



**Reilly, K., Clavin, A. and Morrissey, J. (2016) 'Participative critical enquiry in graduate field-based learning', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 40 (1), pp. 104-116.**

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis Group in *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* on 09/10/15 available online:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2015.1086980>

## ResearchSPAce

<http://researchspace.bathspa.ac.uk/>

This pre-published version is made available in accordance with publisher policies.

Please cite only the published version using the reference above.

Your access and use of this document is based on your acceptance of the ResearchSPAce Metadata and Data Policies, as well as applicable law:-

<https://researchspace.bathspa.ac.uk/policies.html>

Unless you accept the terms of these Policies in full, you do not have permission to download this document.

This cover sheet may not be removed from the document.

Please scroll down to view the document.

## **Journal of Geography in Higher Education (JGHE)**

### **Article Title:**

*Negotiating participative critical enquiry in graduate field-based learning.*

### **Article Authors:**

Dr Kathy Reilly (National University of Ireland, Galway); Dr Alma Clavin (University of Northampton) and Dr John Morrissey (National University of Ireland, Galway)

Word Count: 6157

### **Abstract:**

This paper is an exploration of participative critical enquiry in graduate field-based learning (FBL) in Geography. While fieldwork is central to human geography, in the extant literature there has been limited focus on fieldwork at graduate level, and critical enquiry in graduate field-based learning in particular. This paper firstly outlines a critical pedagogic approach to FBL. In drawing on staff experience relating to the preparation and delivery of a dedicated FBL module for four successive years on an MA programme in Environment, Society and Development (MA ESD), the paper addresses the complexities associated with student-led, participative field exercises during fieldwork in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The paper examines a series of student field journals completed during the 2011/12 academic year. These reflective journals are contextualized and discussed in relation to the anticipated and evolving FBL module learning outcomes. Finally, aspects of fieldwork and related activities that influence the feasibility and effectiveness of participative critical enquiry in a complex, post-conflict FBL context are identified.

**Key Words:** participative critical enquiry; field-based learning (FBL); critical pedagogy; graduate study.

## **Introduction**

In 2009 the MA in Environment, Society and Development (MA ESD) was launched by the Discipline of Geography at the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG). Interwoven throughout the programme's modular format is a commitment to engaging students in debate and discussion relating to a number of core thematic arenas within critical human geography. In a recent submission to this journal, we outline a pedagogic agenda for the MA ESD programme that engages students in the examination and critique of the interventionary practices of development and securitization. (Morrissey, Clavin and Reilly, 2013). The paper specifically reflected on a field-based learning (FBL) module consisting of a series of seminars held over twelve weeks, culminating in a week-long fieldtrip to Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). While in Sarajevo students engage with and reflect on the development work of the UNDP, UNEP, EU Delegation to BiH, and a diverse array of NGOs, civil society organizations (CSOs), and public advocacy groups operational across the city and country. Our first paper outlined some of the on-going challenges encountered by student learners in the field, to understand the multi-scalar complexities of practicing participatory knowledges (Morrissey et al., 2013). We reflected especially on the challenges of working through critique in the field, where both students and staff proactively build upon contacts, and are flexible in recognising what does and does not work methodologically in short time periods. Building on these insights this paper goes beyond a reflection on field-based learning (FBL) as a critical pedagogic approach, to address the complexities associated with student-led, participative exercises completed during fieldwork in Sarajevo, BiH. In considering how FBL as a critical pedagogy becomes operationalised, the paper examines a series of individual student field journals (worth 25% of the module grade) and three group development research proposals (worth 75% of the module grade) submitted by students as part of the module assessment during the 2011/12 academic year. Both the journals and proposals form part of the FBL module assessment, and throughout this paper are contextualized in relation to the anticipated and evolving FBL module learning outcomes.

