Biography and Society

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ISA **RC38** **Biography and Society**

NEWSLETTER/DECEMBER 2021

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENCY

Dear Colleagues,

This Newsletter is almost overflowing with the output of our creative and active community of biographical researchers. It shows how productive our RC's members are and to what different areas of sociology and adjacent academic fields we are contributing!

While it is great to see this, we know that while many colleagues in sociology are interested in biographical methods and work with them in their research, they do not consider joining RC 38, either because they do not know about our community, or – even worse – they do not feel entitled to become members when biographical research is not their central or sole research perspective. We would therefore like to use this opportunity to turn to you with a request. <u>Please invite such colleagues to become members of RC 38 and inform them about the advantages that come along with being part of our community!</u> Additionally, it would be great if you could encourage early-stage researchers in your networks to become members and to participate in the next World Congress.

In spring 2022, Johannes Becker and Maria Pohn-Lauggas, who serve as program coordinators for the World Congress 2023, will start preparing RC 38's activities in Melbourne. The first important deadline is in May 2022 when the Call for Sessions will be opened. However, if you are interested in becoming active, the best would be to get in touch with us before that. It is now clear that the conference will be based on a "hybrid option" which will enable many more of us to participate, but will hopefully not end in a dualism that splits those who are physically present and those who join via video.

At the end of 2021, we look back over a year that was more influenced by the global pandemic than we had hoped. As in past issues, we cannot stress enough that we hope that you and all your loved ones are safe and healthy. We hope for a better 2022 for all of us, with an increasing number of lighter moments and a growing feeling that we have put the worst of this behind us.

Johannes Becker, Hermílio Santos, Maria Pohn-Lauggas, Tazuko Kobayashi

Membership fees

Please remember to pay your membership fee. To apply for membership or renew ISA and/or RC affiliation, please use the membership form online: https://isa.enoah.com/Sign-In

The membership fees to the RC38 for 4 years are (see ISA regulations):

Regular members   U$40
Students and members from countries B and C   U$20

If you have any questions concerning the membership, please contact Johannes Becker for advice: johannes.becker@sowi.uni-goettingen.de

The deadline for the next Newsletter is at the end of June 2022.

Please send us:
- A short paper (3-7 pages) on a topic you are currently working on
- A presentation of your current project
- Some reflections on your experiences of teaching biographical approaches and methods
- Reports or some notes about conferences you have attended
- General reports about activities in the field of biographical research in your institution, university, country, continent
- Interesting calls for papers for conferences, workshops, summer schools
- New publications from you, also in your respective native language
- Any other thought or information you would like to share.
- Please send your contributions in Word or rtf formats.

Send your contribution directly to: Biography-and-Society@gmx.de

CONTENTS

NEW PROJECTS

Some information about
current biographical research projects in Poland

Kaja Kaźmierska

The research consortium of the Faculty of Social Sciences (Institute of Sociology) at the University of Wroclaw and the Collegium of Socio-Economics of the Warsaw School of Economics carries out the research project **COV-WORK *(Socio-economic consciousness, work experiences and coping strategies of Poles in the context of the post-pandemic crisis)*** funded by the National Science Centre in Poland (see the website: www.covwork.uni.wroc.pl). The aim of the project to investigate the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic for the world of work in Poland, with a particular focus on the workers' perspectives. The methodologies used include biographical narrative interview method, focus group interviews, qualitative and quantitative discourse analysis and longitudinal survey research. Particular attention is paid in the project to the biographical experiences and life strategies of selected groups of workers who were considered "essential" at the height of the pandemic (including doctors, nurses, teachers, caregivers of the elderly, and workers in logistics centers and courier services delivering food and other goods during the economic shutdown, often via Internet platforms). The project is based on the earlier experiences of the (completed) **PREWORK project** which involved biographical research on young precarious workers in Poland and Germany funded by the National Science Centre in Poland and German Research Foundation (www.prework.uni.wroc.pl). The project contributed to the debate on the relational aspects of precarity, added to the discussion on the emergence of the precariat as a separate, new social class and empirically grounded – based on the analysis of over 120 biographical narrative interviews with young workers – a typology of the ways of managing precarity. Its results have been published, among others, in Sociology and Work, Employment and Society, as well as other articles and three books (in Polish).

The project ***Culturally Mobile Academics? The Experience of Upward Mobility in The Narrative Perspective*** attempts to analyze cultural mismatch in the biographies of scholars with working-class backgrounds. The central research question is: How do the culture of origin (family, early socialization) and destination culture (current social circles) affect the cultural practices, consumption patterns, and professed values of academics? The overarching theoretical framework is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of academic field, but in the project we use various concepts created to capture working-class experience, including class neurosis, working-class stigma, breakaway guilt, imposterism. The project located in **The University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów** is based on a triangulation of two main research approaches: the Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) with parents and new friends and colleagues. The project is funded by the National Science Centre, Poland (UMO-2019/35/D/HS6/00169). Further details: https://mobilnikulturowo.wordpress.com/

The project located at University of Lodz ***Post-transformation in the perspective of biographical experiences of people born between 1980-2005. A sociological analysis***.

Its aim is to analyse biographical experiences of people born between 1980-2005 in order to grasp the mutual influence between individual perspective and macro socio-cultural processes (reflected also in media discourse) characteristic to the period defined as post-transformation. The study analytically will be focused on the last two decades that at the same time are still framed by the (collective) experience of the systemic transformation in Poland. The core data is based on analysis of biographical experiences of people born in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000 to 2005. In their autobiographical narrative interviews we will study the process of transition from one period of social change (transformation) to another (post-transformation). The transformation is defined as a process of social changes, for which the year 1989 has been symbolically set as the political, social and economic turning point. The post-transformation is understood as contemporary process that is the time "after" the systemic transformation being a significantly new aspect of the social change. It is shaped by at least two global processes: 1) the explosion of social media and the internal logic of the virtual world changing people's lives in general and deepening intergenerational gaps in particular and the dynamic cultural changes concerning value systems and attitudes. The research will be focused on: an insight into biographical experiences of the process of post-transformation in autobiographical renderings of "ordinary people" (Schütz); and supported by an analysis of media discourse as socially constitutive and contingent – a key factor in the social construction of social life. The research perspective is based on biographical approach (Schütze) and discourse analysis (Fairclough, Wodak) and additionally the re-visit and re-analysis of data coming from the previous project on the experience of the systemic transformation. We plan to conduct, analyze and compare biographical experiences of people born in the 1980s, 1990s. and early 2000s. The cohort born in the 80's is the first full "beneficiaries" of systemic transformation in Poland, people born in the decade of the 1990s and 2000s are to a greater extent the subjects and objects of post-transformation processes and they are brought up in "new new media" time. The main frame of reference in the research is the comparative perspective between biographical experiences and the way they are interpreted by people born between 1980 and 2005. The second and supporting research method will be discourse analysis. Treating discourse not only as a structure, but also as a processual phenomenon (van Dijk T) we will analyze publicly available websites texts (Internet platforms) that mirror opinionated Polish newspapers and Internet sources indicated by the selected informants. The project aims to explore the relationship between the studied discourse(s) and the emic categories, self-theories and argumentative structures presented in the conducted autobiographical narrative interviews. The project starts in January 2022 and will be financed by National Science Center DEC-2021/41/B/HS6/02048

Individual and collective memories of slavery and the slave trade: A contrastive comparison of different communities, generations and groupings in Ghana and Brazil

Principal investigators: Prof. Dr. Maria Pohn-Lauggas, Prof. Dr. Gabriele Rosenthal (Georg-August Universität Göttingen, Germany)

Cooperation partners: Prof. Dr. Hermílio Santos (Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul Brasil), Prof. Dr. Steve Tonah (University of Ghana, Legon)

Team members in Germany: Dr. Eva Bahl, Dr. Artur Bogner, Lucas Cé Sangalli, M.A., Dr. Nicole Witte

Team members in Ghana: Rainer Alongwe, BA, Ismael Osei Boampong, MPhil, Dr. Felix Longi

Team members in Brazil: Handiara Oliveira dos Santos, BA, Raphaela Pereira Dellazeri, BA

The empirical interpretative study focuses on a contrastive comparison of collective and individual memories of slavery in different regions, generations and groupings in Ghana and Brazil. We will use an approach that combines methods from the sociology of knowledge and figurational sociology to reconstruct the interrelationships between different memory practices. While for white Europeans the age of the transcontinental slave trade is so remote that they do not connect it with their own family history, this cannot be said of people in Brazil and in Ghana. Here, in both public and family memories and commemoration practices, this past, with all its many facets, is less remote, and there are many people who know that their ancestors were enslaved, or that they enslaved others. However, within each country, attitudes to the history of the slave trade and slavery in general are very different, and sometimes controversial, as seen in public discourses or places of remembrance, in family dialogues, among members of different groupings, and in different parts of the country. In carrying out a contrastive comparison of selected regions in Ghana and in Brazil, we will look closely at these differences, and show how they are due to very different historical trajectories and changing social figurations. In Ghana, we will focus on Elmina und Cape Coast, from where the slave ships departed, and on two regions in the north of the country where people were captured and sold in slave markets. In Brazil, we will work in the coastal region of Salvador de Bahia, where most of the present-day inhabitants are descendants of former slaves, and in the region around Pelotas in Rio Grande do Sul, where most people are of European descent. We will seek to answer the following questions: What knowledge of the past has been handed down in the communities and families? What kinds of slavery and slave trade (transatlantic, trans-Saharan, intra-African, intra-Brazilian) are thematized by whom, how and in what contexts? We will also pay attention to what is said and what is not said at places of remembrance and commemorative events in these regions, and which people are brought together at such places or events.

We intend to conduct family interviews (if possible with several generations of the same family), group discussions, and thematically focused or ethnographic interviews with visitors and guides at places of remembrance.

The Heiresses – Biographical narratives and slavery heritage of three generations of black women from three economic regions in Brazil

Coordinator: Hermílio Santos (PUCRS – Brazil)

A four-years research project funded by CNPq (Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development), starting in March 2022.

