a brief conclusion, presenting some overview observations on this issue.


The author reflects upon the management of danger by drawing on his experiences in the Catholic ghettos of Belfast, Northern Ireland 1981-2 and 1991. He discusses some of the practical methodological sensitivities of doing fieldwork among members of a liberation organisation that has many enemies and is under threat from the security forces. Sluka reminds us of ethical matters concerning the 'bargaining' with participants in a conflict over the expected results of the research. He points out that neutrality may be impossible in highly charged conflicts. In that respect, he also comments on the risks of becoming partisan in a conflict area. However, his main advice to anthropologists doing fieldwork in hazardous conditions is confined to such issues as mediating threats through foresight, planning and skilful manoeuvre. Sluka does not push this point further by asking whether mediating danger and negotiating the safety of anthropologists and informants who work in distressing battlefields warrants a critical reflection on the conventional ethics of the discipline.

This book, produced as a result of an international collaboration between researchers in Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Northern Ireland and elsewhere aims to: (1) Provide a guide to the issues faced by researchers working in violently divided contexts, (2) document the insights and practical wisdom of researchers operating in such contexts, (3) afford access to the living experience of those researchers and the ethical and methodological challenges which face them (5) present accounts and analyses, which illustrate a wide range of diverse experiences and perspectives on the practice of researching in violently divided societies (6) explore the involvement of the researchers with the research material and the impact of doing the research on them. The authors cover a range of ethical and methodological concerns. The specific demands of conducting research in war-torn and divided societies have stimulated the contributors to analyse and critique issues of concern to all researchers, such as the contribution of research to society, the benefit of research to respondents and issues of objectivity. In the often stark circumstances in which the contributors work, these themes take on an urgency and clarity that can potentially illuminate research practise in general.


On 17 May 1980, Shining Path guerrillas burned ballot boxes in the Andean village of Chuschi and proclaimed their intention to overthrow the Peruvian state. For hundreds of anthropologists in the thriving regional subspecialty of Andean studies, the rise of the Shining Path came as a complete surprise. Starn analyzes why anthropologists did miss the gathering storm and what that says about the ethnographic understandings and representations of the highlands.


This paper offers a summary report of the war-torn societies project (WSP) a four year participatory action-research project, supported by 28 agencies and institutions. WSP undertook to initiate, in four selected war-torn societies (Eritrea, Mozambique, Guatemala, Somalia), participatory action-research (PAR) projects. The PAR-method was developed in the late sixties and was applied slightly modified by WSP. Research and policy action is seen as potentially interrelated in several ways. In the research process it was expected that there would be value in promoting and facilitating dialogue about research priorities and findings, and about the policy agendas of the different participants.


In a distinctive self-reflective way, Swedenburg discusses his field research in the Palestinian Westbank in 1992, shortly after the first Intifada. Swedenburg has a strong autobiographical involvement with the people he researched. His special relation with the Palestinians leads him to a self-reflective exegesis, captured well in the double entendre of "prisoners of love"- Jean Genet's musings on his years with he Palestinians in the early 1970s. With Genet he shares
the experience of exhilaration "to be among not with" as well as an 'unacademic feeling' of being "enamoured of the Palestinian revolution". With comparing his sympathy for the Palestinian cause with Genet's literacy writings he offers a formula for balancing his affinity with criteria of scholar objectivity. Swedenburg stresses the ambiguity of conducting participant observation in highly violent contexts.


The book starts with a personal account of the author's engagement with Rwanda and his bewildering experience of violence and massacre unleashed in Kigali. The sudden contraction of the world and the rescue of expatriates convey a sense of the radical rupturing of knowledge and meaning. The immediate interest of this book on the Rwandan genocide (1994) is the fact that Taylor who had already established himself as an ethnographer of Rwanda and was co-incidently present during the period leading up to and the first few days of the massacres. This makes it a very personal and searching analysis since the worlds and beliefs of victims and perpetrators were of friends and acquaintances.

Timmer, Jaap (2002). *Conflict and Anthropology. Some notes on doing consultancy work in Malukan battlegrounds (Eastern Indonesia)*. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Fifth European Society for Oceanists Conference in Vienna, 4-6 July 2002.

