

Snapshots from the Arctic 'Field'

Experiences and Reflections from Postgraduate and Early-Career Research in and on the Arctic

Dear colleagues,

We are pleased to invite you to ***Snapshots from the Arctic 'Field'***, a one-day workshop to be held at St. Mary's College, Durham University on **Saturday 14th May 2016**. The workshop will focus on fieldwork experiences of postgraduate (PG) and early-career (EC) researchers studying the Arctic, primarily in the social sciences and humanities. In addition to PG/EC interventions, Professor Phil Steinberg, Durham University, will be keynoting the event by sharing some of his experiences from the field and pointing to some of the challenges present in conducting Arctic fieldwork.

Arctic research and science writ large plays an important role in Arctic policy and diplomacy. The UK has a longstanding history of Arctic exploration and research, and the government is now aiming at positioning the UK as an important 'science actor' in the region. While this effort focuses largely on the physical sciences, UK-based researchers in the social sciences and humanities cannot exempt themselves from reflection on the implicit politics of our practices in and outside the field. Reflection on researcher positionalities and responsibilities specific to the region is crucial, not least considering how Arctic past and modern history is often marked by (post)colonial encounters. The workshop aims to provide a much needed opportunity for interdisciplinary and inter-institutional networking by creating a forum for joint reflection on moments of encountering the Arctic through the process of fieldwork.

The workshop's format will be an informal roundtable, aimed to stimulate wide participation and discussion. Each presenter will be asked to bring one item, photograph, or other 'prop' around which to talk for 10-15 minutes about their own experience as a UK-based PG/EC researcher in the Arctic 'field' broadly defined. The topic is purposely kept broad in order to encourage a wide range of perspectives, approaches, and creative 'snapshots'.

Participants are encouraged to share something about their experiences as UK-based scholars in the Arctic specifically, but we welcome a wide range of interpretations of the relationship between researcher and field; empirical, theoretical, and anecdotal interventions are all equally suitable, whether humorous or sad, positive or negative. Knowledge of the Arctic is generated in a myriad of different spaces, all of which may be thought of as 'Arctic field sites', whether or not they are geographically located north of the Arctic Circle. These include archives, libraries and museums; virtual and representational spaces such as art, literature and film; the intimacy of homes, villages or settlements; offices of politicians, state officials or business people.

Topics for reflections may include (but are not limited to):

- Researcher positionalities and Arctic fieldwork
- Spaces of the Arctic field – defining and constituting the field itself
- Expectations versus the unexpected - anticipation, preparedness and encounters

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- Encountering local cultures, people(s) and knowledge systems
- Engaging policy makers and politicians
- Embodied experiences of being-in-the-field
- Reflections on representing a European institution in the context of conducting Arctic research

The workshop is primarily directed at PG/EC researchers from across the social sciences and humanities. However, we welcome participation also from the physical sciences and beyond, as we hope the workshop will foster discussions that bridge traditional disciplinary boundaries. Thus, participants will get the opportunity to share and discuss thoughts and reflections on their Arctic encounter in an interdisciplinary environment. This will not only benefit the individual in their research, but also facilitate important knowledge sharing and networking across the UK's Arctic research community.

The workshop is planned as a one-day event, starting at midday on Saturday, in order to allow participants to travel to/ from Durham on the day if necessary. The town's transport connections are excellent, and accommodation options are available at the University's colleges. While the workshop itself will end at 6pm, it will be followed by a wine reception, including poster-displays of some of Durham University's Arctic research. There will also be an informal post-workshop dinner at a venue in the town. While we are unfortunately not able to provide financial support towards travel, accommodation, or the post-workshop dinner, we are pleased to be able to offer food and refreshments through the workshop, supported by Durham University.

If you wish to participate, please email a brief description/outline of your Arctic field research 'snapshot(s)' (no more than 250 words) and a short biography to Ingrid A. Medby (i.a.medby@durham.ac.uk) or Johanne M. Bruun (j.m.bruun@durham.ac.uk). Please include institutional affiliation, position, and contact details. The deadline for submissions is **31st March 2016**. We also welcome participation from people who do not wish to present, but would still want to contribute to the general debate and draw benefit from the experiences of others.

Sincerely,

Ingrid A. Medby and Johanne M. Bruun,
Department of Geography, Durham University