This proposal is connected to the project "Individual and collective memories of slavery and slave trade: A contrastive comparison of different communities, generations and groupings in Ghana and Brazil", coordinated by Maria Pohn-Lauggas and Gabriele Rosenthal. "The Heiresses" will analyse life histories and the everyday life of women whose previous family generations have experienced slavery during the colonial period in Brazil. Biographical interviews will be conducted with three generations of black women from the same family in three regions that were highly dependent on the exploration of slaved workforce: the production of sugar cane in the region of Pernambuco; the exploitation of gold and diamond in the region of Diamantina, in the state of Minas Gerais; and the production of jerky (salty meat) in the south of Rio Grande do Sul, close to the border with Uruguay. In addition to research activities, a documentary film series with 5 episodes has already started to be produced. The first episode presents different aspects of slavery in Brazil and includes an exclusive interview with the sociologist, former president of Brazil, and former president of the International Sociological Association (ISA), Fernando Henrique Cardoso, whose PhD thesis addressed the singularities of slavery in South Brazil. The second episode presents the current situation of black women in contemporary Brazil. The other three episodes will be dedicated to the biographical experiences of black women as narrated by themselves in each of the three regions investigated in this project. The series is expected to be concluded by the end of 2022.

Scientific network: Globalizing sociological theory:
Qualitative research and theory from the South

Convenors: Prof. Dr. Marian Burchardt (University of Leipzig) and Dr. Johannes Becker (University of Göttingen)

Funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) 2022-2024

This research network seeks to advance sociological theory building that is based on qualitative research in societies of the global South. By initiating scholarly exchanges and collaborations among sociologists from Europa, Africa, Latin America and Asia it contributes to interrogating ongoing Western-centrisms and to advancing self-reflexive sociological concepts that account for the increasing transregional entanglements under the global condition.

Over the last decades, there have been sustained and mounting critiques of the ways in which efforts in sociological theory continue to be predominantly based on premises, heuristics, and concepts of Western origin and on research carried out in Western societies while at the same time claiming universal validity. In particular, scholars committed to postcolonial theories have criticized the fact that Western sociological theories bear the imprint of very particular historical trajectories towards modernity, fail to account for the West's historical entanglement with other world regions and fail to interrogate their own constitutive embeddedness in colonial histories and postcolonial conjunctures. These postcolonial critiques have provided valuable and welcome insights into unexamined ideological assumptions of Western sociological theory. However, the task to make good on the promise of global sociology to offer theoretical tools for understanding contemporary, globally entangled social worlds via theory building based on empirical research in the Global South is still ahead.

In this network, we seek to advance theory building through systematic comparisons of the research results of network members in three fields of research: (1) health, gender and sexuality, (2) families, biographies and generation, and (3) space, architecture and urbanism. While taking into account and critically discussing relevant strands of research such as historical comparative macro-sociology, development sociology and studies on transnationalism we aim to go beyond these by carving out a specific terrain of transregional social theory.

Sociology team leads biographical research with oil and gas workers

As part of a research hub based at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), in Porto Alegre, Brazil, a group of sociologists have used biographical approaches to investigate work safety in the oil and gas industry. The Centre for Human Factors and Resilience Research (HFACTORS) seeks to develop processes and technologies to guide the implementation of human factors programs that promote resilience in complex industries. The Research & Development actions being carried out by the centre are organised into projects and, since 2017, one of these projects seeks to contribute to the development of a more systemic and decentralised safety program for the oil and gas industry, drawing from different disciplines such as engineering, social service, psychology, and sociology, among others.

The sociology team currently involves an area coordinator, Prof. Dr. Hermílio Santos, four post-doctoral researchers, Naida Menezes, Karina Reif, Kamila Almeida, and Priscila Susin, an MA researcher, Gabriele Bachi, and an undergrad student, Lucas Oliveira. In earlier years, the team also included a PhD candidate, Débora Rinaldi. Since the beginning of the project, the group has adopted the method of narrative biographical interviews and the method of biographical case reconstruction, aiming to understand workers' long-term perspectives and experiences at work and outside work. The triangulation between biographical research findings and results from other disciplines and methods has strongly oriented the team's interdisciplinary efforts and showed that multi-method approaches can highly contribute to investigations on complex work settings. The team had the opportunity to interview on site in offshore platforms in Rio de Janeiro during the first phase of the project, between 2017 and 2018. During the pandemic, however, a transition to online data collection required the team to adapt to remote interviews. In 2022 it is expected that the biographical research findings, together with the findings from other teams, will inform the research-action phase of the project.

The team has also been producing short videos using preliminary results from the data collected, which are part of a post-doctoral project grounded on visual sociology. Furthermore, a documentary is being produced in order to show workers' life experiences. The film directed by Professor Santos is expected to be available in 2022. The group has been focusing mainly on the work and safety theme and the next publications will bring more reflections on this subject.

NEWS

International Cooperation Agreement between the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Brazil, and the Frankfurt University of Applied Science (UAS), Germany

Representatives of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Brazil, and the Frankfurt University of Applied Science (UAS), Germany, signed a cooperation agreement on February 2020. The main aim of the agreement is to strengthen and stimulate collaborative research, the academic mobility of students and teachers, and joint projects in the field of interpretative biographical research. Professor Dr. Michaela Köttig (Social Work Department/UAS) and Professor Dr. Hermílio Santos (Postgraduate Programme in Social Sciences/PUCRS) led the initiative.

Course on the Conduction and Analysis of Biographical Narrative Interviews by students for students – Student Seminar, Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Brazil

The Fourth edition of the Student Seminar of the Postgraduate Programme in Social Sciences was held in November 2021 at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Brazil. During the event, Débora Rinaldi, PhD student in Social Sciences at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Brazil, offered a course on the conduction and analysis of biographical narrative interviews for BA and MA students interested in knowing and acquiring basic knowledge about interpretative biographical research and the use of the methods of biographical narrative interviews and biographical case reconstruction. A similar course is planned for 2022.

Before, during and after death: Biographical narratives of male perpetrators of intentional homicide in Metropolitan Buenos Aires (2000-2020)

/Antes, durante y después de la muerte: narrativas biográficas del homicidio en enfrentamientos y peleas entre varones en el AMBA (2000-2020).

Martín di Marco

PhD Oral defence in Buenos Aires University by Martín di Marco, Streamed via: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2HUTI1OfLM&t=220s&ab_channel=Secretar%C3%ADadeEstudiosAvanzadosFSOCUBA

CALL FOR PAPERS

University of Milano-Bicocca - Department of Sociology and Social Research

University of Milan - Department of International, Legal and Historical-Political Studies

ESA Research Network 33 'Women's and Gender Studies'

New Challenges to Feminism and Gender Research

Mid-term Conference, Milan, Italy

June 13th-14th 2022

Chair: Elisabetta Ruspini

Co-Chair: Ana Vidu

In collaboration with:

ITHACA-Interconnecting Histories and Archives for Migrant Agency: Entangled Narratives Across Europe and the Mediterranean Region (Horizon 2020 G.A. 101004539)

ABCD-Interdepartmental Center for Gender Studies, University of Milano-Bicocca

Conference Theme

Feminists and gender researchers are increasingly working to provide perspectives capable of analyzing and understanding changing gender relations, to inspire innovative theories and practices in new and established feminisms and to encourage reflexivity. The pandemic has increased this need due to the ambivalent effects of COVID-19, which has magnified socio-economic inequalities and, at the same time, has fostered new socio-economic and cultural practices that are affecting women and men differently.

This Conference encourages participants to both approach contemporary social, economic, political, cultural and climate-related challenges from a gender-sensitive perspective, and to reflect upon the future of feminism and gender research in times of global crises.

The Organizers look forward to seeing proposals for conference papers that reflect upon feminist responses to current world problems and contribute to the establishment of a dialogue between feminism and future studies.

Submissions are open for contributed papers focusing on the following and related fields:

- Feminism, Sustainability and Climate Change;
- Nature/culture Issues in Feminist and Gender Research;
- Social Reproduction and New Technologies;
- Gender and Migration;
- Gender, Care and Mobility;
- Gender Health and Wellbeing;
- Gender-based Violence and Harassment;
- Gender, Sexuality and Social Control;
- Women and New Forms of Discrimination;
- Global Trends in LGBT+ Rights and Issues;
- Gender Perspectives on Post pandemic Futures.

Paper proposals including a transnational and/or comparative perspective are particularly welcome.

Abstracts submission

Please submit your abstract to the ESA RN33 Coordinators (Elisabetta Ruspini: elisabetta.ruspini@unimib.it & Ana Vidu: ana.vidu@deusto.es) by **February 15, 2022**

The abstract should be no more than 500 words and should outline the theme, methodology and the main findings of the study. It should also specifically outline how the author(s) intend(s) to address one or more of the issues raised in the call for papers.

Please e-mail your abstract including a title, five keywords, author(s) names and affiliations and e-mail address of each author.

Please write "Abstract proposal for ESA RN33 2022 mid-term Conference" in the subject line of the e-mail.

Decisions will be communicated by the end of March 2022.

Conference Venue, Fees and Accommodation

The Conference will be held at the University of Milano-Bicocca, Milan, Italy. The Conference programme features keynote lectures, plenary discussions, paper sessions, a round table and an artistic performance.

The Conference will last 1 day and a half, starting on the afternoon of June 13, 2022.

No conference fees will be charged, but conference participants will need to pay their own travel and accommodation. Information on hotels and hostels close to the Conference venue will be communicated in due course.

This is a sustainable event.

Scientific Committee

Elzbieta Czapka, Rassa Ghaffari, Ombretta Ingrascì, Monica Massari, Martina Panzarasa, Elisabetta Ruspini, Ana Vidu, Lise Widding Isaksen

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Sustaining employability through lifelong learning.
A life history approach to employability

Henning Salling Olesen

Abstract: This article presents the practical unfolding of a life history method in a major empirical project on employability. The discourse of employability, seeing the worker as universally adaptive work force, is contextualized historically in a late phase of capitalist modernization. A critical discussion of the prevailing concept of competence for neglecting the subjective dimension of learning and competence development leads to methodological considerations and decisions made in designing this research project, its research questions, its theoretical understanding and the choice of method. Narrative life stories shall illuminate workers' experiences of substantial shifts in their career and the competence development they have experienced in such situations. The article anticipates how a psycho-societal interpretation of life histories can bring valuable insights in the subjective dimension of competence development in the context of workers' life as a whole.