While the reflective journal afforded each student a conceptual space to consider their role and positionality in relation to the discourses encountered while in the field, the group development research proposals incorporated a number of broader core components. These included: a comprehensive literature review for the purpose of contextualising each project; a reflection on the theoretical and methodological implications of enacting each research proposal; a critique of existing data sources; an outline of data collected during pilot research (particularly considering how specific theoretical perspectives become operationalised while in the field); and finally, a proposed framework for the collection of further data. The proposed framework explored opportunities for generating new evidence to supplement, challenge and extend knowledge bases from which new initiatives and policy directions could be supported. Additionally students were also required to present their pilot research at the end of their week in Sarajevo. These presentations took place as part of a student symposium, and invited guests included representatives of the NGOs, EU Delegation to BiH, UNDP and local community groups with whom students intersected during their pilot fieldwork. With this in mind this paper engages with the assessment submitted as part of the 2011/12 FBL module, exploring the resulting field exercises developed by students while in Sarajevo. In analysing the development research proposals and student reflective journals, the paper discusses the extent to which the experiences and insights described by students are aligned to the teaching objectives of this participative critical pedagogy.

### **Field-based learning and participative enquiry as pedagogy**

From the outset a central tenet of the MA ESD programme has been to transcend academic critique engaged during classroom discussion, to consider participatory forms of development knowledge and practice (Morrissey et al., 2013). This wider aim is specifically operationalised by a series of learning outcomes stemming directly from the FBL module, facilitating the transgression of classroom boundaries. These associated learning outcomes include:

- the development and application of critical thinking skills;
- enabling recognition for, and understanding of, the complex and scalar nature of development initiatives;

- extending student understanding through engagement with ‘real world’ contexts;
- developing students’ research capacities through the completion of pilot fieldwork;
- understanding the challenges of working in collaboration with development practitioner and local populations on the ground in Sarajevo.

These module aims are first engaged through a twelve-week programme of class seminars involving a range of tailored academic and practitioner guest speakers. Running simultaneously throughout these 12 weeks is a facilitated independent student engagement with academic, policy and practitioner resources on an assigned group thematic. The latter is supported by a programme of group tutorials, led by the group leader (always a faculty member or graduate research student) prior to the fieldtrip. In its entirety the FBL module prompts critical thinking on how practices of development are framed in scalar, conflicting, and often contested ways, with a view to engaging student-led research on the complexities and contradictions of interventionism on the ground.

In undertaking fieldwork in Sarajevo students are provided with an opportunity to examine ideas and concepts discussed in class, and informed through the literature, against the ‘real world’ of the field (Dummer, Cook, Parker, Barrett, & Hull, 2008). In theory, this fieldwork encourages ‘deep learning’ (Ramsden, 1992), enabling students to develop a better understanding of abstract concepts through making connections between their own observations and experiences. Therefore the nexus within which students encounter, negotiate and make-meaning while in Sarajevo, in and off itself, represents a form of ‘deep learning’ (ibid). This FBL pedagogy is iterative and dynamic, facilitating, contextualising and situating student experience within a particular frame, in this case post-conflict Sarajevo, BiH. This type of learning then advocates conceptualisations of a critical geopolitics grounded in the study of BiH as a post-conflict and contested geopolitical region (for further discussion see O Tuathail, 2010). Through the transitional movement from conceptualising to experiencing the post-conflict city, the FBL module invites students to critically

reflect on ideas of social capital, space (e.g. Smith 1990; 2006), and identity (e.g. Sandercock, 1998) considering the politics of practicing participatory knowledges while in Sarajevo, yet also cognisant of the scalarity inherent within their pilot work.

Pedagogically then, in the active learning and experiential world of FBL, students learn by doing (Gibbs, 1988); this practice of 'doing' can be contextualised within Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, exploring student experiences of active engagement within specifically situated field contexts. Kolb's cycle (1984) provides a pedagogic framework that ranges from active experimentation and concrete experience, through to reflective observation and the conceptualization of experiences through critical reflection. FBL has the added outcome of promoting active and critical engagement in the learning process. If successful, students contextualise, frame and make connections between field experiences, classroom discussion, and reading. In negotiating these three elements students interpret and 'make-meaning' within the learning context to facilitate understanding, knowledge production, and 'practise' what they have learned in class. However, simply taking students into the field may not necessarily result in effective student learning (Fuller, Edmondson, France, Higgett, & Ratinen, 2006), and effective learning may be more likely when the FBL activity is fully integrated into a specific module, allowing students to utilise and reflect upon ideas arising both in the field and during the academic module itself (ibid). In this way, the twelve-week FBL module culminated in one-week of fieldwork in Sarajevo, BiH, with the specific remit of engaging students to operationalise critical participatory enquiry in considering the (dis)connections between classroom discussion and 'real world' contexts, to explicitly deepen the overall learning experience. This deepened learning experience is iterative whereby students experience and reflect in an on-going and reciprocal basis. There is, of course, a continuum between staff-led and autonomous student work, but the FBL activities are principally student-led. As part of the MA ESD FBL module students work in groups, choose their own topic for research, and contact research participants directly in order to develop a research proposal for critical participative enquiry in Sarajevo.