In this article, the author reflects on methodological considerations while conducting field research in violence prone-areas by drawing on his experiences as a consultant for international and local non-governmental organisations that were providing emergency aid to the victims of the Malukan conflicts and attempting to provide service in the field of peace-building and conflict transformation. In regions where security and trust allowed refugees to return he also worked on so-called reconstruction and rehabilitation programs. Drawing on his education as a social anthropologist the author processed anthropological knowledge to make sense of what was going on in order to find solutions to distressing situations and to think through approaches that would foster a better future for the Malukus. He also reflects on the limited control over reliable information and the extent to which ‘truths’ have to be continuously assessed. He critically assesses anthropological fieldwork methods for consultancy work and argues for a methodological discussion. The author argues that anthropologists can play a distinctive role by bringing accounts to the reader which are not over-sensational, and deconstructing the myth about those who engage in acts of political violence.


This paper offers a systematic step-by-step approach to security management starting from context analysis, threat and risk assessment through to security strategy choice and security planning. It reviews major types of threats (battlefield survival, vehicle safety, site security, sexual assault, abduction and kidnapping etc), preventative measures, plus guidelines for survival and incident management. The importance of incident analysis and better exchange of
security information between agencies is also explored. Finally a number of crosscutting themes are explored, that are relevant to risk control such as personal and team competency, clarity towards national staff, good communications, briefing and training etc. The annexes provide additional information, for example on legal protection of aid workers, private security companies, the UN security management system, insurance cover etc. The arguments in the GPR are illustrated with case material drawn from all over the world.

W


A descriptive article on social reality in the Westbank in the early 1990’s. At the end the author reflects shortly about the implications of doing fieldwork among both sides of the conflict.


In the course of gathering life histories in northern Mozambique, the author encountered men who had been the victims of torture at the hands of the Portuguese during the Mozambican war for independence. The author gives an account of his conversations with these men, reflecting upon the urgency with which they told him their stories decades after their experience of violence. Where Portuguese attempts to ‘rehabilitate’ political prisoners and to use them as counterinsurgency operatives rendered all torture victims suspect in the eyes of the post-independence state, and where the atmosphere of political suspicion was exacerbated by civil war, these men were frustrated in their attempts to find a public discursive space in which to make sense of what had happened to them. They consequently spoke of their experiences as if mourning their own deaths, the author argues, while demanding as recently departed ancestors that they not be forgotten.


Anthropologists are not immune from violence. Cathy Winkler is an ethnographer who had to pick up the shattered pieces of her own life after a rape attack. Winkler describes how she was abused repeatedly by a rapist and then became the victim, survivor, witness, plaintiff, investigator and researcher of her own assault. Ethnographer and ethnography collapsed into one totalitarian whole in which objectivity and subjectivity were jumbled in ambiguity. The research object became subject, and the subject survived by behaving as an object. Winkler’s contribution excels in conveying the confusion, irrationality, and bewilderment of the rape attack in particular and of violent conflict as well as research on violence in general.

This article is based on the authors field research in an outlaw motorcycle club in the USA. Choosing to study a deviant group which is also frequently involved in violence and engages in illegal and organized criminal activity. Wolf chose an unconventional methodology, and a very risky entry strategy: He approached the group as a biker with the intention of first earning trust before approaching them as an anthropologist. As a consequence he faced a professional ethical problem of conducting clandestine research.


Zulaika conducted fieldwork in his own natal Basque village. He examines his conflicting roles as an outside observer, educated in the United States, and on the other hand, as a friend and neighbour to the combatants of both sides of the conflict. He rejects dichotomous assumptions that impose ethical judgments on subject matter in such way as to preclude understandings.
## Thematic Index of Authors