Key words: Life history; experience; competence; employability.

I have had several occasions to present the results of life history research in adult education and learning for Brazilian colleagues through CIPA and the two collections published by Abrahão (2004; 2018). I am deeply grateful for the great work on editing and translation into Portuguese, which has been carried out in this context, including a recent account of the development of this research (Olesen, 2018). This work places particular emphasis on the development of a psycho-social analysis of biographical material, but at the same time it is emphasized that this methodological development has always been driven by a problem-oriented epistemology: The method has been further developed through research in mundane social sectors with a view to understanding the actors in these areas, including special professional practices in teaching, socially work and health promotion, and give rise to a dialogue on the political and moral aspects of their practices.

In this article, I will present the practical unfolding of a life history method in connection with the design of a major empirical project which has just begun in Australia under the leadership of Professor Stephen Billett. My role in this project is to contribute to the methodological design of the project with a life-history analysis framework and to participate in the unfolding of the project throughout the three-year project.

I would like to elucidate the crucial strategic considerations and decisions made in designing this research project on its research questions, its theoretical understanding and the choice of method. I will first quote a summary of the project description, in page (number):

"The proposed project aims to generate evidence-based policies and informed practices to support accessible work-life learning arrangements that promote the employability of Australian workers. Employability is more than securing employment: getting a job. It includes having the abilities to remain competent, thereby resisting unemployment (i.e. sustain employment), and being able to secure advancement, broadening occupational roles, or adapt to new circumstances and practices (i.e. developing a career). Securing those capacities equates to what is often referred to as 'lifelong learning' or 'learning across 'working life', which is of interest to governments, workplaces, professional bodies and workers as well as to those whom they provide goods and services."

The project has its point of departure in the concept of employability and aims to find out how to support the opportunities to maintain employability through learning and education. The people whose employability research is about appear indirectly, as stakeholders who,

along with virtually everyone else, have an interest in this research. But the epistemic object is not the people as such but their societal status as wage workers and bearers of this employability. This immediately understands the demands of the labor market as an independent driver for the learning processes needed to be employable. However, the focus of the study is not the development of work and its demands on the labor force, but a study of what it takes for working people to be able to keep up with them - or in the words of the project proposal: "how promoting that employability can be realized by identifying and verifying the types of experiences that most effectively and viably support learning through informants' everyday work activities and educational provisions ". And this is not a narrow or static concept of employability: "It includes having the ability to remain competent, thereby resisting unemployment (ie sustain employment), and being able to secure advancement, broadening occupational roles, or adapt to new circumstances and practices (ie developing a career) ". The worker must therefore live up to the demands of the labor market, but not in any uniquely determined way.

The problem of the study is obviously determined by something that appears to be a general political theme in most capitalist countries: competence development through lifelong learning is seen as an instrument or prerequisite for economic development and competitiveness. This societal view generates a social engineering challenge of clarifying the means that enables workers to adapt to the differentiation and change of work, and thus maintain their individual value in the labor market. But research that can contribute to this social engineering must shift the perspective and see the workers as learner subjects, who develop their competences from their subjective perspective. to the In this article I will take a critical view on the concept of competence used in the discourse on lifelong learning, and raise the question: Can we, through empirical studies of how concrete people actually handle the changes of (paid work) life, gain theoretical insights into the dynamics of lifelong learning and competence development? How can we do that? These questions of learning theory and methodology that makes the project very promising.

The context of the study

The practical issue of the Employability project is a symptomatic result of a historical change in societal structure. The development of capitalist modernization has, above all, entailed a constant change in technology and business structure. In pre-capitalist societies, society is relatively stable from generation to generation - the location, the technical and procedural content of the work, the division of labor, etc. constitute a stable framework for the learning processes of growing up individuals. Culture and normative orientations do not change much over a generation. In such a society, the upbringing has the character of social adaptation to well known conditions, and education has the nature of disseminating recognized practices and knowledge. Competence development is a marginal growth within known frameworks. Modernization means that there must be an accelerated transfer of skills between the generations. This task is left to the school and later also an increasingly formalized vocational training for young people: Children and young people are taken up to society's "current cultural stage" until adulthood. The increasing importance of the education system can initially be seen in response to the need to ensure dissemination to all, and gradually more and more to a demand for temporal compression of this dissemination.

This trend has continued, but through the industrial modernization, the relationship between generations and societal change has changed so that the relationship between the period length of the cycles has become almost the opposite. Before, many generations passed on a societal epoch - Now there are several constellations of society going on one generation. You can discuss what constitutes societal epochs - hardly every new technological innovation can be seen as an epochal change, but many of them require learning - and each generation experiences a few changes that can be called epochal changes. In addition, the modernization process has led to a number of cultural and social changes that give both learning and work new subjective meanings. Not only is lifelong learning a societal requirement, but it has also become a central component of many people's everyday lives and life

strategies. Individualization is a direct cultural consequence of the modernization process, also seen as a cultural release (Ziehe, Fornäs, & Nielsen, 1989).

I use the concept of modernization as a term for the comprehensive transformation of society and culture that concerns both culture, institutions and the individual, driven by capitalist industrialization in the capitalist center of Europe and North America. I do this to maintain the basic nature of the process, even though it is not a smooth and homogeneous process - it proceeds widely differently and not least, one can rightly distinguish between "center" and "periphery", and globally between a "northern" and a "southern" version of this modernization (Connell, 2007; Sousa Santos, 2014). Knowing that the historical process differs in different variations and phases, the concept of modernization provides a framework to explore empirically how the historical transformation of society has an impact on the life of the individual, and that is precisely what the employability project allows.

Once upon a time profession was a form of life that was relatively given and characterized a person's life completely. The normal biography consisted of one professional career with pre-education and post-retirement, and one accompanying family career that, mediated through the gender division of labor and the core family, was linked to the professional career. As a consequence of modernization, a profession becomes more and more something that is chosen and 'held' - not freely, far from tha - but work identity is something that is formed by occupational choice and changes with actual employment and occupational changes. It can be said that wage labor is increasingly shaping the work identity in the sense that work ability becomes a de-personalized commodity that can be acquired and exchanged as such.

The same goes for women. Women now work in the formal economy almost all their adult lives, interruptions in childbirth are quite short-lived. Both sexes are gradually gaining a working 'career' which means that women are not merely a buffer in the geographical and practical working conditions of men, and are not tied to a partner for life. Both careers undergo shifts and loops, and professional and personal needs are merged in a new way.

In spite of the fact that social normativities and established cultural horizons have been eroded in the course of modernization process they still play a significant role in the form of class and gender orientation patterns, and each individual must throughout adult deal with the reconstruction of these cultural universes, building their own matrice of a life course. Let us focus on gender.

Regina Becker-Schmidt, with her concept of "Geschlechterverhältnis", has termed the fact that gender relations form a structural component in capitalism and also encapsulates the core contradiction in capitalist social formation ((Becker-Schmidt & Knapp, 1987a, 1987b): On the one hand women's participation in the formal labor market as (almost) equal wage workers enables a universal commodification of socially necessary work. On the other hand, the physical and social reproduction of society is (still) dependent on women's work and femininity as social competencies. Changing gender relations in general and women's work activity are directly linked to general shifts in the occupational structure from manufacturing to service industries, and in particular to the care sector (childcare, elderly care, nursing). In these growing professions, personal characteristics and competencies play a greater role in working practice than in manufacturing industries. In a broad sense, this trend means blurring the boundary between professional qualification and personal development, and takes on much more variable forms than before - both between different individuals, generations and genders, and across the adult life of the individual.

The changing gender relationship that we see evolving in many forms is also seen as part of the restructuring of capitalism, and in this respect the understanding of gender relations in work are also politically contested, for instance in a memorable discussion between Nancy Frazer and Boaventura Sousa Santos the relationship between capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism. Where Santos asserted the relative independence of each of the structural power relations, Frazer's reasoning was an emphasis on the inner coherence between capitalism as the basis societal relation and patriarchy and colonialism as the derived forms of coercion. In all simplicity, this theoretical discussion proposes an empirical-historical examination of the relationship between ethnic identity, work identity and gender identity in individual lives.

Studying empirically the learning processes related to work identity in connection with career changes we get a micro level peep hole into the subjective dimensions of such basic societal developments. The two trends pointed out here, the basic change in work and family career once or more in adult life, and the increased interplay between professional identity and personal development are both connected with changing gender relations. They imply that the personal development of the adult person has an increased impact on work identity and learning in connection with work. Complicated shifts in people's lives can be both the trigger for and sometimes the result of extensive and in-depth learning processes. Sometimes in the form of participation in education, other times not. Continuing education in adulthood often takes place in these particular stages of transition, and education often has more complicated implications than just its explicit purpose. Lifelong learning is thus far more comprehensive than a continuous refueling exercise.

The concept of employability must be seen in this context. Occupational change is a condition of life and the fact that several societal technology and business changes are going on in a single generation of working life means that people must try to keep up with changes. The basic education system is no longer a guarantee of lifelong employability - more and more people are changing occupation area in a way that either involves a new qualification or a re-functioning of the competences that the individual brings. But changing occupation and changing work requirements is not just a professional retraining. By seeing this in the context of modernization and the ongoing restructuring of the social form of industrial capitalism, we also gain a deeper understanding of the connection between challenge for maintaining individual employability and the ongoing restructuring of the societal form of industrial capitalism.

The interest in employability is thus a symptom of a societal transformation which means that people must constantly be able to undergo fairly basic developments and that the school and education system that has tried to equip the individual with a lifelong knowledge and skills base can no longer fulfill this task alone. Therefore, in order to elucidate how employability can be maintained, we must deal with the totality and coherence of individual learning, formal as well as informal. In schools as well as elsewhere.

Theorizing competences

These societal conditions have paved the way for a new framework for discussion of learning and a new vocabulary which is not related to formal education and schooling but rather to the capabilities in relation to work. It has flipped the lens from teaching to the individual learner in context, from curriculum to learning outcomes, from knowledge and skills to competences. It is not a development which is fostered in education, on the contrary many educators see these discourses as a farewell to education as such, in the sense of "Bildung".

