

EWIS 2023

University of Amsterdam, 12-14 July 2023

Workshop convenors:

Elisa Randazzo (University College London) and Simone Tholens (European University Institute)

Workshop title:

At War with the Truth: Epistemic politics, contestatory practices, and the co-production of knowing and unknowing in peace and conflict studies

This workshop explores the relationship between peace interventions and knowledge production. In the widest sense, interventions are defined to include military interventions, as well as security assistance, capacity building, development assistance and humanitarian aid. This broad field of international policy involves a wide range of agents engaged in complex processes whereby information is produced, transformed, interpreted and diffused. The workshop aims to unpack what is at stake in the production, contestation and enactment of authoritative knowledge. In the context of peace interventions, this pertains to the process of establishing what 'the problem' is, and the associated 'solutions' proposed, both of which involve practices that render things known, not known, visible, or invisible. These are questions that concern, at their heart, what procedures, legitimise or delegitimise specific forms of knowledge that is made authoritative under certain conditions. The workshop seeks to build a repertoire of perspectives on the ways in which external interventions assemble knowledge and expertise, including strategies of ignorance/non-knowledge, and the effects this non-binary interface has on the field of interventions. It treats this interaction between knowledge and non-knowledge as a field of uncertainty produced through a series of political, cultural and legal practices. From this vantage point, the workshop explores new conceptual and empirical terrains, from the making of expertise, to assemblages of knowledge production beyond the human, strategic ignorance as governance technology, the function of controversies and crisis handling, complexity as a modality of intervention, and apparatuses of secrecy and transparency. The panel aims to further the critical agenda in peace and conflict studies by engaging with the question of knowing and unknowing at the epistemological, ontological, and methodological levels. As such, contributions aim to open the field to interventions that seek to draw attention to practical-political, as well as theoretical, implications of rendering visible structural knowledge production and its (often exclusionary) effects.