

Students in "the field"

Decolonizing applied research collaborations. Discussion of experiences and practices.

17 May 2023

KFPE online workshop series "Decolonizing Swiss Research Collaborations"



Bern University of Applied Sciences
► School of Agricultural, Forest
and Food Sciences
HAFL Hugo P. Cecchini Institute

Agenda & overview

- ▶ Objective of the workshop: To exchange and discuss on experiences and practices of dealing with the topic “decolonization” in the context of (student) research collaborations – preparation of students, accompanying students (while abroad), institutional learning
- ▶ Moderation by Dominique Guenat, HAFL Hugo P. Cecchini Institute, Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH)
- ▶ The workshop will be recorded (for internal purposes only)—if you do not wish to be recorded, you may turn off your camera and microphone or decide to excuse yourself from the meeting
- ▶ Short inputs by invited guest speakers (5’ each)—institutional and personal perspectives on "decolonization" in the context of (student) research collaborations:
 - ▶ Claire Somerville, Geneva Graduate Institute
 - ▶ Lilian Trechsel, Centre for Development and Environment (CDE)
 - ▶ Nancy Bourgeois Lüthi, Bern University of Applied Sciences, School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences (BFH-HAFL)
 - ▶ Mirko Winkler, Swiss Tropical and Public Health (TPH) Institute
 - ▶ Dana Landau, Swisspeace
- ▶ Open floor discussion:
 - ▶ Following all inputs
 - ▶ Please raise your hand and we will try and take questions and comments in the emerging order
 - ▶ You may also post questions and comments to the chat, and we will try and address them as best as we can

Claire Somerville

- ▶ Geneva Graduate Institute

Constructing the Field (Vered Amit 2000): decolonising approaches to empirical research and data

GENEVA
GRADUATE
INSTITUTE

GENDER,
DIVERSITY
AND
INCLUSION
INITIATIVE

Geneva Graduate Institute: Masters in International Relations & Development Studies (MINT)

- Two opportunities for empirical research: **Applied Research Projects (ARPs)**
MA Dissertations

Student Preparation

1. Formal – Institutional Ethics Guidelines

1. Responsibilities to **communities**/research participants/colleagues(collaborating partners/funders and future researchers
2. Permissions – Ethics approvals in-situ (not just Swiss); informed consent/community permissions
3. **Do No Harm** – risk assessments/ unintended consequences / positiona

2. Informal – what I do in supervisions

Context-specific – from ideation to implementation across the research cycle

Gender example – meta-synthesis/self-reflection on four r4d projects –

❖ Somerville C. et al. *Gender in public health research: Reflections on design and process across four research projects in low-and middle-income countries. PLOS Global Public Health. 2023 Apr 12;3(4)*

Research Ethics to Context-Student-Specific Supervision



- ❖ Ethics is one entry point to decolonising; gender another...
 - ❖ **They don't go far enough....**
 - ❖ My students commit to:
 - ❖ Sharing of data and outputs with participants (and write to respond/correct before dissemination and IP); acknowledging participants contributions and participant right to be named/ anonymity; conduct a reflexive exercise to examine power relations between researchers/students and communities/collaborators/participants;
- ❖ Research questions, design, and **Positionality**
 - ❖ Have we exhausted the literature and what is the rationale for “field” studies?
 - ❖ Who are “we” as researchers?
 - ❖ **Intersectional identities** – how will “we” be received and how does impact the generation of data and knowledge
 - ❖ Example of 3 students traveling to Syria/Turkey border (Red Zone/earthquake) to undertake research on refugee women and access & management of water resources
 - ❖ Intersectional identities – age, gender, language, citizenship/migration status (implications for visas/emergency evacuation) education, religion, dietary requirements, health etcand whilst these 3 students could return to Switzerland, step out of the conflict zone by plane, their research community with whom they lived remained precarious – and were later impacted by the earthquake.

Link to video: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7039244669876064257/>

What do we learn?



Ensuring student research relationships do not reproduce coloniality, imbalances of power and inequity is a fundamental part of the research process - from the moment the idea of a research study is conceived.