**Approaches (theoretical, conceptual and methodological):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderson (1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td>do no harm approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avruch (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td>overall review of concepts &amp; approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel (1996)</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;writing violence&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel (1997)</td>
<td></td>
<td>reflexivity, &quot;writing violence&quot;, representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Das (1990)</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;writing violence&quot;, responsibility, reflexivity, representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentan (1995)</td>
<td></td>
<td>interviews, representation, &quot;writing violence&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gill (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagmann/Mason (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hays-Mitchell (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td>reflexivity, responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry (1966)</td>
<td></td>
<td>partiality/impartiality, Field work in two conflict parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kovats-Bernat (2002)</td>
<td></td>
<td>review of concepts and approaches, new strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krohn-Hansen (1997)</td>
<td></td>
<td>review of three approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunnath (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert, Steve (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td>validity of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee (1995a)</td>
<td></td>
<td>research on sensitive topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee (1995b)</td>
<td></td>
<td>dangerous fieldwork general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manz, Beatriz (1995)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason (2003)</td>
<td></td>
<td>interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migdal (1980)</td>
<td></td>
<td>interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell (1993)</td>
<td></td>
<td>secrecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moussaoui (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nash (1976)</td>
<td></td>
<td>partiality/impartiality, neutrality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordstrom (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodgers (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td>participant observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross (2002)</td>
<td></td>
<td>conflict sensitive journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangarasivam (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td>self-informant, political engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheper-Hughes (1995)</td>
<td></td>
<td>militant anthropology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trish/Hendrie (1997)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timmer (2002)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sluka (1990)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smyth/Robinson (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stiefel (1998)</td>
<td></td>
<td>PAR-method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starn (1991)</td>
<td></td>
<td>ethnographic understanding, representation, orientalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swendenburg (1995)</td>
<td>reflexity, new approach</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Soto/Dudwick (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Postsocialist States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West (2003)</td>
<td>interviews</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winkler/Hanke (1995)</td>
<td>self-informant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolf (1991)</td>
<td>closed society, high risk methodology</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zulaika (1995)</td>
<td>self-informant</td>
<td>Basque, Spain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethics:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAA (1998)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourgois (1990)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Central-America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davison (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gill (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry (1966)</td>
<td>partiality/impartiality,</td>
<td>Trinidad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kovats–Bernat (2002)</td>
<td>Field work in two conflict parties</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunnath (2004)</td>
<td>double identity</td>
<td>Bihar, India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee (1995a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee (1995b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manz, Beatriz (1995)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell (1993)</td>
<td>secrecy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nash (1976)</td>
<td>partiality/impartiality, neutrality</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olujic (1995)</td>
<td>self-informant</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pieke (1995)</td>
<td></td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodgers (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smyth/Robinson (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolf (1991),</td>
<td>clandestine research</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zulaika (1995)</td>
<td>self-informant</td>
<td>Basque, Spain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dealing with Perceptions/Emotions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chatzifotiou (2000)</td>
<td>anxiety</td>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gill (2004)</td>
<td>trust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green (1995)</td>
<td>fear</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kleinmann (1991)</td>
<td>feelings general</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert (2001)</td>
<td>informant’s perception of researcher</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell (1991)</td>
<td>secrecy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell (1993)</td>
<td>secrecy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robben (1995)</td>
<td>seduction</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaffir/Stebbins (1991)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simons (1995)</td>
<td>rumours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sluka (1990),</td>
<td>impression management</td>
<td>Belfast, Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor (1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timmer (2002)</td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starn (1991),</td>
<td>ethnographic understanding,</td>
<td>Peru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>representation,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>orientalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reychler/Pfaffenholz (2001)</td>
<td>rumours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallach (2001)</td>
<td>field research in two conflict parties</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Development-oriented Approaches:

- Anderson (1999) do-no-harm approach
- Huntington (2005) merging good development practice, Risk Management and Do No Harm
- Fisher (2000) Cambodia, Afghanistan, South Africa, Kenya, Northern Ireland, Colombia
- Gaigals/Leonhardt (2001) Eritrea, Mozambique, Guatemala, Somalia, Indonesia
- Reber (2005)
- Stiefel (1998) PAR-method
- Timmer (2002)
- Reychler/Pfaffholz (2001)

Research Design:

- Chatzifotiou (2000)
- Gill (2004) Dominican Republic

Safety/Security, Protection Strategies:

- Chatzifotiou (2000)
- Gill (2004) Dominican Republic
- Howell (1990) Haiti
- Kovats-Bernat (2002)
- Lee (1995b) China
- Pieke (1995) Belfast, Ireland
- Reber (2005)
- Sluka (1990) Belfast, Ireland
- Sluka (1995)
- Reychler/Pfaffholz (2001)
- Van Brabant (2000)

Gender:

- Chatzifotiou (2000)
- Gill (2004)
- Reber NGO (2005) Dominican Republic
- Reychler/Pfaffholz (2001)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oglesby (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>letters of the anthropologist Myrna Mack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conflict sensitive journalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>