



BSA Postgraduate Forum Regional Event

Public sociology and the role of the researcher:
engagement, communication and academic activism

Wednesday 29 March 2017, De Montfort University, Leicester

What is the role of the researcher outside the academy? This event invites Postgraduate and Early Career Researchers to innovate and critically reflect on three related areas of public sociology: academic activism, public engagement, and participation and co-production.

Keynote lecture:

Dr Mark Carrigan, Digital Fellow, The Sociological Review @mark_carrigan

What does it mean to be a public sociologist in the era of @realDonaldTrump?

In the summer of 2011, David Cameron's response to the English riots was to declare that "this is criminality pure and simple". In the summer of 2013, then Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper proclaimed that "this is not a time to commit sociology" after high profile anti-terrorism arrests. Each of these statements was made within a specific political context but each also reflected a broader tendency: the narrowing of explanatory horizons within post-democratic political culture. Such a process has reached its apotheosis with the Presidency of Donald Trump, whose successful hacking of the media system led him all the way to the Whitehouse where he now pursues a press strategy oriented around the twin poles of mendacity and Twitter.

In this talk I address the rapidly changing political context within which public sociology is pursued in order to ask: what does it mean to be a public sociologist in the era of @realDonaldTrump? Social media offers profound opportunities for public sociology, albeit in a way that should lead us to reflect critically upon established strategies and tactics. But social media poses equally profound challenges, both directly through the architecture of these privately owned platforms and indirectly through their implication in wider social regression. These issues are complicated further by the changes underway within the academy, as well as the issues they raise for those seeking to work as scholar-activists while retaining a concern for their employability. My claim is that a reflexive practice of public sociology can both help us negotiate these changes and work collectively towards fostering resistance to them.

Postgraduate speakers:

Paris Connolly, Reproduction Research Group, De Montfort University
@Paris_Connolly

The non-active activist

This talk will focus on my PhD research on Female Genital Cutting and my experiences with being an academic and activist. It will cover areas such as ethics, recruitment, questions posed to me by my participants and the positionality of myself as a researcher, further touching on my guilt for not being more active. I will discuss how my thoughts changed during the course of my research and how emotion work often makes it difficult to be neutral in such political and sensitive work.

Mirjam Twigt, Department of Sociology/Media and Communication, University of Leicester, @MirjamTwigt

Reflections upon conducting research among Iraqi displaced people in Jordan: (Un)be(com)ing one of these western women who comes to Palestine because of an emptiness in the heart.

I reflect upon some of the concerns and questions that came about while conducting and writing about ethnographic research – 'hanging out' – with Iraqi nationals who self-identify as refugees in Jordan. The relationship between me as a researcher and the field is complex, sometimes uncomfortable and never neutral, but could it also be potentially counter-hegemonic? I plead for a caution for self-absorption and against a naïve imperialist thinking in quick fixes, and instead - by drawing upon feminist epistemology - I argue for care as a political act.

Periklis Papaloukas, De Montfort University, @PeriklisPa

Incorporating participants' authentic 'voices' in critical health psychology research: Reflections from the LGBT living with MS study

This presentation will reflect on the incorporation of participant 'voices' in research, through engagement, and collaboration. Moreover, means of dissemination of research findings will be explored. Examples from the PhD research project 'the lived experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) individuals living with multiple sclerosis (MS)' will be provided.

Film showing and discussion:

Dr Michal Nahman, Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Criminology,
The University of the West of England, Bristol, @michalnahman

Atomised Mothers. Isolation, Austerity and the Politics of Parenting

The discussion will explore alternative ways of working with participants and communicating research findings to a (non-)academic audience.



Workshop:

Dr Maria Berghs, Early Career Academic Fellow, Allied Health Science,
De Montfort University

Public Dilemmas of Engagement

This workshop will grapple with different notions of impact. It will explore how to work in an activist sphere as an academic and how to engage in public sociology.

Call for abstracts and posters

We would like to invite Postgraduates to take part in a five-minute PechaKucha/Stand-up presentation and/or a poster presentation: the call for abstracts is now open. Given the brevity of the presentations, abstract submissions should be no longer than 200 words. **Abstracts for presentations are due on February 24th, 2017** and poster confirmation is needed **by 1st March 2017**. There are small prizes for the best poster and the best presentation.

Oral presentations and posters may cover any aspect of Public Sociology, including, but not limited to:

- dissemination of knowledge beyond academia;
- participatory research methods and challenges;
- positionality of the researcher and relationships of power;
- approaches and practice in the co-production of knowledge;
- academic activism.

Registration closes on March 15th, 2017.

To book please visit:

<https://portal.britsoc.co.uk/public/event/eventBooking.aspx?id=EVT10624>

£10 BSA Members, £25 Non-BSA Members. Includes lunch and refreshments.

For further information and to submit your abstract, please contact Sasha Loyal
P11238742@my365.dmu.ac.uk

This event is being organised by PhD and Early Career researchers based in the
Reproduction Research Centre, De Montfort University.