"Decolonization must transform the terms upon which universities exist in theory and praxis"

Gaya Radaddi, Decolonising University Space

"The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" Audre Lorde

References

Geneva Graduate Institute Ethics <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/research-support/research-ethics>

Gaya Radaddi Decolonising University Space. <https://repository.graduateinstitute.ch/record/299365?ln=en>

Mia Schoh Decolonising Feminist Publishing <https://repository.graduateinstitute.ch/record/299365?ln=en>

Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Lorde_The_Masters_Tools.pdf

Mariam Kerfai, Sarah Shafik, Elona Wahlen AMWAJ: Women's empowerment through water management and rehabilitation projects <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/interdisciplinary-master-mint/mint-research-practice/amwaj-womens-empowerment-through-water>

Link to video: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7039244669876064257/>

Lilian Trechsel

- ▶ Centre for Development and Environment (CDE)

Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) University of Bern

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Input CDE
Dr. Lilian Trechsel

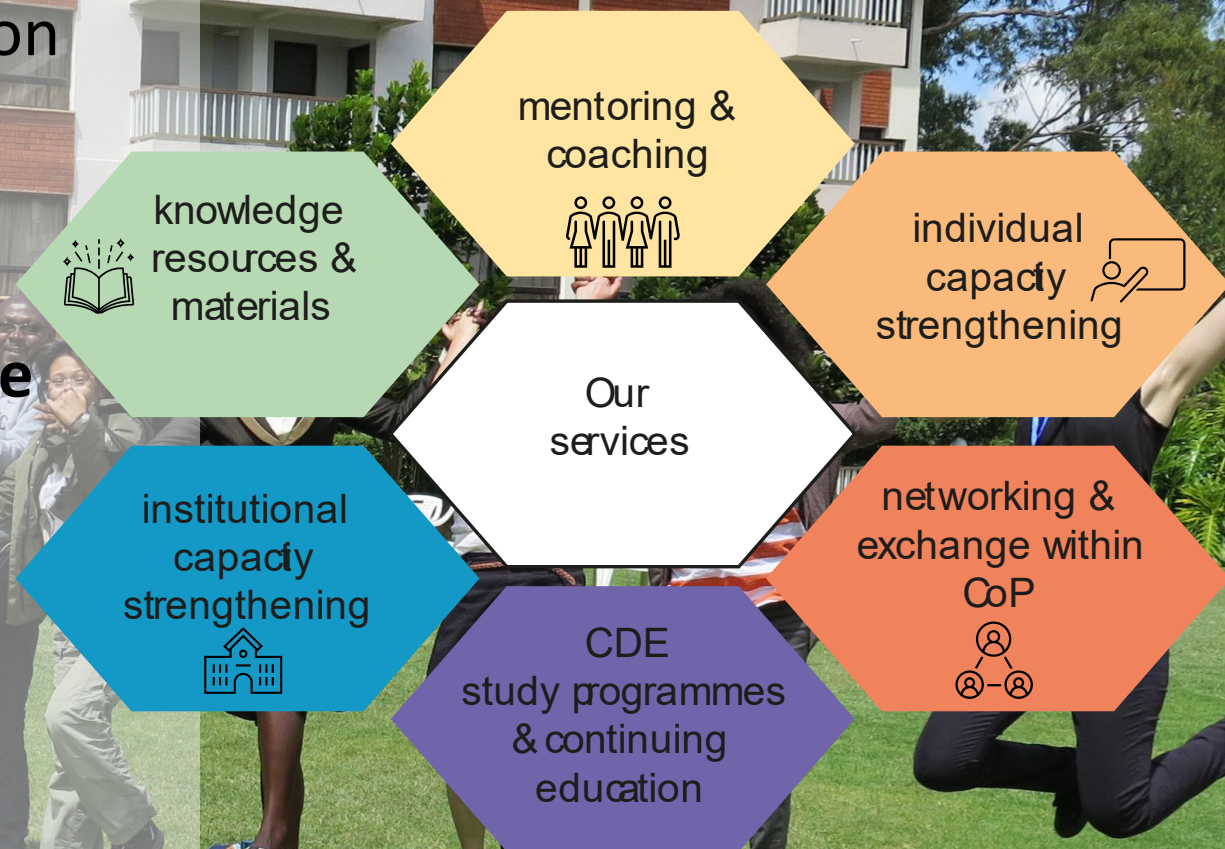


What do we offer?

