

Public Health Workshop: Participatory action research using mobile methods

Facilitated by Prof. Colin MacDougall, Flinders University, Australia, Dr. Maya Negev, Haifa University, Israel and Prof. Nadav Davidovich, Ben Gurion University

Tuesday, Nov. 18 15:00-18:30 Outside, weather permitting OR Biology 2

The workshop aims to deepen qualitative research skills in relation to public health and climate change. It is ideal for students, practitioners and researchers. Researchers with existing experience are welcome to share and refresh their knowledge and skills. We aim for it to be interactive, fun and outside!

Climate change is one of the biggest problems we have ever faced (and created!). We need the best science to explain the causes and develop solutions: but in doing so we need the combined wisdom of scientists, Indigenous groups, community organisations and citizens. The most immediate results of climate change included new patterns of diseases, re-emergence of old diseases, and increased death and trauma from natural disasters. Health research works best when there is a respectful partnership, leading to concerted action, between professional scientists and various community groups and representatives – a field known as Participatory Action Research (PAR).

PAR can make a useful contribution to participatory research about the health effects of climate change because its roots are in emancipatory causes and social movements, seeking to empower communities in general, and the marginalised in particular. PAR has often used qualitative and ethnographic methods. Over the past decade or so, PAR started to use photographic methods, enabling participants in research to have more control in selecting and describing what is important to them. At the same time, participant-guided mobile methods (such as walks and driving) emerged with a similar goal of changing the power relations between researcher and researched. Mobile and photographic methods are now used in tandem to examine the aftermath of natural disasters, which will become more prevalent as the climate changes.

This workshop starts with an overview of theoretical foundations that need to be understood in order to plan rigorous and ethical research. The majority of the time will be spent in a practical session on campus experimenting with mobile and photographic methods. The final part of the workshop will bring together theory and practice so participants will be able to start using these methods in research on climate change and desertification.

Prof. Colin MacDougall's research focuses on healthy public policy, the social studies of childhood and the relationship between public health and climate change. He is working now on the fourth edition of "Understanding Health: a Social Determinants Approach" to be published in 2015 by Oxford University Press.