The new descriptor for human capability is competence (Nicoll & Olesen, 2013; Salling Olesen, 2013a). Originally the concept of competence had a legal meaning related to legitimacy. The meaning that gained ground from the 1990s combines functionalism and psychology, where the emphasis varies a little between the two and which has been applied in different ways (Gnahs, 2007; Illeris, 2009; D. S. . Rychen & Salganik, 2001). Nevertheless, there is in practice today a core meaning: competence refers to the abilities of an acting subject to translate knowledge into appropriate action for everyday practical situations, above all in work processes. This ability can be specified in the following attributes according to Rychen; Salganik (op. Cit,), 2001, and summarized by us:

- The ability to act successfully
- In a complex context
- Through the mobilization of psycho-social prerequisites (cognitive and non-cognitive)
- With results related to the requirements of a professional role or personal project

In this understanding, which is representative of the political-economic use of the term, competence is in one respect *functional, performance-oriented and pragmatic*, and defined in terms of external social demands that need to be mastered. Additionally, it also involves a

questioning of previous conceptions of the application of knowledge, where knowledge is something one can *have* and where rational practice can be based on general abstract knowledge. "Competence" is addressing practices that are not fixed and known before-hand, and in competent practice knowledge must be mobilized and transformed in order to be applied successfully. Therefore, competence is linked to a potentially acting subject who is able to mobilize various prerequisites in a manner relevant to the situation at hand.

Competence has been applied in an effort to identify the qualities of the workforce that are vital for the economy and competitiveness, key competences, and were intended to serve as a guideline for national policies for long term competence development, while also serving as a general equivalent (Salling Olesen, 2014) enabling some kind of calibration for comparing the workforces.

In the OECD DeSeCo project (Definition and Selection of Competencies) this analytical task was approached quite ambitiously. The scientific project to create clarity and consistency in the definition of key competences was obviously triggered by the pragmatic desire to achieve workable indicators of generic competences for policy making and international comparison. One of the experts, the psychologist Franz Weinert, referring to the connection between competences linked to specific practices and key competences with broad or universal applicability, states as follows:

such scientific plans have often failed in psychology, however. The underlying multilevel models can be logically reconstructed, but not validated psychologically. The different degrees of abstraction mean, therefore, a fundamental asymmetry in competence research - high abstraction: intellectually brilliant, pragmatically hopeless; low abstraction: pragmatically useful, intellectually unsatisfactory. (Weinert, 2001,p. 52).

To put it simply: The scientific ambition to understand the dynamics of subjectivity must be sacrificed in the pursuit of pragmatic policy needs.

I think the difficulties involved in such use can be related to two conceptual problems, both enforced by the political context in which the concept was conceived and propagated. One is *reification* or *commodification*, i.e. it is assumed that competences are immutable properties that can be acquired and possessed. This reification is directly triggered by objectives of measurement and comparison, but also in the thinking of economists regarding the logic of the market (commodification) and capital (accumulation). The definition and description of key competencies seem to be driven by a dream of a universally flexible and adaptable workforce in an era where the industrial (Taylorist) division of labour and its way of reducing the complexity of work tasks operations is becoming outdated.

In the above summary definition of competence the two first items clearly refer to a future more complex work situation. In the 3rd item the attention is drawn to the necessary endeavour of mobilizing "cognitive and non-cognitive" prerequisites. This attempt for a psychological conceptual delineation revolves around the relationship between cognitive factors, which are well defined, and a great many other things that can only be defined negatively, as non-cognitive, but seem to include motivational and other emotional factors. Within a cognitivistic figure of thinking and learning, which seems to be the starting point, it is the relationship between universality/abstraction and specificity/concreteness that challenges the conceptualisation, since practical problem solving and agency involves something more than abstract knowledge. Weinert himself also refers to empirical data showing that the solution of difficult problems always requires the involvement of content-specific knowledge and skills (Weinert, 1998). In his psychological contribution to the DeSeCo project's initial conceptual process, Weinert emphasizes that competence implies and presupposes, in the fulfilment of a task, a combination of '*cognitive and (in many cases) motivational, ethical, volitional, and/or social components*' (D. S. . Rychen & Salganik, 2001 p. 62).

This leads us to the second problem of the prevailing competence discourse, namely that it does not take *the subjective nature of competences* seriously. In spite of assuming that the nature of practice is unpredictable and will require more and other than cognitive prerequisites, but these factors add to the complexity of the specific tasks on which the competent agent can act successfully, however independent of the specific agent subject and his/her relation to the practices in question.

This is fatal for the understanding of competence, and particularly the dynamics of *developing competences* – i.e. learning. Although the requirements or success criteria for competent practice are externally determined, competent actions are basically subjective processes, based in feelings and interpretations: problem comprehension, impulse for practice, mobilization of knowledge, learning, and practising skills in new contexts. These subjective or "noncognitive prerequisites" – to use the DESECO vocabulary – are result of life experiences and previous learning. The concept must involve a view of competence as a personal, culturally anchored and experience-based capacity, located in the competent person's way of interpreting situations and engaging in them, and also as a tool for learning. It must seek to understand the subjective "productive forces" that may lead to learning and practice development, including those involved in the emotional and cognitive work of detachment and reconfiguration of experiences. It must enable analyses of the complexes of rationality and defence mechanisms, rooted in the life experience, from the interaction with family, leadership in community etc. They may in a professional career be redefined by professional knowledge – but when, how and why still underpinned by personal life experience.

This will require that we overcome the reification/commodification of competences. Only if we recognize this subjective dimension of practice we enable an empirical investigation of the relation between those aspects of competence that were only negatively defined, the "non-cognitive psychosocial prerequisites", and the life experience and learning of the practitioner – which are individual, situated and changeable. For the sustaining of employability it becomes obvious that employability will depend on identification of the worker with the specific work process and its content – not as a general attitude only, but as a specific compliance with an individual and collective life experience.

The research which is just commencing in Australia is defined within a framework of competence development, integrating learning through formal education and training as well as informal learning. In the words of the project proposal: "Here, th[e] aim is to understand further how promoting that employability can be realised by identifying and verifying the types of experiences that most effectively and viably support that learning through informants' everyday work activities and educational provisions. Using retrospective cases, firstly, ... (Billett, 2018, p.1)."

In order to avoid some of the conceptual problems which arrive in the prevailing theorization of competence, as described above, we will work with a life history approach. Leaving the following steps of the research away for a moment, and also the promises for social engineering, I will explain how this will happen. The first phase of the research will explore retrospectively the learning careers that have for a number of interviewees enabled them to maintain employability in a changing environment. The sample will be relatively small (24 individuals) and they will be selected so as to cover a variation of occupations, age, and gender – all however characterized by obvious shifts in their working career – either triggered by structural changes in labor market, by specific developments of work processes and occupational structure, and/or by their own decisions. They will be interviewed in a two step procedure, first a very open narrative autobiographical interview, and second a follow up where researchers on the basis of a preliminary analysis will clarify facts and circumstances that seem of importance and invite the IP's to reflect on their learning career so as it stands out from their narration.

The project design further includes a longitudinal shadowing of interview persons' later learning in the form of "detailed progressive accounts secured through year-long shadowing of workers' learning through discussions and observations, informed elaborations of processes of work-life learning, effective forms and sources of support for that learning will be identified and appraised" (Billett, 2018, p.1).

We have chosen an autobiographical interview for two reasons. First, because we want to give voice to the protagonists themselves, we want to apply an inside perspective on the subject-matter. Interview persons will be encouraged to tell their entire life story, with just a minimal indication of our particular interest in learning and career shifts. Second, an autobiographical interview has specific qualities as a told story and in text resulting from its transcription because the narration obeys cultural rules or standards of interaction that may or may

not be conscious for the narrator. A narrative account is more than a naked transmission of information about what has happened and what has been. It is also not a purely intention-driven agency (illocutionary speech acts). Actually, our two reasons for choosing this method converge in the sense that a narrative as a specific form of language invites but also presupposes a subjective engagement and a legitimate focus on the narrator as a subject irrespective of the circumstances and the research project. The precondition for this is that the research interviewer succeeds in defining and facilitating a compliance about the narrative communication.

A good autobiographic interview requires certain relational and technical precautions: The research interviewer must of course be genuinely interested in the interview person *as a subject*, not as a token and not as a "source" for information about history or the societal whole (Bertaux, 1981). He/she must be able to create a confident atmosphere, and he/she must be able to maintain this line of communication in a supportive encouraging and self-restrictive way of pushing the narration ahead. The qualities of the narrative as a specific form of text can be related to a number of cultural standards or rules that can be summarized as "requirements" that a narrative has to fulfill or obey. These requirements are in some ways recognizable as aspects of literary tools although they are of course released from aesthetic evaluation.

Storytelling must be concrete and detailed – it must have a point or morale, but it must also expand, complicate and provide details which enables imagination and possibly suspense. The point of the story must be motivated, have a relevance and must condense a wider meaning and perspective. Having adopted the narrative compliance this also means that the story must saturate and complete the line of incidents and the logic of the situation. Obviously the fulfillment of these requirements can be more or less consequent in each case but it is expected that we can gain a very rich empirical material, which with an appropriate analysis will enable a deep understanding of the life experiences of interview persons.

A hermeneutic method: the concept of Experience

When (auto)biographical research is used in sociology or history research it is often preferred in order to understand society and history from a life world perspective - oral history, cultural studies of collective memory. In a symbolic interactionist framework you may assume a high level of homological structure between the narrative and the agency in the time and situation told - the autobiographical narrative is as close as you can come to reproducing the meaning making of the persons in the story. In this sense autobiography is lifelike. But still it is necessary to remember that the (auto)biography is "only" a text or a speech act in the present. It presents an interpretation of the lived life told by someone who is on the one hand part of it but on the other hand is already somewhere else, seeing the agency of the told time in the light of his or her present context and not least imagination of the future. The biography he or she tells is interesting both as an account of the past and an expression of the present subject in his or her present situation (and actually we must understand the self-interpretation in the present in the context of the present and anticipated future employment condition). This complexity is not different in principle from any interpretive understanding – but it is particularly important in autobiographical research because the fact that he or she is doing the account of him-/herself may nourish an illusion of authenticity and truth, which again goes together with an epistemological problem of social science in general, namely the illusion of an identical object. (Adorno, 2001). You may radicalize this view into a constructivist view, which is sometimes the case in learning research so that the narrative produced in the interview is in itself the object of research. This is not the epistemic interest in the Australian project.