- Impact Area “Transformative Education and Science” with focus on ESD
- BSc, MSc, PhD & CAS

IGS North-South Summer School course

- Methodological modules
 - Fair and conflict sensitive research
→ positionality, reflexivity
 - Digital & remote research
→ trust, fairness in digital spaces
- Exploratory fieldwork (it/td)



**international
graduate school
north-south**

What are the students questions?

- IGS North-South Alumni tracer studies 2012, 2017, 2022
- 2022: focus on decolonizing graduate careers, in response to corresponding calls for critical self-reflection in academia
- Olivia U. Rutazibwa (2019): “decolonial strategic framework”
 1. de-mythologize / 2. de-silence / 3. de-colonize
- Recommendations for (doctoral) educational programmes:
 - Rearrange the curricula of PhD graduate school programmes
 - Build up alliances between universities (global South and North)
 - Global inclusion through online courses accompanied by critical reflection on power dynamics
 - Provide spaces for learning and exchanging in PhD education by welcoming different forms of knowledge and collaboration
 - Enable all stakeholders in the programme to become learners

References/frameworks/tools

- IGS North-South Tracer Study 2022: Decolonizing a PhD Programme and Beyond
- Fair and conflict-sensitive research in sustainability contexts
- Unlocking knowledge for sustainability: Partnership-based research and education
- Good Practice Guidelines. Digital Tools for Transdisciplinary and Transformative Research and Learning
- Safe Spaces for Disruptive Learning in a North–South Research Partnership Context: International Mobility of Doctoral Students

Nancy Bourgeois Lüthi

- ▶ Bern University of Applied Sciences, School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences (BFH-HAFL)



(Field) research of BSc students in international agriculture

How are students prepared to conduct their research abroad?

► Bern University of Applied sciences. School of agricultural, forest and food sciences.

BSc at HAFL

3-year studies in



Forest sciences



Food sciences



Agricultural sciences

- ▶ Plant sciences
- ▶ Livestock sciences
- ▶ Equine sciences
- ▶ Agricultural economics
- ▶ **International agriculture**



includes a **6-month research and professional internship** in the Global South -> 3.5 years of study

Private sector

NGO, INGO or
FBO

National
University

International or
national
research
organisation



Research and professional internship abroad

Preparation (1 year)

Research (6 months), incl. a visit by HAFL BSc supervisor

Debriefings and synthesis (3 weeks)



- ▶ Specific teaching methods (Problem Based Learning)



