

Co-laborating for Change? The Future of Peace and Security in an Age of Crises

Faced with multiple crises and increasing social and political complexity, proposals to rethink and redesign the relationship between science and society are gaining ground. Participatory and transdisciplinary research, action research, citizen science, and real-world labs emphasize new forms of collaboration between researchers and citizens or practitioners. Practicing engagement “all the way down,” companionship, and “co-laboration” with societal and political stakeholders, these approaches aim to do research with people rather than about them. This new paradigm has been met with enthusiasm for its innovative way of interacting with society. But it also raises questions about research ethics, access to and exploitation of local knowledge as well as power and inequalities in co-creative processes of knowledge production. This holds all the truer for the study of crisis responses in fields such as security policy, peacebuilding, climate adaptation, and humanitarian governance that are marked by high power imbalances between involved actors and stakeholders.

The workshop aims to explore the promises and challenges of participatory research in an age of multiple, complex, and interconnected crises. The workshop is organized by the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH) in the context of its “Doing Peace!” program, a multi-annual research program in which IFSH researchers experimented with participatory and practice-oriented methods in peace and security research.

Breaking with traditional workshop formats, the event will provide participants with an opportunity to explore the 'doing' and 'making' of participatory research themselves. We will be open to creative impulses including, but not limited to, poster sessions, exhibitions, maker spaces, or performances. The workshop aims to provide an environment for creative and thought-provoking interdisciplinary debates on the benefits and challenges of participatory research. We are especially interested in contributions that for example present findings from research projects using such methods, critically reflect on the advantages and challenges of such methods, or problematise the current fashion of their use.

International Workshop

Date:
25-27th June 2025

Location:
betahaus
Schanze – Hamburg
Germany

Workshop organisers

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We invite contributions from International Relations, peace and conflict studies, critical security studies, political geography, climate research, and adjacent fields of the social sciences and humanities that engage with participatory and collaborative research methods – broadly understood – in the study of one or several of the following thematic areas:

Uncertain futures and temporalities of the polycrisis

First, we are interested in participatory approaches to study practices of future-making as well as the lived temporalities of the polycrisis. How are the temporalities of the polycrisis experienced by stakeholders in everyday lifeworlds? How can collaboration and engagement with practitioners advance our understanding of future-oriented security practices? And how can we use participatory methods to imagine alternative, more progressive, just and sustainable futures in the polycrisis? These and similar questions could be addressed by proposed contributions.

Spatialities of peace and conflict

Second, we are looking for contributions that dig deeper into the spatialities of peace and conflict in the face of multiple crises. These works could, for example, address questions such as: How can participatory methods help to better understand the local boundaries and manifestations of peace and conflict? How can we study conflicts across scales? How can we approach everyday theories of peace through engagement and collaboration? And how can participatory research work for the benefit of involved co-researchers, reduce structural inequalities, contribute to conflict transformation, and foster sustainable forms of peace?

Technologies and practices of security

Third, we are inviting participatory and practice-oriented contributions to the study of security and defence. How can we study everyday and embodied experiences of insecurity given that the negative implications of the polycrisis become manifest mainly at the local level? How can performative methods, reenactment, or the collaboration with artists, engineers, or security practitioners help to open the black box of security technologies? What are the limits of participatory methods in the security domain given field-specific problems of access and secrecy? These are some of the questions that we would like to discuss at the workshop.

Please submit an abstract of 250 words by
Friday, 21 February 2025,
to doingpeace2025@ifsh.de.

Travel and accommodation will be covered for workshop participants.

Please do not hesitate to contact the workshop organisers if you have any questions.