Seeing the autobiographical narration as a subjective action in itself is also an interpretative condition in this project. But we ultimately want to understand how interviewees have in the past interpreted their real life conditions – particularly in relation to employment – and have been able to sustain their employability. There is a double level of interpretation: we must extract an understanding of the past subjective agency through the later (self)interpretation, but we also need to relate it to objective conditions of work, labor market and the objective

employability in the past of the interview person. Although we can, and we will seek to align this with other sources of knowledge about work and labor market context, we must be aware that the agency of the IP at the time have been based on their own more or less realistic assumptions and interpretations, and we may investigate which circumstances have shaped the subjective ideas about context. In the design of this first phase a second interview round will give the chance for an interpretative loop in which first interpretation can be in some respects tested and corrected, but primarily enriched by the second order reflections of the interview persons in the second interview round. The purpose of this will not be to check if we got the correct account, or if the IP had interpreted his situation appropriately, but to improve our understanding of the dynamics of the experience process.

The dynamics of learning processes are not purely cognitive - their complexity, unpredictability and diversity are linked to emotional engagements, resistances and entrenchments that give them a certain direction, sometimes hinder them, etc. Societal, historical relationships are subjective processes - knowledge as well as learning are both socially and physically mediated. Which new experiences and challenges will become learning opportunities and which do not depend on a concrete interaction between the social framework of everyday life and life-history experiences, mediated through the individual learning body and consciousness.

The longitudinal dimension - and its unpredictability and individual specificity - is absolutely crucial to what is the theme here: How do learning processes and identity formation in a new career build on past life-history experiences and resources? We do not seek causal explanations or regularities. The goal is not to predict who can and will what, but to understand what people actually do or have done in the light of their past experiences and living conditions.

Psycho-societal interpretation

In order to extend and enrich our understanding of how past life-history experiences are conveyed in contemporary subjective meanings and identifications, we can incorporate concepts from socialization theory and social psychology (Leithäuser, 1976; Weber, 1995, 2002; Weber & Olesen, 2001; Weber & Salling Olesen, 2002).

In previous research we have developed an 'in-depth-hermeneutic interpretation', which is basically an ordinary hermeneutic interpretation of cultural symbols and activities but integrates some experiences from psychoanalytic interpretation, in order include also unconscious dynamics in the text object of interpretation (a text, an interaction) and in the interpretations procedure itself. It understands subjectivity as an aspect of everyday life interactions, including not least work and work-related learning processes, and also give rise to a methodological reflection of the research subject's involvement in the interpretation (Salling Olesen, 2013, 2017, 2019). The real life history merges the emotional and cognitive processes to a person's bodily and social practices, interacting with cultural frameworks and societal conditions.

Theoretically, it refers to the material socialization theory formulated by Alfred Lorenzer and forming the basis of his development of the in-depth hermeneutic interpretation of cultural meanings and artefacts (Lorenzer & König, 1986). The focus of socialization theory is on early socialization and, like other "modern" psychoanalytically inspired theories, sees the basic psychological development of an individual as a result of the child's early experience of the "world". This goes through the necessary interaction with the child's caregivers, primarily the mother. The "mother" is the central safeguard of the dependent child's well being in this context the corporeal representative of "the social", and the interaction experiences are "inscribed" in the child as traces of interaction forms, ie. practices that have later become differentiated. Although these interactions are naturally structured by societal and cultural conditions - for example, through the "mother" 's class-specific relation to work - it is an individual experience. The special feature of Lorenzer's theory is that it attributes, in particular, the acquisition of language to a crucial importance for this differentiation. The practical experiences are symbolized, ie a connection is established between the sensory (individual) experience and a culturally accessible language game (subject, knowledge). But it is also important that far from only successful forms of interaction are inscribed, it is also traces of "systematically broken practices" that cannot be integrated. A retrospective analysis of learning will most likely also find defensive barriers and staggered motives interfering with a person's emotional

and cognitive ability to navigate social demands, thus blocking learning and constraining employability.

The understanding of subjectivity as a result of life-history interaction experiences characterized by conflict-filled societal conditions led to a problematization of the notion of a bounded and coherent subject. Instead, the subject is seen as a process of experience, inner encouragement and changing social practices. The autobiography produced here and now is an articulation of the subject's own understanding of this process, and it relates retrospectively to social conditions. It is articulated through a cultural medium (the narration) and in a particular situation and can, with some reason, be called a temporary identity. It is a conscious process but it is the result of a process that has both conscious and unconscious dimensions.

Employability is a subject-object relationship. The demands of the labor market and the change in them are one of the central social conditions that contribute to the formation and transformation of the subject, and the formation of a worker's identity implies a more or less clear identification with the requirement of employability. Maintaining employability within a universe of capitalist economics and wage labor is a central dimension of subjective life experience that has a high degree of learning. We call it learning when the individual through this process increases his/her practical and reflexive capacity, ie. His/her power and insight into the objective world in which the subject lives, but also his/her understanding of himself, and thereby his ability to express own needs and impulses. But it is crucial that it forms part of a whole body of life experiences, emotional orientations and resultant motives that also include other aspects of life, and which places the importance of work and employability in an overall identity context, which includes, for example, the relationship between gender identity and work identity.

The use of the in-depth hermeneutic interpretation, or psycho-social interpretation, is a way of understanding subjectivity as expressed in actions and utterances - for example, the autobiographical interview - as tangible and unique intertwining of the individual's concrete life experience - both in the present and past, and with the future in mind - and the cultural and material environment. In the context of this project, we will use them to study the transformation of specific experiences and competencies over the interviewees' past lives, thereby maintaining their employability – with variation in degree and the way in which they maintain it. Individuals have changed their employability both in terms of their objective opportunities in the labor market and in the workplace, and in the significance of work for themselves (their work identity).

Career Shift and Competence Development

The connection between the societal level that is codified in business areas, professions and jobs and the life-history experience and identity is absolutely crucial to our understanding of career changes and the particular learning processes involved in them. Maintaining one's employability under changing conditions often requires that you learn something new, but in particular that you are able to utilize your skills in a new way. I prefer to avoid the concept of transfer for two reasons. On the one hand, the concept of transfer indicates that there are some entities - knowledge, skills, etc. - that can, so to speak, be moved from one context to another, without itself changing - ie a conceptual commodification. On the other hand, one cannot just look at the elements that are "transmitted", one must also focus attention on the context that makes it possible or impossible. Instead, we have used the concept of reconfiguration of experiences, which may not be much better, but hopefully unaffected by the reification that the concept of transfer entails. In this sense, it logically attaches itself to the emphasis on subjective expression and practical implementation that the concept of competence contains, but also has difficulty in unfolding.

In understanding what "re-configuration" involves, we can refer to Lorenzer's theory of socialization and its understanding of interaction experiences. It is a peculiarity of interaction experiences that they with a concept from psychoanalysis are scenic, i.e. sensory perceptions of the world encompassed in a holistic context, being bodily present in the scene - which for the child a total dependency. None of the elements in the situation can be seen independent of the whole and the experience of the little child is thus in this sense a scenic experience. With

language acquisition, the child enters the social world - conceptualized with Wittgenstein's concept of language games. The child establishes symbols, i.e.. connections between the forms of interaction that are at the heart of the past experience, and linguistic expressions whose meaning is given from the outside, through the social interaction that has formed the cultural significance universe of the language game. Initially, language acquisition is holistic, non-differentiated, but gradually meanings become more differentiated. Symbolization implies establishing a close connection between all sides of the sensory memory (feelings, relationships, observations, actions) that were part of the scenic whole and linguistic expressions which, in turn, have a meaning core that is somewhat socially defined but also has an implication, which all other language users associate with them based on their experience background.

The symbolization's connection between the scenic experience and language (symbolization) that - mutatis mutandis, with relevant adaptations - provides a framework for an understanding of the interaction between the relational and emotional aspects of life experiences and the linguistic cognition that is central to reflection and in most learning processes. On the one hand, we see it as an indication of how the different sides of learning and identity formation are interwoven in the subjective development process. On the other hand, Lorenzer's tangible materialism gives an indication of how "society enters the body" through individual interaction experiences and shapes dynamics that remain active later in life. This provides a frame for understanding how social interaction later enables very large and sometimes fractional reinterpretations of past life experiences. These changes are not the same for all individuals in the same social universe, nor are they determined - they can only be understood from behind. It is the ultra-brief rationale for empirical work with them.

We need to understand competence in the context of life experience, and competence development as an element in an individual identity development. To understand this context, we must firstly incorporate fundamental social experience backgrounds such as social class, gender and ethnicity as preconditions for a cultural identity, but also the subject's individual understanding of his or her own role in existence, as can be read from the autobiographical narrative: he understands / herself as the governing body in life, or as a product of certain factors in the environment, even as a victim of fate (Alheit & Dausien, 2002; Andersen, Dausien, & Larsen, 2005; Schütze, 1984). It is crucial to conceptualize identity as a subjective act, an identification process, rather than as a cultural imprint of social influence, and it is crucial to recognize the procedural and probably ambivalent nature of identity. (Weber, 1998; Weber & Salling Olesen, 2001). But we may achieve a more concrete differentiation of the social relations class, gender and ethnicity and their actual interweaving (intersectionality) by interpretation of individual cases. Becker-Schmidt contributed concepts of women's dual socialization and women's work as an ensemble of different kinds of work (Becker-Schmidt, 1982, 1991, 2019; Becker-Schmidt & Knapp, 1987a). Martin Baethge uses the notion of life concept to differentiate between work orientation, family orientation, and leisure orientation. And in a larger empirical study of young people's form of work orientation he distinguishes between work as concrete life activity, subdivided into self-realization through work content or a primary orientation towards social relations at work - and on the other hand work as instrumental activity, subdivided between orientation towards income and employment security and an orientation more toward career and social status (Baethge, 1994; Baethge, Hantsche, Pelull, & Voskamp, 1988). These empirical categories can be used to specify the identity of class and gender, and in this way help to spot the small changes and ambivalences in the overall categories. In the area of work identity, one can further try to identify specific work activities and forms of engagement in them. Professional identification can be seen as a subjective identification that presupposes autonomy and accountability at work, and in Baethge's sociological categories intersecting between commitment to work content and the social status.

