



The interpretation of global politics Methods and epistemologies after the event

2 - 3 November 2017, Canberra



Conference hosted by the School of Politics and International Relations in conjunction with the Humanities Research Centre, Qualitative Research Network, the Centre for Law, Arts and Humanities and with the support of the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

Abstracts of no more than 200 words should be sent by 30 July to April Biccum (april.biccum@anu.edu.au) or Carlos Eduardo Morreo (carlos.morreo@anu.edu.au)

In the era of 'post-truth' and surprising electoral outcomes, it might be appropriate to return to discussions of the 'event' in the Derridean sense —that which always exceeds calculation and prediction. The 20th Century challenge to classical knowledge paradigms in the form of critical, social, post-structuralist, post-colonial and 'post-modern' interventions, have been tempered by a series of methodological counter-reformations, begun in the mid-century with the Popperian and 'rational choice' programs in Anglo-American political science and the growing prestige of economics. This debate clearly designated as 'interpretivist' anything not regarded as 'positivist' or 'causal' social science. Scholars in the 'interpretivist' camp, broadly defined, have in turn responded with their own treatises and texts addressing constructivism, hermeneutics, assemblage, and discourse, both within the disciplinary literatures of politics and beyond.

Today, amid the popular appeal of 'big data' and the promise of further quantification, similar challenges to the role of interpretation in research are being rehearsed. In turn, the call for pluralism has been heard by disciplinary gatekeepers with the response of 'mixed methods'. In the context of unprecedented global events, the self-assurance of science in the social sciences may again be on the back foot. This conference, therefore, calls for investigation into the value of interpretation as method, interrogating what it means to 'interpret' the political.

The conference aims to:

- provide a space to debate and formulate what is fundamental about interpretivist approaches and what they contribute to the social sciences
- provide a showcase of interpretative methods in the social sciences
- create a space for cross-disciplinary conversation and collaboration
- consolidate a domestic network and create links with Australian and international scholars
- create an opportunity for the professionalisation of post-graduates

In this vein, the call for papers is seeking contributions which:

- demonstrate the purpose of interpretative methods in a variety of disciplinary settings
- address the methodological debates from the vantage point of non-European and postcolonial academic histories
- expound on interpretivism's relevance for specific research projects
- emphasise the diversity of methodologies or approaches within 'interpretivism', e.g. post-structuralism, critical realism, etc.
- engage in contemporary debates concerning the role of interpretation in philosophy of science and science and technology studies (STS)
- place 'interpretivism' in dialogue with theoretical frameworks that challenge the assumptions of a single ontology such as 'multinaturalism', 'pluriversality', etc.
- reflect on the relevance of methods of interpretation to contemporary global politics
- engage in 'mixed methods' research which expand or problematise the dichotomy between 'positivist' and 'interpretivist'