## **FBL: Development Research Proposal**

Since the beginning of the MA ESD student FBL development research proposals have included the following arenas of critical enquiry: civil society and social inclusion; environment and governmentality; local development in post-conflict society; and memory and public space. The variety of thematics addressed as part of the development research proposals are outlined below, highlighting the diversity of interests engaged since 2009. In the context of this paper we explore the 2011/2012 series of development research proposals, reflecting the group of individual field journals discussed later in this article.

### *Civil Society and Social Inclusion:*

The tutorial readings for this group centre broadly around children and young people in post-conflict Bosnian society. Since 2009 students have engaged pilot research focusing on educational spaces, citizenship, identity and reconciliation. In 2011/12 student pilot research, and the subsequent proposed framework for further study, explored the role of sport and sport focused civil society organizations in 'building-capacity' and social capital across segregated communities in Sarajevo and the broader BiH context. Considering policy documents published by the UNDP (2008a; 2008b; 2008c), students examined the role of sport as a mechanism for enhancing social inclusion in post-conflict society; specifically examining cross-cultural sporting activities and the potential for these events to lead to the construction and development of new social networks. Students encountered a disparate NGO and CSO landscape, with groups and activists promoting inclusion through sporting activities. Furthermore, the pilot research pointed towards a further scalar disconnect with representatives of global institutions unaware of local initiatives promoting sport as part of an active development agenda.

### *Environment and Governmentality:*

In post-Dayton Accord BiH, local and national government representatives are struggling to develop environmental policies and collect accurate environmental data at a variety of scales. This has led to poor management of environmental issues, compounded further by a complex political system struggling to

cope and cater for post-conflict populations. Students engaging this thematic often find it difficult to focus on one specific concern; in the past pilot research has engaged themes relating to de-mining and security, and illegal practices (for example, de-logging). In 2011/2012 students specifically focused on the policy arena, considering public attitudes toward environmental activity – energy efficiency, consumption, waste and recycling. In particular this group's work centred on the development of local food-growing initiatives, exploring existing programmes and the potential for extension. The absence of policy at a national scale played an important role in this group's pilot research, with existing programmes and initiatives led by grassroot groups operating in a very disparate public sphere. A key outcome of this work reflected on the less-than-prominent position of environmental policy within the national (political) consciousness and donor funding realm.

*Local Development:*

The local development thematic represents the most diverse group in relation to the issues it has sought to engage. Topics in this area include: social entrepreneurship, dark tourism, and festival spaces. In 2011/2012, student pilot research explored the contribution of festival events to the local economy and populations, reflecting on the politics of who participates and who funds these initiatives. Students examined the emerging festival culture in Sarajevo, considering an emerging politics of organization and participation. Emerging findings from this pilot research included the desire by local populations to 're-brand' Sarajevo as a city of culture, not as a city enduring the legacy of war. Following from this, grassroot organisation representatives outlined how they felt powerless, with tokenistic participation in decision-making processes relating to the internal and micro-politics of their city.

Across all three development research proposals, submitted as part of the FBL assessment for 2011/12, a number of recurring challenges are highlighted throughout the submitted student work. These include:

- Snapshot Syndrome: As our fieldtrip is based in Sarajevo City many proposals draw attention to the fact that the completed pilot research is spe-



cific to the urban context, with potentially little relevance to the fringe, rural, and other urban centres across BiH.

