Master in Political Ecology  
Academic year: 2019-2020

Case study research design and methods in political ecology

Instructors:
Marien González Hidalgo  
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences  
marien.gonzalezhidalgo@gmail.com

Diego Andreucci  
Department of Political and Social Sciences – Pompeu Fabra University Barcelona  
diego.andreucci@gmail.com

Objectives
The aim of this workshop is to offer theoretical and practical tools for the design and implementation of political ecology research projects. Specifically, it will provide an introduction to basic principles of social research design and qualitative investigative methods, focusing specifically on the “case study” method and its application to the analysis of concrete situations of socio-environmental change and conflict.

Structure
The workshop will be primarily based on group work, but will also involve short lectures and discussion. To participate, you are required to do the assigned readings carefully in advance, which will be discussed collectively in class (you can find all reading materials on the Master’s cloud). Moreover, all of you will have to prepare in advance a draft research proposal on a topic of your choice (following the guidelines given below). During the workshop, you will work individually, in pairs and groups in order to improve your research idea and turn it into a well-structured proposal. After the workshop, you will send it again in refined form; you will be evaluated according to your ability to apply key concepts and principles defined and practiced in the workshop.

Assigned readings
Burawoy (1998); Booth et al. (2008), ch. 4; Sultana (2007)

Before the workshop
You will have to prepare in advance, and bring to class, a tentative, one-page proposal, explaining the topic for your research project, motivation and how you plan to carry out the research. This could be based, for instance, on the topic for your Master’s thesis—but could
also be a research project you want to develop for an NGO or other social or environmental organization, public sector institutions, cooperatives and the like.

It is **indispensable that you bring this draft proposal to class** for you to be able to work on it during the workshop. In the draft, provide details about the following:

1. **What** you want to investigate (your research topic and aims)
2. **Why** you want to investigate it (what motivates the research, why it is important to know more about the topic)
3. **How** you plan to carry out the research (e.g., what specific case, what evidence you need, how you will access it, etc.)

**Assignment and evaluation**

After the workshop, each of you will hand in a reworked (and hopefully improved) research proposal, of no more than **750 words**. The proposal must be handed in two weeks after the class (14 March). It will count as 50% of the overall grade of the course. Late proposals will not be accepted.

**General structure of the workshop**

The following is a preliminary outline of the contents of the workshop – note that we may decide to make adjustments to it as we finalise the preparation of the activities.

- **Part 1: Research topics, questions and problems**
  - Practical vs. conceptual problems
  - Elements of a research proposal
  - Formulating good research questions
- **Part 2 – Case study and qualitative methods**
  - The “extended case method”
  - Overview of qualitative methodologies
  - Positionality and ethics
- **Part 3 – Work on your research proposal**
  - Drafting your proposal
  - Peer-learning
  - Class discussion
- **Course evaluation**

**Further readings**

- Booth et al. (2008)
- Carabine (2001)
- Crang and Cook (2007)
- Spencer (2011)
- Tuiwai Smith (2012)
- Watts (2001)