- ▶ Interview with student

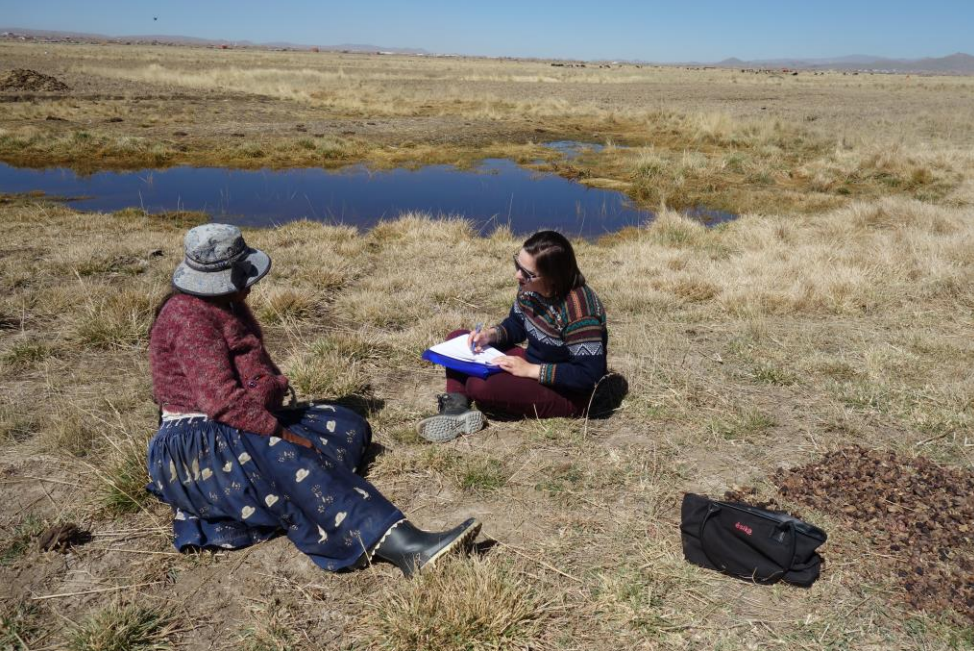


- ▶ Proposal of research topic by host institution



- ▶ Preparation modules: intercultural aspects, daily life, safety & security, gender related aspects, etc.





Receiving? Co-creating?
Taking? Giving back?
Learning? Sharing?