- Political Complexities: Student proposals relate the difficulty in identifying stakeholders and key informants, particularly local political representatives. This is symptomatic of an overly complex system of governance, a legacy of the Dayton Accord, but also due to multiple scalar representatives for some ministries and an absence of representatives in others (e.g. lack of a ministry for the environment).
- Lack of Contextual Data: Since the signing of the Dayton Accord there has been no official census conducted across BiH. This is due to the highly politicized nature of the data potentially collected (including the ability to construct enclavic discourses). As a result students often work from contextual material generated by the UNDP, EU Delegation to BiH and other global institutions operational across the country; knowledge produced by the same interventionist institutions critiqued by students.
- Time: Student development research proposals often recognized the 'time poor' nature of their fieldtrip engagement; visiting Sarajevo for a one-week time period was deemed by students as insufficient to engage with stakeholders. This time constraint was also considered in relation to ethical practice by some students who felt uncomfortable with the development of what they perceived as 'fake friendships'.
- Language: The MA ESD students do not speak Bosnian nor do they have access to an interpreter. Implicitly then, participation in the pilot work by Bosnian people was limited to those who spoke English. Students recognized this as a particular limitation to their pilot research activity.

In spite of (and, of course, because of) these challenges, students engage in a reflexive process of positioning themselves as both a learner and researcher in what is ultimately an alien, abstracted and somewhat constrained field-based context for a limited one week period. Such engagement with an unfamiliar FBL context reflects a politics of fieldwork (Rose, 1993) that is temporally situated, inherently scalar, and fraught with positional tension. Therefore, to students negotiating the immersive FBL context of Sarajevo, the experience can potentially be overwhelming, with students positioning themselves as both

learners and researchers within a myriad of situations and discourses; continuously contending with a recognition for the partiality of knowledges encountered and ultimately produced through their interpretations of pilot fieldwork. This raises questions concerning the value of FBL to critical participative enquiry and the potential of pedagogues to 'place' students in vulnerable situations whereby they (students) struggle to negotiate the immersive and unfamiliar landscape of data collection, and their positionality within this process. To meet this challenge, MA ESD staff members encourage students to develop, and be cognisant of, their own way of 'seeing' the fieldwork context. This practice represents a politics of position that remains sensitive to the researcher/researched dichotomy, and an associated 'Othering' sometimes characteristic of field-based experiences. For Monk (2000), such sensitivity is principally underscored by the importance of teaching about the 'Other' to inculcate feelings and ideas of empathy, rather than sympathy prior to field-based learning experiences. Nairn's (2005) critique of field-based experiences that engage students with the 'Other' argues that such encounters are typically highly problematic and potentially serve to reinforce existing beliefs and prejudices. Conversely, Hope (2009), while recognising this critique, defends fieldwork and engagement with the 'Other' as both a challenging and a valuable pedagogic method. Moreover, for Dummer et al (2008) it is not sufficient to simply reflect in this manner, indeed reflection may simply allow students to reinforce pre-existing ideas, as some have argued (Schon, 1987). Therefore, to encourage deep learning, field-based learning assessments must provide a conceptual space to enable and encourage students to challenge their own pre-existing (and constantly changing) assumptions, beliefs and ideas. Moon (2005) advocates a number of pedagogic methods to facilitate reflective learning as an integral and explicit part of the curriculum. One suggested vehicle is the use of the reflective journal, a tool that has formed part of the fieldwork assessment for our FBL module since 2009.

### **The critical FBL reflective journal**

From a pedagogical perspective the manner in which students engage and negotiate field-based learning contexts can be quite strategic, particularly when such engagements become reduced to a series of assessment motivat-

