

« I agreed to speak to you in order to... » Ethical Reflections on Research in Refugee Camps

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This presentation explores ethical issues inherent to participatory action research with protracted refugees living in refugee camps. It is informed by our qualitative research led with Palestinian women who are refugees in Lebanon (Caron 2012; 2007). Stuck in the “waiting zones” that many Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon have become since the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, refugee women expressed “wanting to speak to the world through us”, to allow their realities as Palestinian women, as Muslim women, and as refugee women living in camps for generations, to be heard. Through their testimonials, they aspire to convey their anxieties and their frustrations (particularly toward the uncertainty of their future; their state of exception with regard to international law; and the feeling of imprisonment many find themselves in) but also their hopes, their dreams and the ways in which they “hang on”. Yet, this explicit request to “convey their voices” can only bring ethical questions: how and in what conditions should these voices be circulated? How can we deal with the fact that disclosure may become a “survival strategy” for some participants, no matter the risks? These are central questions our presentation will seek to explore.

participant’s experiences; their views regarding the life stories method and the collaborative analysis