Border Zones: Documenting Life and Work Carried Out under Precarious Conditions

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Professor Emeritus Jan Haaken Portland State University

Contemporary feminist methods reflect broader global trends in the production of knowledge through pictures. From NGOs, activist and arts-based projects to programs of research, feminists have sought and secured space for re-presenting women in the visual field. Feminist projects grounded in visual methods have tended to be under-theorized, however, in relying on the power of the image itself—particularly images of female suffering—to subvert the male gaze. Since visual images often invoke the spectator experience of unmediated access to the inner world of the subject, the evocative power of photographic images may readily reproduce forms of voyeurism.

Professor and filmmaker Jan Haaken takes up these theoretical, ethical and methodological dilemmas in a presentation preceding the screening of her recent film, KUWEPO (running time 24 minutes)

KUWEPO” (“Being There” in Swahili) follows the daily lives of providers in Kenya as they work within the 2010 liberalized constitution to provide post-abortion care for women. The film shows how providers in a range of neighborhoods and clinical settings operate within this new political landscape, even as reforms in the law continue to put women at risk for medical problems and death from unsafe abortions.

The screening is followed by discussion moderated by Professor Maggie O’Neill.

Jan Haaken is professor emeritus of psychology at Portland State University, a clinical psychologist, and documentary filmmaker. Haaken is author of Pillar of Salt: Gender, Memory and the Perils of Looking Back and Hard Knocks; Domestic Violence and the Psychology of Storytelling. She has directed and/or produced six feature-length films, including “Diamonds, Guns and Rice,” “Moving to the Beat,” “Guilty Except for Insanity,” “Mind Zone: Therapists Behind the Front Lines,” and “Milk Men: The Life and Times of Dairy Farmers.” She has directed five short films, including two recent films on abortion providers produced through a team at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor that carries out anti-stigma research.