ed practices. This critique reflects on the challenge to student learners in perceiving field experiences as something more than knowledge acquisition, motivated by a desire to 'do well' in assessments. Indeed, when FBL experiences are assessment driven a danger exists in that deep learning may not be achieved (Hill & Woodland, 2002; Scott, Fuller & Gaskin, 2006). To address these concerns individual reflective journals have been incorporated as part of the FBL module assessment, premised on ideas of reflective good-practice. These practices include: a recording of student observations and encounters; a reflection on these observations and encounters contextualised within the overall research process; contextualising and connecting these ideas with wider theory and concepts (discussed in class); and subsequently to generate new knowledge and understanding - thus supporting a reciprocal and multi-faceted process of 'critical reflection' (Nairn, Higgitt & Vanneste, 2000). The ambiguous terrain of using the reflective journal in undergraduate and graduate programmes has been well documented in the JGHE (Haigh, 2001; Park, 2003; Dummer et al., 2008; Heller et al., 2011). Furthermore, Haigh (2001) states that the dominant rationale advocating the use of reflexive journals is to ensure the self-conscious development of student learning; encouraging the learner to consider how content and experience are interpreted. Students then become 'expert learners', understanding how to use self-knowledge to select the strategies they need to achieve learning goals, and also to demonstrate understanding of their learning processes and how these shape and self-regulate their progress (Ertmer & Newby, 1996 in Haigh, 2001). Such self-regulation involves clarifying purpose, understanding meanings, drawing inferences, looking for relationships, and understanding concepts by reformulating and documenting this process in personal terms, through the reflective journal (Gourgey, 1998). Journaling allows students to be more aware of the impact of the research process on themselves and their positionality. This 'self-checking' improves transparency (Heller et al., 2011) in relation to the research process, but also in charting the trajectory and conceptual development of students' thinking as they negotiate the politics of FBL. Moreover, as a reflexive tool the journal has been central to painting a more complete picture of the dialogical processes of research, one structured by both researcher and participants (England, 1994; Fine, 1994). In writing everything down

and evaluating the research process, all the while being cognisant of the influence of prior knowledge and the assumptions upon which this is premised, we access those spaces in-between; the spaces of dialogue between researcher and specific field research contexts.

For the reflective fieldwork journals submitted by the MA ESD students of 2011/2012<sup>1</sup>, staff members conducted a thematic analysis on the content of each individual journal (14 in total). Each fieldtrip staff member coded their own group's journals (civil society and social inclusion; environment and governmentality; and local development). Once this initial coding was complete, staff collaborated to discuss similarities and differences with a view to developing a standardised coding schemata. Through the repetition of this process a series of nine thematic categories emerged from the fieldwork journals. These are presented and defined in Table 1. It is important to acknowledge that these thematic categories are not mutually exclusive but remain interconnected in dynamic, fluid and iterative ways (reflecting the complexity of negotiating the FBL process). In evaluating the module learning outcomes against these nine interrelated reflective themes, the various ways in which scalar and situated participatory knowledges are realised emerge. These are considered below. **[Table 1 should be inserted here]**

**Table 1. Coded Student Reflective Themes**

Reflective Theme	Definition
Student positionality	This encompassed sensibilities relating to gender and the student's role as researcher. Students also identified cultural barriers associated with research practice (for example: language barriers led to a collective sense of frustration and alienation).
Challenging research environments	This was characterised by a crisis of confidence; students questioned the relevance of their pilot research, searching at times for legitimacy and validation. This was an identified problematic from the readings engaged prior to the fieldtrip, which variously critiqued a foreign interventionist agenda that has been in place since the end of the war in BiH.

<sup>1</sup> Consent was sought from each of the students to ensure ethical practice. All students consented to their journal being incorporated into this research.

(Dis)Connect between policy and practice	This category reflects the cognisance of students to identify discrepancies between academic literature and policy documents (engaged prior to the field) when compared to actual practices of development.
Perceived versus actual experience	Students identified stark contrasts between their perceptions of what Sarajevo would be like and how they actually experienced the city.
Interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences	Students identified the affective and highly subjective journey attached to the fieldtrip, outlining a plethora of emotions ranging from shock and frustration to empathy and recognition.
Cognitive and critical capacity	Students reflected on their enhanced ability to critically evaluate the rhetoric of speakers during interviews and meetings. Many journal entries point toward moving beyond 'face-value' to explore the possibilities for operationalising critique in FBL contexts.
Self-efficacy	Students identified a series of skills and competencies attained during the course of the field trip. These included: methodological abilities, communication skills, team-building activities and networking capacities.
Context & preparation	Upon return from the field, students recognised the importance of preparation prior to the fieldtrip, with some explicitly stating that they wished they had spent more time familiarising themselves with context-specific material and readings prior to the trip.
Future (career) opportunities	The fieldtrip was viewed as a vehicle through which students could explore the work and career practice of development practitioners ranging from global to grassroots organisations. Many expressed a desire to return and work both in Sarajevo and BiH as a whole.