Exchanging? Asking?

*Data, information,
knowledge,
experiences, skills...*



Sharing culture, hobbies, food, rituals, joy, sport, happiness, pain, doubts, grief and so much more

Sharing moments of LIFE



Mirko Winkler

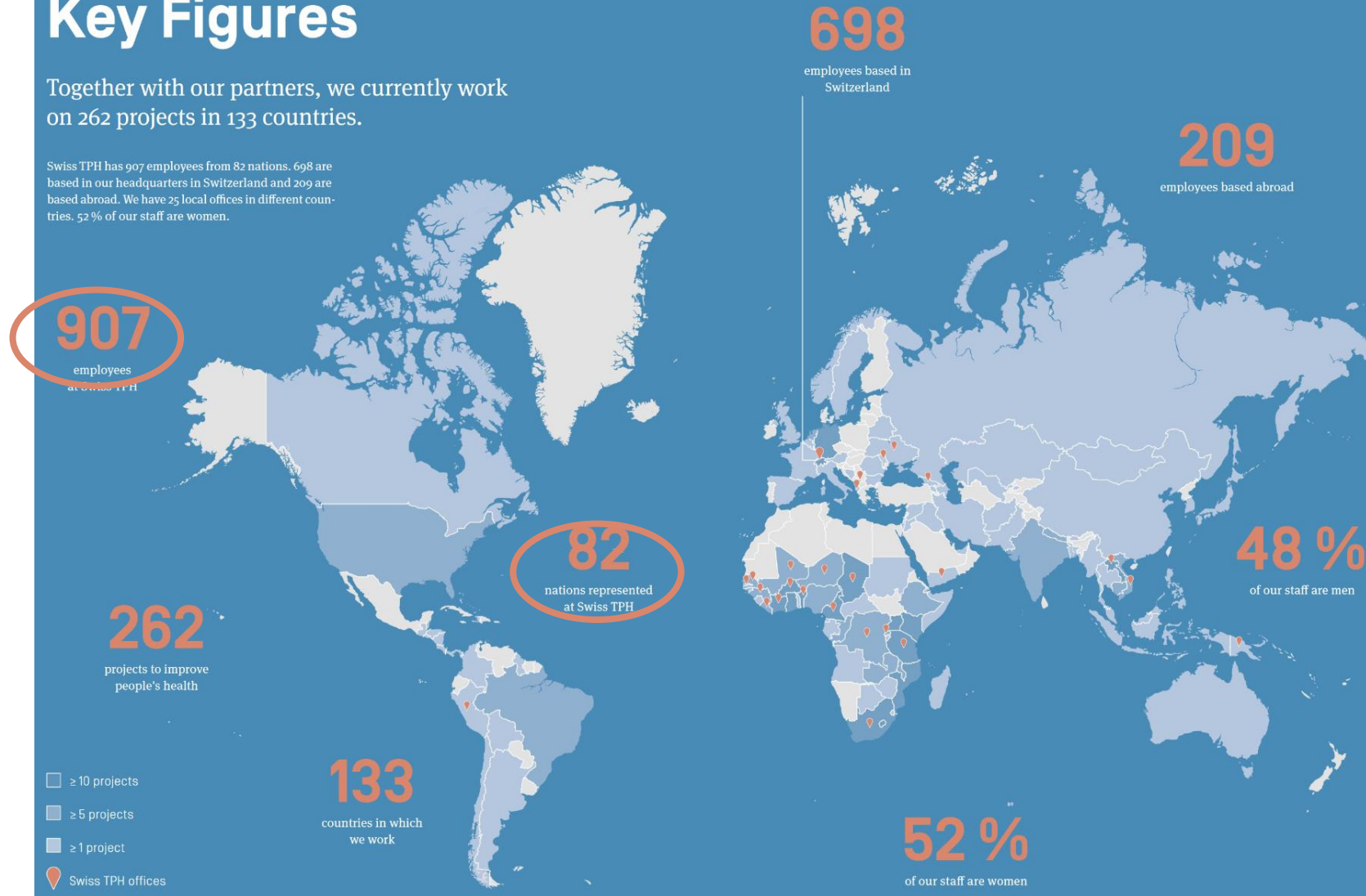
- ▶ Swiss Tropical and Public Health (TPH) Institute

Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute

Key Figures

Together with our partners, we currently work on 262 projects in 133 countries.

Swiss TPH has 907 employees from 82 nations. 698 are based in our headquarters in Switzerland and 209 are based abroad. We have 25 local offices in different countries. 52 % of our staff are women.



- **Preparations**

- **Recruitment** (e.g. experience, languages, cultural sensitivity)
- Travel clinic (vaccinations and also baseline status)
- UN security test, travel request
- Accommodation, travels, insurance, etc.
- At Swiss TPH, **establish contact with colleagues from the target country**
- Host country: **establish contact with local partners!**

- **During fieldwork**

- **Local partners!**
- Regular contact with supervisor
- Travel safety, etc.

- **After fieldwork**

- **Debriefing**



- **Preparations**

- **Establish contact** (supervisor, course coordinator)
- Swiss TPH to initiate visa application process
- Swiss TPH supports travels, accommodation, transportation, bank account, insurance, etc.

- **During “fieldwork” (while in Switzerland)**

- Onboarding (IT, admin processes, work place)
- Travel clinic (baseline status)
- **Regular meetings!**
- **Being part of a team/class/relevant communities**
- **Debrief before travelling back home**

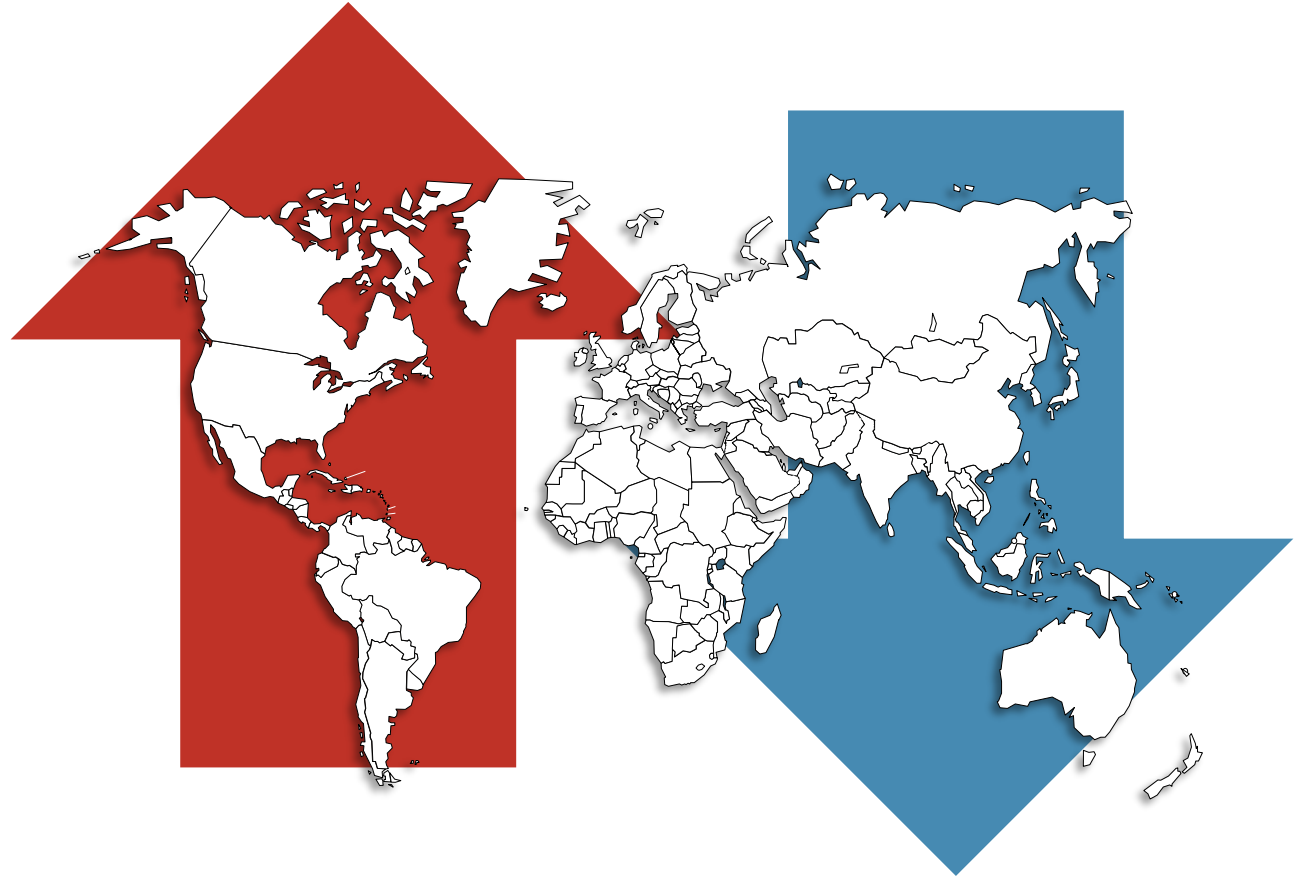
- **After “fieldwork” (back home)**

- Depends (student, course participants, etc.)



What really matters (in my opinion)

- Regular contact / being part of a team
- **Listen to your local* partners/collaborators** (→ sensitization!)
- Cultural onboarding
- Provide the possibility for social/psychological support



Dana Landau

- ▶ Swisspeace

KFPE workshop 17 May 2023

Supporting students' field research in peace studies

Dr. Dana Landau, swisspeace / University of Basel
Universität Basel

swiss
peace

Schweizerische Friedensstiftung
Fondation suisse pour la paix
Fondazione svizzera per la pace
Swiss Peace Foundation



University
of Basel

Field research at swisspeace

- Interdisciplinary peace research institute
 - political science, anthropology, gender studies, history, law, etc.
- Field research mostly at PhD level, often to conflict-affected contexts
- Methods: participant observation, interviews (elite or grassroots), focus group discussions, etc.
- Sometimes links to practice-based projects: entails risks and opportunities

Considerations

- Positionality
- Conflict Sensitivity
- Safety
 - of researchers
 - of interlocutors and research participants
- Ethics
 - of knowledge production on peace and conflict

Before leaving vs. while in the field

- Individual needs, fears, previous experiences
- Importance of networks, individual contacts, 'vouching'
- Sometimes institutional affiliations help, e.g. with local university
- Regular contact (part of safety protocol), as well as substantive check-ins
- Research questions change and develop
- Mental health risks (stress, burnout)

Thank you for your attention!

swiss
peace

Schweizerische Friedensstiftung
Fondation suisse pour la paix
Fondazione svizzera per la pace
Swiss Peace Foundation