The intention is primarily to show the need to integrate categories for the social dimensions of life experiences with the idea of the subjective experience process as it is theorized in the section on learning processes and experience. Again, it is crucial to examine the complex nature of skills development and careers at the level of everyday life, taking into account individuals' past life experiences in relation to the overall societal categories.

Conclusion

By choosing the autobiographical interview, we hope to gain a complex empirical input to understand how the interviewees have interpreted their reality and maintained their employ-ability through learning. In the interpretation procedure of the life history approach, we obtain a key to understanding the complex context of learning processes with the 'scenic' nature of experience and the language game as the access to social knowledge and meaning (Salling Olesen, 2012; Salling Olesen & Weber, 2012). All the knowledge, skills and attitudes we carry with us are embodied combinations of emotional, cognitive and actionable practices that are interwoven in the scene that experience captures and processes. Learning is very much experimental and reflexive reconfigurations of elements of these life experiences that detach them more or less from one subjective configuration and establish them in another, linked to a new practice. Competence In the sense we are talking about here, there is a potential for situational mobilization of mental and bodily resources - which can result in a learning process that produces a new competence, ie. stabilizes the immediate availability of these resources which increases the potential in future situations.

Through a deeper understanding of the dialectic of past interactions with material life conditions in which our interview subject have been (more or less) able to sustain their employability we hope to get an insight in how others may be supported in sustaining theirs. Gaining knowledge that can support policies, education and training measures, and hopefully also individuals in their own career planning form the practical perspective of the research.

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Author: Henning Salling Olesen, professor of lifelong learning, Roskilde University, Denmark. Former chair of ESREA. Editor for European Journal for Research in the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA). Research in adult learning in relation to work, including professional work, using life history method and psycho-societal interpretation, learning theory and experience based learning.

NEW BOOKS AND JOURNAL ISSUES

Constraints and Creativity. In Search of Creativity Science

Feiwel Kupferberg

Cambridge University Press 2021
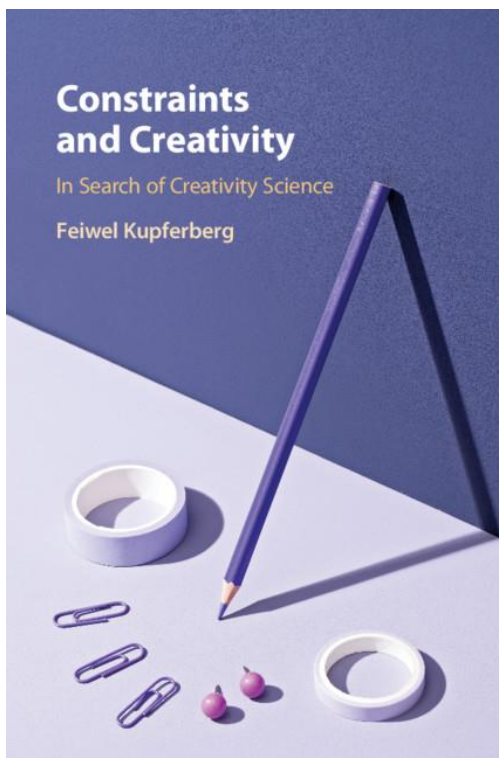
In my contribution "Biography Research in the Nordic Countries" to the collaborative work *Handbuch Biographieforschung* (eds. Helma Lutz, Martina Schiebel & Elisabeth Tuider, Springer Verlag, 2018) I announced a current project on using the biographical method to study creativity. The result has been my recent book *Constraints and Creativity. In Search of Creativity Science,* Cambridge University Press, 2021.

The book is based upon a huge number of empirical cases that I have studied over the last 30 years, both with standard biographical methods reported in previous books and articles (referred to in the bibliography) and a new method of contrasting comparisons which I have borrowed from Jarred Diamonds books on social and biological evolution. These latter studies include a number of pioneers (groundbreaking creativity) from the sciences, arts and technology. Apart from a foreword and introduction plus two concluding chapters on conceptual and methodological issues, the core chapters present a theoretical model for how to study creativity for its own sake and in a scientific manner (First principles of creativity science).

Briefly the theoretical model for how to study (analyse, interpret, explain) creativity by comparing intellectual biographies, consists of five dimensions plus sub dimensions. The model is elaborated and exemplified in the book by selected empirical (historical)cases

Dimension I Types of Creativity

　　　I.1 Physical constraints

　　　I.2 Protypes or development constraints

　　　I.3 Knowledge Constraints

　　　I.4 Rules of the game (Creativity Regimes)

　　　I.5 Motivations (Pleasure, Pressure, Opportunity)

Dimension II Levels of Creativity

II.1 Are children romantic geniuses?

II.2 Novices: Participation as pleasure

II.3 Professionals: competitive pressure and transmutation of craft and judgement

II.4 Pioneers: opportunity as regulative gene and the complexity of creative explosions

II.5 Is there such a thing as genius?

Dimension III Getting it right

III.1 The principle of parsimony (Simple/economic/elegant solutions)

III.2 Independent (re) discovery and convergent evolution

III.3 Co-evolution (interdependent discovery) and the complexity of creativity

III.4 Problem situations and problem solvers (historical, professional, personal)

Dimension IV   Protection of vulnerable ideas

IV.1 Geographical isolation (Galapagos effect)

IV.2 Intellectual migration and team work

IV.3 Skunk works (secrecy I)

IV.4 Confidants and working alone (secrecy II)

IV.5 Support systems: Patrons, mentors and agents

Dimension V The Structure of Creative Processes

V.1 Material causes

V.2 Formal causes

V.3 Effective causes

V.4 Final Causes

Although this is not a traditional type of biography research it is still well within the basic idea of how to combine biography, in this case mainly intellectual biographies of pioneers who once were children, novices and professionals, with society. The core concept is how creativity is constrained and the main idea is to constitute a science of creativity in its own right. Some important overall results are a) that creativity can best be described as a sociocognitive phenomenon b) that the nature/culture divide is relative and not absolute c) that postmodernist theories which claim that all knowledge and creativity is contingent, have to be rejected. I hope some of you might be interested to read the book and hopefully get some inspiration for your own research.

All comments are welcome. I can be reached on the following e-mail address: fei-wel.kupferberg@mau.se

Silences, Neglected Feelings, and Blind-spots in Research Practice

Edited by Kathy Davis and Janice Irvine

Will be published by Routledge in March 2022, https://www.routledge.com/Silences-Neglected-Feelings-and-Blind-Spots-in-Research-Practice/Davis-Irvine/p/book/9781032077338#
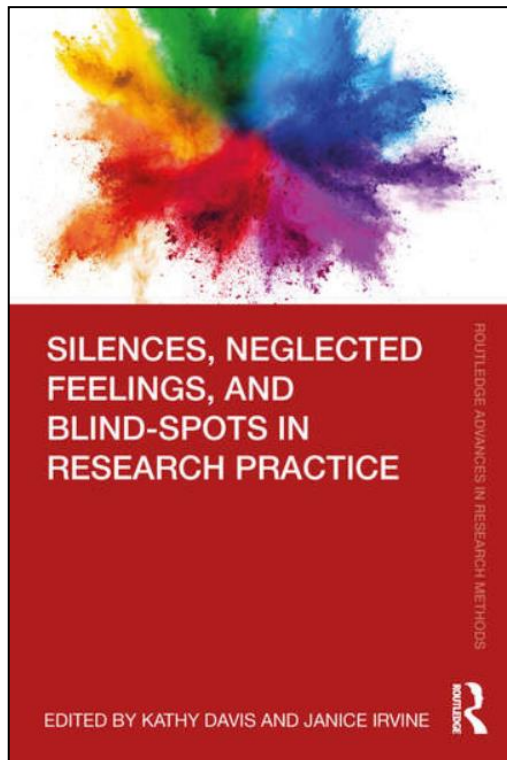
This book was inspired by several sessions in RC 38 during the last ISA Forums. It addresses some of the wide-ranging dilemmas that social researchers face as a result of silences, neglected feelings, and blind-spots in their research, from biographical to ethnographic to archival research. Their stories tackle what we are all familiar with, but seldom talk about, and they are thoughtful, reflexive, and often courageous.

Biographies, Politics, and Culture:
Analyzing Migration Politics from the Bottom Up.

Special issue European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology, Volume 8, Issue 4 (2021)

Edited by Elise Pape, Kenneth Horvath, Catherine Delcroix and Ursula Apitzsch
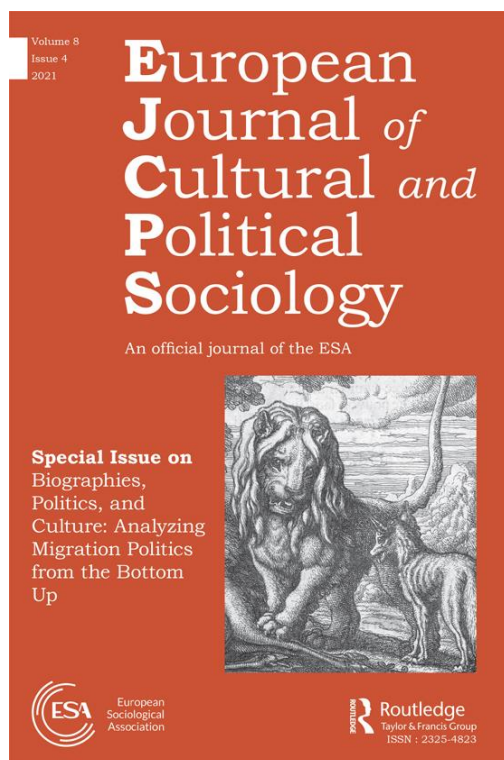
Biographies, politics, and culture: Analyzing migration politics from the bottom up

Elise Pape, Kenneth Horvath, Catherine Delcroix & Ursula Apitzsch

Transnational marriages: National policies, generational transmissions, and gender dynamics – a biographical policy evaluation perspective

Anıl Al-Rebholz & Ursula Apitzsch

Disentangling interlocking regimes in the biographies of migrant mothers with tertiary education

Anne-Iris Romens

The impact of local support and integration policies: A comparative analysis of the situation of immigrant families with 'incomplete rights'

Catherine Delcroix & Lena Inowlocki

Impacts of political and social contexts on refugees' experiences: A comparison between Southeast Asian refugees arriving in France in the 70s and recent refugee migration

Isabelle Wilhelm & Anja Bartel

Biographical perspectives on political agency and migration: The struggle of workers from the Maghreb against institutional discrimination in France's National Railroad Company SNCF

Elise Pape, Christoph H. Schwarz & Mustapha El Hamdani

Migration research in Brazil in times of Covid-19. Conversations with Alejandro Goldberg, Maria do Carmo dos Santos Gonçalves, Ercílio Langa, Kassoum Dieme and María del Carmen Villarreal Villamar.