### **Contextualising thematics: making sense of FBL reflections**

In analysing the reflective discourses emerging from student journals it is possible to situate the student FBL experience in relation to the overall module learning outcomes. More importantly however, in exploring student reflective discourses it is possible to consider the challenge of negotiating field experiences as a critical and participative FBL pedagogic approach within a graduate student syllabus. Therefore the remainder of this paper focuses precisely on these two arenas of critical and innovative pedagogic practice, situating these practices within the overall vision for the MA ESD programme.

*Linking Reflective Discourse with FBL Learning Outcomes:*

- *Demonstrate and apply critical thinking skills to recognise the scalar nature of development initiatives:* The sensitive and inherently scalar positionality of speakers representing different organisations, operating across multiple scales, was recognised by students. In particular, students reflected on diverging discourses among representatives from global institutions and those representing grassroots initiatives. Across a number of journal entries students reflect on a sense that some speakers they encountered simply regurgitated discourses that 'toed the party line'. Furthermore, although many of the reflective journals demonstrated more surface learning (i.e. descriptive accounts that loosely applied theoretical ideas), students reported an improvement in their own thinking and critical capacity over the course of the week's FBL activities, and began to critically reflect on what they had learned while in the field. Of note here is a cognisance on the part of students relating to their perception of BiH prior to the FBL experience and at the conclusion of their time in the field.
- *Linking theory, policy and practice:* Students recognised the importance of engaging both academic and policy literature focusing specifically on the BiH context prior to their fieldwork. These resources (among others) consolidated a series of perceptions among students relating to the practice of development work in the country. However, many FBL reflective journal entries refer to an emerging series of disconnects and discrepancies between what is reported in this body of work and the real world experiences of the people with whom they engaged during pilot data collection. This brought to the fore the challenges of negotiating and understanding the hardship of war; the realities of everyday life for citizens of the city, and the importance of social capital and family ties. The discourse of reconciliation in post-Dayton BiH was identified as problematic and potentially meaningless without a sustained series of actions that move toward unifying post-conflict society. There was recognition by students of how the literature only shows a 'narrow picture' of the everyday reality of post-conflict livelihoods. Perceived versus actual experience was temporally evident as student impressions changed over the course of the week-long fieldtrip. Some students identified a feeling of surprise when they first arrived, fol-

lowed by a realisation that perhaps they were not fully prepared to engage with this specific context. As a result some reported working late nights while in the field to prepare for interviews and follow-up on potential meetings with organisations identified during the previous day's work (snowballing methodology).

- *Self-directed research and learning:* Students communicated the difficulty in negotiating the temporality of self-directed research, transitioning from a dependent, research-led platform to operationalising independent, research-oriented processes. This also reflected a distinct movement from student as audience to student as participant researcher. There was an evident search for legitimacy and validation in much of the student journals. This manifested itself in a desire to 'make a difference'. Some students recognised that this desire was essentially problematic in that it could be perceived to represent a foreign interventionist agenda, the very practice of which is critiqued as part of the FBL module. The iterative and reflexive nature of this work enhances the development of ideas and methodological processes, which were affirmed and refined throughout the week's fieldwork. Debriefing sessions, held at the end of each day, ensured feedback to students and among students, aiding the refining of research questions and methods for the following day. In this way, students developed confidence and a sense of self-efficacy flourished as the week progressed.
- *To engage effective participatory and collaborative action research and develop practical skills in-doing-so:* Students recognised that they had developed skills for engaging research contexts, including a particular awareness for researcher positionality and the need for researcher reflexivity. Effective collaborative action research involves the identification of one's own positionality. The 'Othering' of interviewees was in itself recognised by the students who at times felt that they were failing to connect with the interviewee. This struggle continued as the week progressed, with students grappling with both the interpersonal and intrapersonal boundaries of 'doing' research. The development of reflexivity and reflective prac-

tice happened, of course, in the challenging fieldwork environment of post-conflict BiH. This sensibility developed with an acknowledgement of the complexities associated with both negotiating a divided society and overcoming barriers (as researchers) on the ground (e.g. language). Students identified their success in gaining and improving practical skills for networking and improved communication. This sense of self-efficacy and recognition for the skills gained was acknowledged as potentially assisting students in their future careers. Some students expressed an interest in returning to Bosnia in a professional capacity. In this way, in terms of field context and preparation, a well prepared one-week field excursion was sufficient to develop such feelings of self-efficacy and facilitate the grounded research process which the programme aimed to achieve.

