

Call for Book Chapters

Book Project

Global South Researchers in Development Studies: Positionality, Power, and Vulnerability

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The purpose of this book is to bring together voices from the Global South to discuss their fieldwork experiences and reflections, thereby generating a grounded theoretical proposition on Global South researchers' reflexivity and positionality in the field of development studies.

Global South researchers navigate a multilayer complex positionality while conducting social studies and development research. Their experiences are shaped by race, gender, religion, values, and politics. Existing literature, personal stories, and researchers' experiences reveal the complexity and sub-layers of identities that emerge for Global South scholars, especially while conducting research that challenges the static and linear perception of the researcher's positionality and ethics in the field.

The growing movement of epistemic justice and decoloniality within development studies poses essential questions about how, by whom, and for whose benefit knowledge is created. At this crucial moment of the discipline's transformation, Global South researchers can play a significant role in shaping the intellectual conversation and reversing the gaze in development studies research.

Major challenges, such as the high cost-of-living crisis, the surge of far-right and populist politics in the Global North, the expansion of surveillance in authoritarian regimes, and global environmental issues, create additional barriers to research and fieldwork practices. In these conditions, development studies students and researchers from the Global South residing in Western universities encounter increasing difficulties conducting fieldwork away from home. These challenges include academic censorship, limited access to financial resources, and visa restrictions.

This book project highlights and bridges the experiences of Global South researchers in development studies, which are usually concealed or censored for the fear that they would affect academic analytical production. Hence, this book is timely as it centralises the voices and experiences of early career Global South researchers in fieldwork encounters, methodological approaches, and transboundary knowledge production. With the compiled contributions of fieldwork experiences, the book will speak to a larger discussion on the role of researchers, the importance of fieldwork, power dynamics in fieldwork, mental and physical challenges, and the significance of fieldwork beyond data collection to a real-life experience that shapes the researcher's positionality for years to come.

The seeds of this book project are two recent blogs published by the editors in the [LSE Impact Blog](#) and the [Centre for Pan African Studies Blog](#). Moreover, a joint and more extended discussion of these blogs is included in a journal article currently being peer-reviewed, in addition to panel discussions in several academic conferences.

Thematic focus and inquiries: The book will focus on two broader thematic issues relevant to Global South researchers' experiences and positionality, including but not limited to the following:

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Theme 1: Geographies and researcher's positionality

Beyond dichotomies: The discussion on positionality frames researchers as 'insiders' or 'outsiders' to their fieldwork. We encourage contributions that problematise this common insider-outsider dichotomy, especially for Global South researchers conducting research outside their home countries.

Researching home: Conducting research at home presents challenges and opportunities for Global South researchers. We encourage contributions that reflect these processes, considering the emotional, psychological, and political toll researchers must manoeuvre when proximate to their research context, including security threats and precarities that emerge from ethnic, racial, religious, and caste identities. Contributions should critically engage with scholars' experiences conducting research in their home countries beyond familiarity and comfort and instead focus on the known and unknown of our own knowledge biases.

Reversing the gaze: The norm in development studies, which emerged from a colonial project, is that researchers from the Global North often study the Global South. Despite the increased representation of Global South researchers in development studies, researchers conducting fieldwork in the Global North remains rare. Still, we nonetheless encourage reflections from researchers who have done so while coming from Southern backgrounds.

Theme 2: Research training and knowledge production

Research choices, training, and experiences: Current research training and textbooks for fieldwork preparation are rooted in the Western gaze and provide relatively standardised technical guidance for early career researchers. This is insufficient and sometimes even irrelevant to Global South researchers and scholars of development studies. We invite early career scholars to challenge and think through the training, fieldwork preparation, and ethics procedures they go through before going to the field.

Epistemic justice and knowledge creation: Knowledge creation is essential to epistemic justice debates. How do we channel fieldwork and communities' voices through writing and academic endeavours? Moreover, the question of whether it is possible to shift the power in knowledge production for development studies by adopting epistemic justice and a post-colonial lens is a key argument that the book aims to engage with. We also invite contributors to reflect on the relevance and future of development studies and to engage with meta-questions of why we research what we do and whether post-colonial, empirically and analytically plural, Global South-rooted development studies are possible or desirable.

Submission guidelines

This book will prioritise voices from the Global South, particularly those of early career researchers, invited to share their research experiences. We also seek to include diverse regional perspectives in this project. Scholars interested in contributing are encouraged to submit an abstract of 250–500 words to (abasli@iss.nl) by October 31, 2024. Contributions to this book can be conceptual and theoretical chapters of up to 7,000 words or case studies and shorter vignettes featuring researchers' own lived experiences of up to 2,500 words. Accepted abstracts will be asked to submit their complete manuscript for a peer-review process, including a virtual or in-person workshop for feedback and editing. The workshop will be designed to bring contributors together for reflection and peer discussions to frame the book's overarching conceptual argument.

Timeline

Submission of abstracts: October 31, 2024

Submission of complete accepted chapters: March 31, 2025

Authors Peer-review workshop: TBD, May–June 2025

Submission of reviewed chapters: October 2025

Complete manuscript publication: TBD, January–February 2026