Eva Bahl and Lucas Cé Sangalli

We conducted these interviews with fellow social scientists who do research on migration and asked them about their research experiences in Brazil during the Covid-19 pandemic. They are from Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil, Mozambique, and Senegal and are currently based (at least partially) at different academic institutions in Brazil. The interviews took place between April and June 2021. During this period, Brazil had more than 500,000 registered Covid-19 deaths, one of the highest rates in the world. Since 2019, the government of President Jair Bolsonaro has gone from openly targeting teaching and research in sociology to deliberately denying scientific evidence of the effects of the pandemic in Brazilian society. In terms of academic cooperation, our conversations with these researchers can be seen as a positive outcome of the constraints imposed by the pandemic. Although the restrictions to our fieldwork were challenging, we were aware that it was a huge privilege to be able to keep working in Germany with our well-funded academic contracts – yet another example of the deepening of global inequalities in the production of knowledge in "Covid-19 times". We see these interviews as a way of broadening the scope of empirical research on migration during an especially challenging period for scholars working in and on Brazil. It was an opportunity to have an exchange with these colleagues and to learn more about their research.

Keywords: Brazil, Covid-19, Migration research, Migration and Health, Social vulnerability and exclusion, Social Inequalities, Civil Society

Navigating Through Increasing Social Inequalities in Times of Covid-19. A Research Report on Interviews with Migrants in the Middle East and Europe and Migrants and Indigenous People in South America

Edited by Eva Bahl and Gabriele Rosenthal

Göttingen: Centre for Global Migration Studies (Global Migration Studies), 2021, available for download under: https://publications.goettingen-research-online.de/bitstream/2/96783/1/cemig-04-bahl-rosenthal.pdf
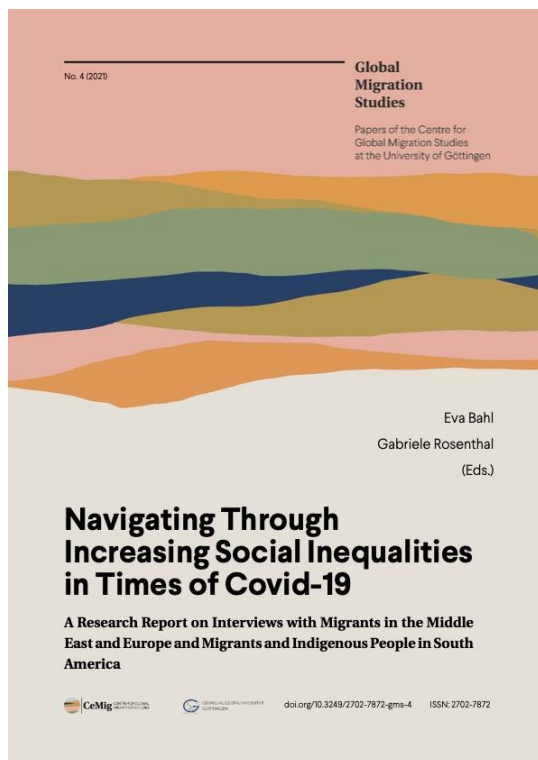
This account of research in times of Covid-19, carried out by a team at the Center of Methods in Social Sciences, University of Goettingen, under the supervision of Gabriele Rosenthal, is an updated version of a report published in July 2020. Since then, within the framework of ongoing empirical research in the geographical regions of West Africa, Western Europe, the Middle East and South America, members of the team and their field assistants have conducted many more online interviews (n= 102). We have now updated our description of the individuals presented, with whom we have maintained contact, and look at the ways in which their situation has changed since summer 2020. This report also includes reflections by Victoria Taboada Gómez on the research she carried out for her dissertation on the situation of indigenous people in Paraguay. The contributors to this report have all used a biographical and figurational approach. This means, in the tradition of Norbert Elias, making an attempt to reconstruct the collective and historical backgrounds of the interviewees, their membership of various we-groups, and the changing collective belongings and power chances in the figurations of different we-groups and groupings. A contrastive comparison of the case studies shows that two components have played an important role in determining how the interviewees have experienced the pandemic, how they have dealt with changes in their situation, and especially *to what extent their power of agency has been affected by the pandemic*. Even before the pandemic, these components were significant in the lives of migrants and the indigenous population in Paraguay: on the one hand, *their degree of integration in social networks or we-groups*, and, on the other hand, their *legal status* in the country in which they are living. The analyses reveal not only that legal status is an extremely significant component but also that its effects depend on the extent to which the individual is integrated in a we-group or network.

Keywords: Migration, indigenous people, Covid-19 pandemic, social inequalities, biographical research, figurational sociology

Sozialwissenschaftliche Analysen von Bild- und Lebenswelten

Edited by Roswitha Breckner, Karin Liebhart and Maria Pohn-Lauggas

Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021

Über dieses Buch

Die Analyse bewegter wie unbewegter Bilder hinsichtlich ihrer sozialen, kulturellen und gesellschaftspolitischen Rolle gewinnt in den Sozialwissenschaften zunehmend an Bedeutung. Mittlerweile stehen vielfältige theoretische und methodologisch-methodische Zugänge der Bild- und Filmanalyse zur Verfügung, die sich auch wechselseitig anregen. Zum Teil sind sie im deutschsprachigen und/oder internationalen Wissenschaftsraum bereits etabliert, zum Teil betreten sie auch theoretisches und methodisches Neuland.

In diesem Band stellen Wissenschaftler*innen des Forschungsschwerpunktes "Visual Studies in den Sozialwissenschaften" an der Universität Wien verschiedene Ansätze vor, die in den Disziplinen Politikwissenschaft, Soziologie, Medien- und Kommunikationswissenschaft sowie Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie Anwendung finden. Sie reichen von wissenssoziologisch-hermeneutischen Zugängen und Rekonstruktionen mittels der Dokumentarischen Methode über Multimodalanalyse und ethnographische Analysen sowie Filmanalysen bis hin zu partizipativen Ansätzen und zu einem Visual Essay. Ausgehend von einer theoretischen Standortbestimmung werden in den Beiträgen die jeweiligen Zugänge präsentiert und es wird an einem konkreten Beispiel deren Umsetzung gezeigt. Ziel ist es, konkrete empirische Analysen und deren methodologisch-methodische Grundlagen anhand unterschiedlicher visueller Medien in verschiedenen gesellschaftlichen Kontexten mit verschiedenen thematischen Fokussierungen darzustellen. Der Band enthält Beiträge in deutscher und englischer Sprache und ermöglicht einen anwendungsorientierten Einblick in das breite Feld visueller Analysezugänge in den Sozialwissenschaften.

- Anwendungsorientierte Einblicke in bild- und filmanalytische Verfahren in den Sozialwissenschaften
- Englische und deutsche Beiträge

About this book

The analysis of moving and still images with regard to their social, cultural and political role is becoming increasingly important in the social sciences. In the meantime, a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to image and film analysis are available, which also spur each other. While some of them are already estab-

lished in the German-speaking and/or international scientific world, others are breaking new theoretical and methodological ground.

In this volume, scientists of the research focus "Visual Studies in the Social Sciences" at the University of Vienna present various approaches that are applied in the disciplines of political science, sociology, media and communication studies as well as cultural and social anthropology. They range from sociological-hermeneutic approaches and reconstructions using the documentary method to multimodal analysis and ethnographic analyses as well as film analyses to participatory approaches and a visual essay. Based on theoretical considerations, their implementation is shown using a concrete example in each case. The aim is to demonstrate concrete empirical analyses and their methodological foundations. The examples relate to different visual media, different social contexts and a variety of subject matters. The volume contains contributions in German and English and provides an insight into the wide field of approaches to the analysis of visuals in the social sciences.

- Application-oriented insights into image- and film-analytical procedures in the social sciences
- Contributions in German and English

Escape as the cause of mobility of Europeans.
Sociolinguistically grounded analysis of social processes in autobiographical narrative interviews

Katarzyna Waniek

University of Lodz Publisher, 2020

The book is addressed to social researchers interested, on the one hand, in a sociolinguistically grounded analysis of socio-biographical processes, and, on the other, in the issues of migration and suffering. Based on a detailed analysis of autobiographical narrative interviews (collected mainly as part of the FP7 project "EuroIdentities"), various modalities of an escape process are presented. They extend on the "from-to" continuum as a kind of constellation of experiences that contributed to the departure of many Europeans from their home country and influenced their personal identity and attitude towards different "We"-communities. "Escape from ..." as a motive to leave the home country is in fact an attempt to get out of the life trap (loss of sense and being paralyzed by overwhelming powerful forces), which is a consequence of the peak phases of the suffering trajectory process, while the "escape to..." results from the desire to abandon the organization of life based on meeting expectations and realization of a "set" scenario, which usually dynamizes the trajectory potential, for active and intentional planning of one's own biography.