In seeking to successfully engage the learning outcomes of the FBL module a considerable degree of pre-field preparation by both staff and students was required. The value of such preparation was especially retro-actively recognised by students. This preparatory engagement enhanced student thinking (as evidenced through the emergent reflective themes), and by extension consolidated and augmented the learning outcomes for the module. A central critique of student feedback on the module to date has been that their work 'in the field' remains too constrained due to a limited timeframe. What the reflective journals highlight however (perhaps with varying degrees of success) is that it is possible to consolidate the FBL module outcomes during a one-week fieldtrip programme, provided detailed pre-field preparation is engaged. Deeper (and sometimes differing) forms of learning are evident in the field each year, although some post-trip assessment for the 2011/2012 cohort provided evidence of more surface learning outcomes. This may also reflect a lament across some student journals reflecting limited personal engagement and preparation with material prior to the trip. The following table uses student reflective discourses to illustrate when each of the FBL themes emerged throughout the module's progression. Although conversations with students while in the field pointed toward the prevalence of deep learning, especially through the development of critical capacities, post-trip assessment in some cases failed to articulate these successes. In particular there was a discon-



nect among a small group of students between the detail and degree of critical thinking demonstrated while immersed in FBL activity and the discussion outlined as part of their reflective journal. **Table 2 should be inserted here.**

**Table 2. FBL ‘Action Guide’ Table**

(adapted from Wesche, Huyan, Nelson, & Ramachandran 2010)

<b>FBL Theme</b>	<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Post Trip Synthesis</b>
Student positionality	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Experience of a challenging research environment		<b>X</b>	
(Dis)Connect between policy and practice		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Perceived versus actual experience	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
Interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Cognitive and critical capacity	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Self-efficacy		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Context & preparation	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
Future (career) opportunities			<b>X</b>

Overall, this critical and participative pedagogic approach provides students a conceptual, practical and self-reflexive space, considering the politics of scale, researcher/learner positionality, and the shifting power dynamics permeating research focused on post-conflict development interventionist agendas in Sarajevo, BiH. Central to the success of this pedagogy and student negotiation of FBL experiences, is a structured approach to pre-field preparation, in-field reflection and post-field feedback. This structured approach runs contrapuntal to the fluidity and dynamism of an ever evolving research context, requiring students to be flexible in their negotiation of uncertain contexts, particularly as

they grapple with development practitioner discourses representative of multiple scalar agendas.

### **Concluding comments: Advocating for a critical FBL methodology?**

Central to the discussion provided throughout this paper is the complex and multifaceted nature of participatory FBL pedagogic practices. This is manifest through the range and variety of themes identified throughout the reflective journals, but also communicated through the research challenges identified as part of the Development Research Proposal. In the context of the MA ESD FBL module a reciprocal balance has emerged between structured activities facilitated by staff throughout various stages of the course, in contrast to the relational uncertainty characteristic of every (field) research engagement. How FBL students negotiate the tenuous connections between these two elements impacts on their overall performance (for example preparation prior to fieldwork is identified as paramount). Success in this negotiation is partially supported through staff guidance; but further enhanced with resources (literature on BiH), peer-supported learning and the development of confidence for independent student-led research. The reflective journal then represents an opportunity for students to synthesize their ideas, observations and field-encounters; an in-between space where meaning is negotiated and produced, a messy space where students struggle to 'make-meaning'. More importantly the chaotic nature of this reflexive practice (negotiating and making-meaning), in and of itself reflects the complexity of the post-conflict FBL context; with multiple voices striving for prioritisation at the expense of others, and students attempting to position themselves as researchers and learners within an already crowded practitioner landscape. Crucial to an understanding of FBL student experience is an acknowledgement that it is okay to feel uncertain, that it is ok to feel over-whelmed. These sensibilities have been documented across academic research (England 1994; Katz 1994) but remain under-represented as a central trope of graduate research (in)experience. If students do not realise that it is acceptable, indeed perfectly legitimate, to feel this way, the FBL experience potentially becomes stressful and anxiety ridden. Through the module assessments critical and participative FBL pedagogy implicitly validates and legitimises the negotiation of uncertainty, ambi-

guity and vagueness to support emerging student research frameworks that create opportunities for generating new evidence to supplement, challenge and extend knowledge bases from which new initiatives and policy directions can be developed.