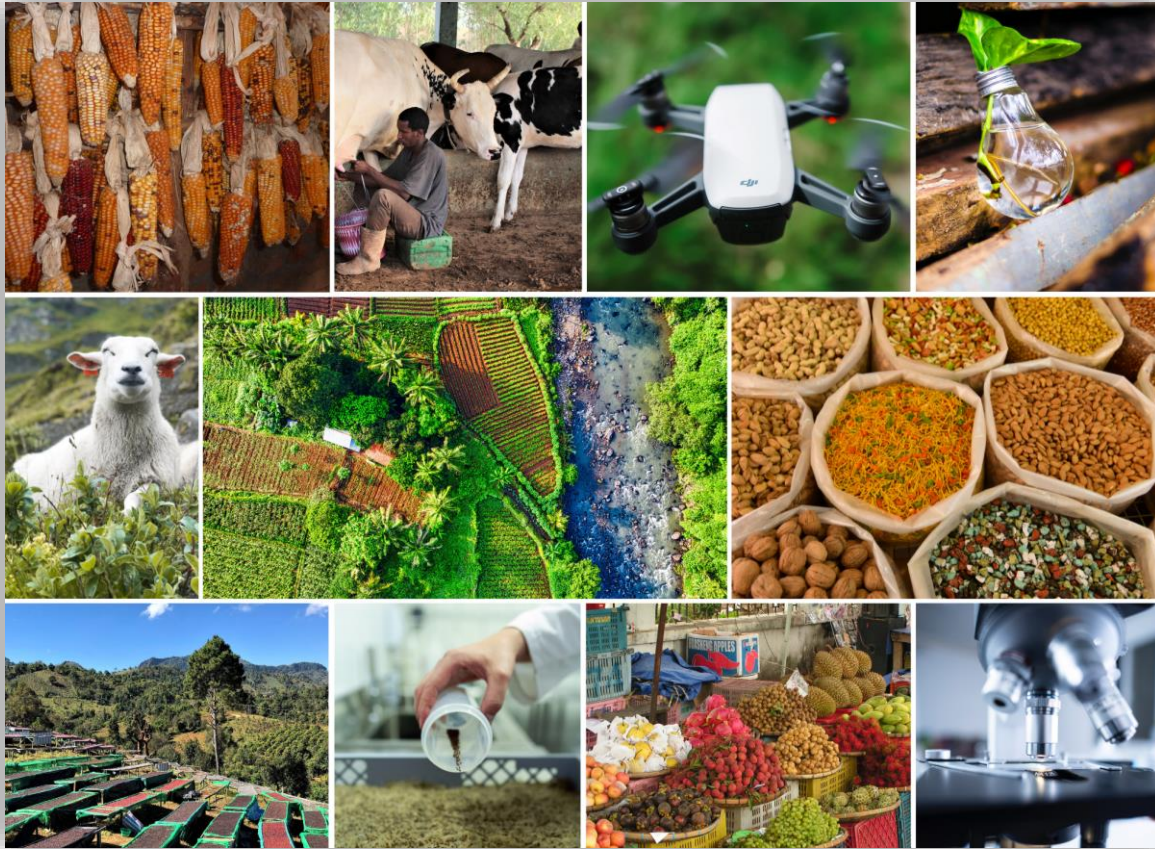


University
of Basel

Questions, comments & discussion

- ▶ Thank you for your participation!
- ▶ What are your questions and comments?

HAFL Hugo P. Cecchini Institute Annual Event 2023



- ▶ Agroecology: Dreamy buzzword or practical solution for sustainable landscapes and food systems?
- ▶ 20 June 2023, 2 - 5.30pm, Zollikofen
- ▶ Registration still open
- ▶ Interesting guest speakers (Madeleine Kaufmann, Urs Niggli, Marylaure Crettaz Corredor, Stefanie Pondini)
- ▶ Interactive-games workshops

Reach us online!

Twitter: [@hafl_p](https://twitter.com/hafl_p)

Website: bfh.ch/en/hpci/

