

Bringing Researchers Back In: Debating the Role of Interpretive Epistemology in Global IR

Abstract:

The article discusses interpretive epistemology in IR and its advantages to address the field's sociological composition, its scholars' identity, and knowledge structuration. The research proposes to engage in sociological reflexivity on IR methods and the way in which knowledge accumulation and structuration are driven by canonical assumptions of what is considered 'normal'/'good' scientific procedures. The central argument focuses on interpretive epistemological approaches as possible venues for research to participate in the collective effort to address, and redress, the imbalance between the sociology of the field and its knowledge-production and -structuration processes. By allowing dialogue around meanings and interpretation among increasingly diverse members, an interpretive stance on IR opens the floor to criticism and rival interpretations. More specifically, the paper presents the methodology of interpretive phenomenological analysis as a method which both emphasizes context- and actor-specificity with regards to the subject of study, and fully acknowledges the researcher's identity and voice in scientific inquiry.