## References

Clegg, S. (2000). Knowing through reflective practice in higher education. *Educational Action Research*, 8(3), 451-469.

Clegg, S. (2005). Evidence based practice in educational research: A critical realist critique of systematic review. *British Journal of Sociology in Education*, 26(3), 415-428.

Dummer, T., Cook, I., Parker, S., Barrett, G., & Hull, A. (2008). Promoting and Assessing 'deep Learning' in Geography Fieldwork: An evaluation of reflective field diaries. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32, 459-479.

England, K. (1994). Getting personal: Reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research. *The Geographical Review*, 46(1), pp.80-89.

Fine, M. (1994). Working the hyphens: Reinventing self and other in qualitative fieldwork. In: N. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 70-82). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Fluri, J. & Trauger, A. (2011). The Corporeal Marker Project (CMP): Teaching about bodily difference, identity and place through experience. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 35(4), 551-563.

Fuller, I., Edmondson, S., France, D. Higgitt, d. & Ratinen, I. (2006). International Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Geography Fieldwork for Learning. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 30(1), 89-101.

Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by Doing*, London: FEU.

Gourgey, A. (1998). Metacognition in basic skills instruction. *Instruct Sci*, 26, 81-96.

Haigh M. (2001). Constructing Gaia: using journals to foster reflective learning. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 25(2), 167-189.

Heller, E., Christensen, J., Long, L., Mackenzie, C., Osano, P., Ricker, B., Kagan, E. & Turner, S. (2011). Dear Diary: Early career geographers collectively reflect on their qualitative field research experiences. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 35(1),67-83.

Hill, J. & Woodland, W. (2002). An evaluation of foreign fieldwork in promoting deep learning: a preliminary investigation. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 27(6), 539-555.

Hope, M. (2009). The Importance of Direct Experience: A philosophical defence of fieldwork in human geography. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 33(2), 169-182.

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as a source of learning and Development*, Inglewood Cliff, CA: Prentice-Hall.

Monk, J. (2000). Looking Out, Looking In: the 'Other' in the Journal of Higher Education. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 24(2), 163-177.

Moon, J. (2005). *Guide for Busy Academics No. 4: Learning through Reflection*, York: Higher Education Academy.

Morrissey, J., Clavin, A., & Reilly, K. (2013). Field-based learning: the challenge of practising participatory knowledge. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 37(4), 619-627.

Nairn, K. (2005). The Problems of Utilizing 'Direct Experience' in Geography Education. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 29(2), 293 – 309.

Nairn, K., Higgitt, D. & Vanneste, D. (2000). International Perspectives on Fieldcourses. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 24(2), 246 – 254.

O'Tuathail, G. (2010) Localizing geopolitics: Disaggregating violence and return in conflict regions. *Political Geography*, 29(5), 256-265.

Park, C. (2003). Engaging Students in the learning process: the learning journal. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 27 (2), 183-199.

Porter, L. (2010). *Unlearning the Colonial Cultures of Planning*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Ramsden, P. (1992). *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*, London: Routledge.

Rose, G. (1997). Situating Knowledge: Positionality, reflexivities and other ethics. *Progress in Human Geography*, 21(3), 305-320.

Sandercock, L. (1998). *Towards Cosmopolis: planning for multicultural cities*, London: John Wiley.

Schon, D.A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Towards a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Scott, I., Fuller, I. & Gaskin, S. (2006). Life without Fieldwork: Some Lecturers' Perceptions of Geography and Environment. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 30(1), 161 – 171.

Smith, N. (1990). *Uneven Development, Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Smith, N. (2006). The Endgame of Globalization. *Political Geography*, 25(1), 1–14.

UN Report (2008a). *From the Field: Sport for Development and Peace in Action*, published by: Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group.

UN Report (2008b). *Sport for Development and Peace: Governments in Action*, published by: Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group.

UN Report (2008c). *Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments*, published by: Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group.

Wesche, S., Huyen, T.N, Nelson, E., & Ramachandran, L. (2010). Challenges and opportunities in cross cultural geographic inquiry. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 34(1), 59-75.