Daily Lives of North Korean Women and Gender Politics

Jeong-ah Cho, Ji Sun Yee & Hee Young Yi

Seoul: KINU, 2020

Available for download under:
https://www.kinu.or.kr/www/jsp/prg/api/dlV.jsp?menuIdx=290&category=24&thisPage=1&biblioId=1538418
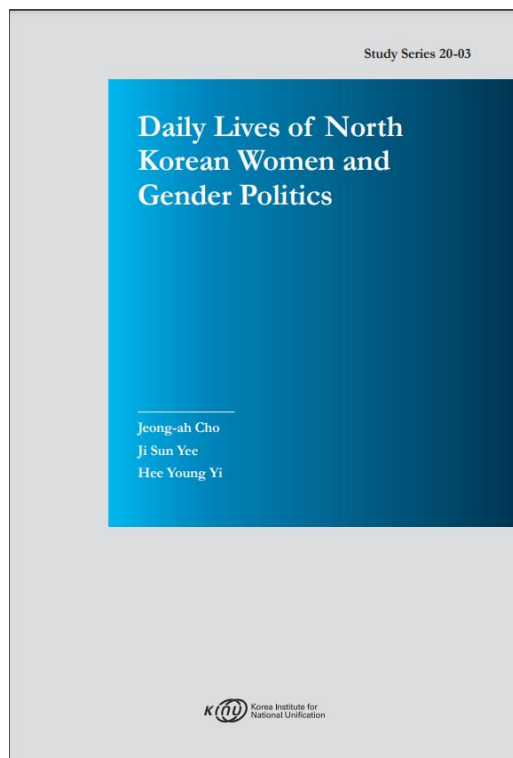
This study examines the changes of gender politics in daily lives of North Korean women before and after Kim Jong Un came into power reign through discourse analysis and biographical research. It focused on analyzing the gender-political characteristics of North Korea during the Kim Jong-un era, and the results are as follows. First, a gender division of labor—men in charge of formal labor and women informal labor—has emerged as a new gender system along with an expansion of the markets, replacing the distribution system that made up the backbone of the old gender system in an era of pre-economic crisis. Second, the function of the family has shifted to an economic community after having gone through economic crisis and marketization. This changed family unit underpins a gender division of labor. Third, the institutional mechanisms of family unit, such as marriage registration, and divorce are starting to weaken while the gender discourse with a focus on motherhood and re-familiarization has come to the surface since Kim Jong Un took power. Fourth, it is women who have driven a change of gender politics: they have obtained economic power through economic activities, developed a sense of identity and autonomy, and practiced changing the status quo beyond institutions, policies, and practices. In particular, young women dream of being in a 'romantic relationship' with the person of their choice and contemplate their future as an independent being rather than being complete as someone's wife through marriage. There are variations but some instances suggest that women are leading the changes in sexuality: they are in control of every aspect of sexuality and seek their own style in their appearance, going beyond what is socially allowed in a conservative sex culture of North Korea. Fifth, the changes in North Korean gender politics demonstrate that a crack is opening up in the existing gender order. Such a pattern has already entered a path of 'irreversible changes.' The driving force of such changes is the struggle of women who have been responsible for their own survival in the midst of economic crisis in North Korean society.

Keywords: North Korean women, gender politics, gender division of labor, sexuality, oral life history. This English translation is a summarized and edited version of the research paper "Daily Lives of North Korean Women and Gender Politics" by Jeong-ah Cho, Ji Sun Yee, and Hee Young Yi (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, Dec. 2019).

Civilisations, Civilising Processes and Modernity – A Debate: Documents from the Conference at Bielefeld, 1984

Edited by Artur Bogner and Stephen Mennell

Palgrave Studies on Norbert Elias, expected publication date: 11 January 2022
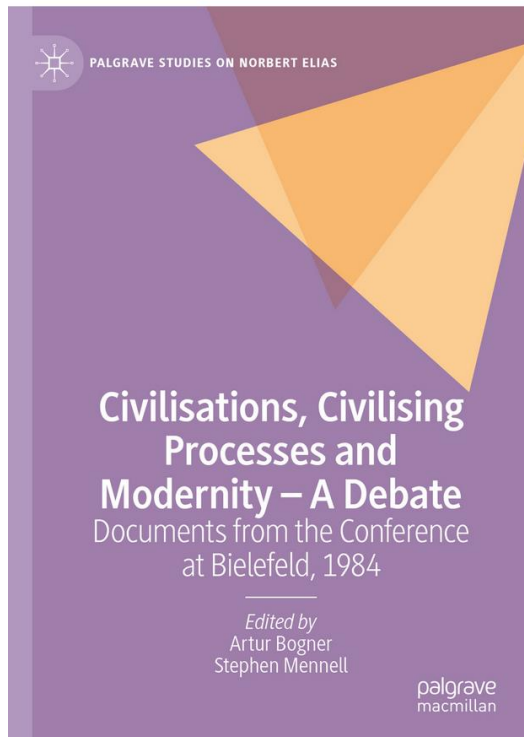
In 1984, the celebrated sociologist and historian Norbert Elias convened a major conference on 'Civilisations and civilising processes' at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research (University of Bielefeld). Participants included the most distinguished and influential scholars in historical sociology and world history. This book will make available, for the first time in one place, the papers presented by the speakers and, even more interestingly, the transcripts of discussions at the symposium. This conference brought together eminent and internationally reputed scholars of macro-history and historical sociology including Johann P. Arnason, Norbert Elias, Hans-Dieter Evers, Johan Goudsblom, Keith Hopkins, William H. McNeill, and Immanuel Wallerstein. This highly informative encounter between various leading scholars of humanity's global social history has never before been published, although it was completely recorded, including the discussions, on paper and in tape recordings. Its publication in one volume should be an important event for all students of the long-term structural transformations of humanity.

Lifelong Learning in a Different Voice:
Women Academics' Narratives of Retirement

The Retired Academic Women's Group: Tamar Appel, Leah Bar-Efrat, Freema Elbaz-Luwisch, Leah Hagoel, Rachel Hertz-Lazarowitz, Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, Ruth Katz, Liora Ore & Mechal Sobol

Tel Aviv: MOFET, in press.

Addendum

Please note: Change of Author

In the last issue of the Newsletter we included a detailed report about an exciting book project by the Retired Academic Women's Group. After distributing the Newsletter we were approached by the group to clarify the following: **The report printed in the Newsletter was prepared by Freema Elbaz-Luwisch and not by all members of the group.**

NEW ARTICLES

Follow-Up-Interviews im Rahmen biographischer Fallrekonstruktionen. Prozessorientierte und methodenflexible Zugänge zu prekärer Transnationalität

Eva Bahl and Arne Worm

In: B. Blättel-Mink (Ed.) (2021): Gesellschaft unter Spannung: Der Verhandlungsband des 40. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie (DGS) vom 14.-24. September 2020.

https://publikationen.soziologie.de/index.php/kongressband_2020/article/view/1342

Wie Kooptationen Familiengeschichten bestimmen: Auf- und Abstieg in der Periode des jordanischen Staatsaufbaus

Johannes Becker

In: Leviathan 49(3), 2021, 314-336.

This article addresses the biographical and familial consequences of belonging to, and being excluded from, the elite in authoritarian regimes, using a case study of a modernity-oriented family in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It shows what contribution biographical research and a figurational perspective can make for studying the history of postcolonial states.

Bildbiografien in vernetzten Lebenswelten

Roswitha Breckner

In: M. Dietrich, I. Leser, K. Mruck, P. S. Ruppel, A. Schwentesius, & R. Vock (Hrsg.) (2021), Begegnen, Bewegen und Synergien stiften: Transdisziplinäre Beiträge zu Kulturen, Performanzen und Methoden (S. 191-207). Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH.

Challenges of hermeneutic image interpretation: Visual Segment Analysis as a way to explore visual meaning

Roswitha Breckner

In: T. Morikawa (Hrsg.) (2021-in print), Inquiries into Humans and Societies: Studies in Sociology, Psychology and Education, Tokio: Bulletin of Keio University.

Bild- und Filmwelten

Roswitha Breckner, Eva Flicker

In: E. Flicker (Hrsg.), & M. Parzer (Hrsg.) (2020): Forschungs- und Anwendungsfelder der Soziologie (3. Aufl.). Wien: Facultas.

Erleben – Erinnern – Sprechen über die Vergangenheit. Zu den Anzeichen von Traumatisierungen in autobiographischen Texten

Gabriele Rosenthal

In: M. Stanisavljevic/ H.-G. Soeffner (Hrsg.) (2021): Filmfragmente und Zeitzeugenberichte. Mythos, Historiographie und Soziologie des Ghettos und Durchganglagers Theresienstadt. Heidelberg: Springer, 267-285.

Voices from the West Bank. We-images and collective memories

Gabriele Rosenthal

In: A. Mana/ A. Srour (Eds.) (2021): Israeli and Palestinian Collective Narratives in Conflict. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 160-188.

Drug addiction treatment as biographical work: Life-stories of young women in recovery from addiction

Giorgos Tsiolis and Zacharoula Kasseri

In: C. Chatwin, G. R. Potter, B. Werse (Eds.) (2021). Who? Variation and distinction in the European drugs landscape. Lengerich: Pabst Science Publishers, 41-56.

This chapter contributes to the understanding of therapeutic practices that take place in drug-free therapeutic communities as a particular model in the complex and pluralistic field of drug addiction treatment in Europe. Through a theoretical perspective that conceptualises recovery from addiction as 'biographical work', four life-stories of interviewed recovering addicts have been analysed. The interviews were conducted in a drug-free residential therapeutic community in Greece and, for the purposes of this chapter, one case will be presented: the life-story of Helen. The following typical components of the biographical work operating during the therapeutic procedure emerged: (a) the construction of a confessional and observant self; (b) excavation in the biographical stock of childhood to identify the causative factors of addiction; (c) the portrayal of the career in drug-use as a trajectory of suffering; (d) the identification of recovery as a process of restructuring the self which activates the latent potential of the biography; and (e) the production of a coherent life-story which integrates conflicting images of the self. The biographical work is mediated by the discourse and practices of the therapeutic community.

Keywords: drug-addiction, recovery, biographical work, therapeutic communities, life-stories

RC 38 Board 2018-2023