

Biography and Society

BIOGRAPHY AND SOCIETY
RESEARCH COMMITTEE 38 OF THE ISA

NEWSLETTER / DECEMBER 2013

**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT
DECEMBER 2013**

Dear Colleagues,

We are approaching the end of a prolific year full of RC activities. We had two interim events in which the RC participated: a tremendous conference in Lodz in June, organized by Kaja Kazmierska and her team (we reported about it in our last newspaper), and an intriguing workshop in Crete end of September, bravely and brilliantly organized by Irini Siouti, Giorgos Tsiolis and his team. A couple of days before the workshop was planned to take place, the University was occupied by students striking against the dismissal of a considerable amount of the administrative staff, most of them losing long lasting contracts with the University. This created a dramatic situation in terms of hardships for those affected by the dismissal, but also for preparing the new academic year with all the teaching and exam duties, requiring endless meetings of the rectors and deans for finding ways to deal with these conditions. Most of us know about the crisis and its 'management' in Greece only from the media news, but being there we got a taste how it endangers the Universities and the whole educational system. Thanks to Giorgos and Irini, who spent a day discussing with the students, the workshop was welcomed in the end and could take place in the rooms of the University, accompanied by the support of the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Skevos Papaioannou, by the lively interest of the attending members of the faculty especially during the opening event with the keynote speech of Kathy Davis, and, last not least, by the engaged participation of students, most of them in PhD processes. The discussions in a very pleasant atmosphere during the whole workshop demonstrated the high level of biographical research established in the department of Sociology of the University of Greece. In one of the next newsletters we hopefully are able to present an extended report about biographical research in Greece in general, which is already written in German, and just has to be translated into English. Is there somebody out there who would be willing to volunteer with translation expertise?

Apart from these highlights we were busy with finalizing the program for the World Congress in Yokohama in July next year. After the deadline for submitting papers end of September we were in the happy situation to have got a huge amount of very good abstracts. We would like to thank all of you who have submitted paper proposals, and also the session organisers who composed promising sessions! You find the whole program in this newspaper, still without fixed time slots for each session. The final scheduling probably will happen only after the registration deadline for presenters, which is on April 1, 2014. Please keep in mind to register in time.

So far from my side; all further information about the newsletter you find, as usual, in the following editorial by Michaela Koettig and Andreas Kempf who have managed all the work to let him appear!

I wish all of you a happy and peaceful time with lots of season's greetings!

Roswitha Breckner

www.soz.univie.ac.at/roswitha-breckner/

President of the RC Biography & Society

**EDITORIAL
DECEMBER 2013**

Dear colleagues,

Et voilà – we proudly present this year’s second newsletter of our Research Committee. With a focus on transnational biographical research its content is divided as usual:

On the first ten pages you will find the detailed RC 38 program of the largest and most long-awaited event of next year: our ISA World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama. This is followed by announcements of further workshops and conferences.

The substantive part of the newsletter starts with the keynote speech by Kathy Davis held at the international workshop “New Challenges in Transnational Biography Research” which took place at the University of Crete in September this year. Referring to the example of tango as transnational cultural space she argues that for us, as biographical researchers, “[t]hinking transnationally should be a standard feature of our methodological repertoire” (p. 23). Thereafter, as a paper for discussion, Minna-Kristiina Ruokonen-Engler and Irini Siouti explain their approach of “doing biographical reflexivity” as a theoretical and methodological tool in transnational research settings. They argue that “biographical reflexivity” could be a way to “deal with the trap posed by methodological nationalism” (p. 24).

This is followed by a conference report by Ina Alber and Maggie O’Neill on the 11th ESA conference on “Crisis, Critique and Change”.

As you know from previous issues our newsletter finishes with your news and news from the ISA as well as publications related to Biographical Research.

We hope you will enjoy reading the newsletter.

All the best for 2014. Hoping to seeing you in Yokohama.

Kind regards,

Andreas & Michaela

Andreas Oskar Kempf (andreas.kempf@gesis.org)

Michaela Köttig (koettig@fb4.fh-frankfurt.de)

Some further important topics:

We ask all of you to inform us about a change in your address, and in particular in your e-mail address.

Membership fees

Please remember to pay your membership fee:

Regular members	US\$ 40
Students and members from countries B and C (see ISA regulations)	US\$ 20

Bank account: Michaela Koettig
Sparda-Bank-Hessen, Germany
IBAN: DE 13 500 905 000 101 548 312
BIC: GEN ODE F1 S12

The deadline for the next newsletter is the End of May 2014

You can send us

- a short paper (3-7 pages) on a topic you are currently working on
- a presentation of your current project
- some reflection 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 call for papers for conferences, workshops, summer schools
- new publications from you, also in your respective native language
- any other thought or information you like to share.

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WORKSHOP REFLEXION CRETE

Keynote: Dancing Across Borders: Tango as transnational cultural space
(Kathy Davis, Netherland)

PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION

‘Doing Biographical Reflexivity’ as a Methodological Tool in Transnational Research Settings
(Minna Ruokonen-Engler and Irini Siouti, Germany)

CONFERENCE REPORT

ESA 11th Conference: Crisis, Critique and Change
Ina Alber (Germany), Maggie O’Neill (UK)

NEWS

ISA-NEWS

NEW PUBLICATION



**XVIII ISA WORLD CONGRESS
OF SOCIOLOGY**

横浜
YOKOHAMA

**FACING AN UNEQUAL WORLD:
CHALLENGES FOR GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY**

13-19 July 2014



CONGRESS INFORMATION

In order to be included in the program the participants (presenters, chairs, discussants etc) need to pay registration fees **by April 1, 2014**. If not registered, their names will not appear in the Program Book or in the Abstract Book. In case of a co-authored paper, at least one author needs to pay the registration fee by the early registration deadline April 1, 2014 in order for a paper to be included in the program. Other co-authors must pay the registration fee if they wish to attend the conference. We invite you to register by following this link:

<https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/wc2014/registration/index.cgi?person=Person7898>

RC 38 PROGRAM

Ab- stract no	Name/Country	E-mail	Topic
JOINT Session (RC 05 and RC 38, hosted by RC 05): Intersectionality and Intellectual Biographies Session Organizers: Kathy DAVIS (k.e.davis@vu.nl) and Helma LUTZ (lutz@soz.uni-frankfurt.de) Chair: Janice IRVINE			
38984	Roswitha BRECKNER/Austria	ro-switha.breckner@univie.ac.at	Between Language and Music – An Intellectual Biography
42362	Patricia HILL COLLINS/ US	collinph@umd.edu	Anna Julia Cooper and the Riddle of the Sphinx: American Pragmatism, American Sociology, and Intersectionality
47549	Jeff HEARN / UK	jeff.hearn@oru.se	Autoethnography, Theorizing and Transnational Movements and Moments
65583	Nira YUVAL-DAVIS / UK	n.yuval-davis@uel.ac.uk	Narratives of Women Against Fundamentalism Activists – Some Methodological and Political Ponderings
66556	Nacira GUÉNIF-SOUILAMAS / France	ngs39@hotmail.fr	Reflecting/Reflexive Surface: An Ethno-Gender Othering Experience

66957	Linda PIETRANTONIO / Canada	lin-da.pietrantonio@uottawa.ca	What Social Location for the Concept of Majority? Reflexion on a Boundless Theoretical and Methodological Approach for the Study of Power Relations
JOINT Session 3869 (RC 38 and RC 32, hosted by RC 38): Representation and Restoration of Women's Experiences: Navigating between Colonial History and Postcolonial Present in the Asian Context Session Organizers: Hee-Young YI (biograf@hanmail.net) and Gabriele ROSENTHAL (g.rosenthal@gmx.de) and Bandana PURKAYASTHA (bandanapurkayastha@yahoo.com) Co-Chairs: Victoria SEMENOVA, Pilwha CHANG			
45500	Na-Young LEE and Jae Kyung LEE / South Korea	nylee@cau.ac.kr ljk@ewha.ac.kr	Can We Hear Subaltern Woman's Experiences? Im/Possibility of Representation in Postcolonial Context of South Korea
50378	Yoon Kyung CHOI and Young Ju CHO / South Korea	yunee20@gmail.com, womenjs75@ewha.ac.kr	How to Historicize the Invisible and Inaudible Women's Experiences? Thesaurus Construction of Women's Oral History and Gender Politics
47237	Maki KIMURA / UK	maki.y.kimura@gmail.com	The Return of Women's Voices: The Politics of Representation of 'Comfort Women' during the Second World War
65717	Naoko KINOSHITA / Japan	nao-conaoco55@yahoo.co.jp	Re-Articulation on Japanese 'Comfort Women' Survivors' Experiences
31649	Aya EZAWA / Netherlands	ayaezawa@gmail.com	Dutch-Japanese Encounters: Gendered Experiences of the Japanese Occupation of the Netherlands East Indies
34754	Murchana Kaushik SARMA / India	mur- chana.kaushik@gmail.com	Women in Society
JOINT Session 3865 (RC 38 and RC 31, hosted by RC 38): Crossing Experiences: From Biographies of Migrants in and from Northeast Asia Session Organizers: Sara PARK (bach_ps@hotmail.com) and Lilach LEV-ARI (llevari@oranim.ac.il) Chair: Sarah PARK			
40288	Johanna ZULUETA / Japan	hannazu@gmail.com	Memory, Nostalgia and the Creation of "Home": An Okinawan Woman's Journey
45662	TAKESHY TANIGUTI and Matheus GATO DE JESUS / Brazil	gustavotani-guti@gmail.com; matheusgatodejesus@gmail.com	Sociology of an Immigrant Between Borderlines: An Intellectual Biography of Hiroshi Saito
47045	Hiromitsu INOKUCHI / Japan	hi2@buffalo.edu	Reading "Battle Hymn of Tiger Mom" as an Educational Biography
52408	Daisuke YASUI / Japan	hs0130yd@yahoo.co.jp	Ethnic Food Business as Cultural Practice
50193	Qian SONG / US	bravurasong@gmail.com	Remittance Behaviors of International Migrants in Comparative Perspective: Evidence from Rural China

Session 3871: Understanding Social Problems through Narratives by Insiders, Part I

Session Organizers: Tazuko KOBAYASHI (t.kobayashi@r.hit-u.ac.jp) and Mamoru TSUKADA (mamoru@sugiyama-u.ac.jp)

Chair: Tazuko KOBAYASHI

35029	Christal Oghogho SPEL / Finland	christal.mudi- okorodudu@helsinki.fi	Scums of the EARTH: A Critical Analysis of 'Humanness' in Host Society from 10 Life Stories of Poor Immigrants in Johannesburg, South Africa
50754	Baukje PRINS / Netherlands	b.prins@hhs.nl	You Are a Dark Person After All
62844	Zeila DEMARTINI / Brazil	zeila@usp.br	Japanese in São Paulo: Challenges of Education in the New LAND
51692	Karijn NIJHOFF / Netherlands	k.g.nijhoff@hhs.nl	Polish in the Hague: The Stories of Long Term Migrants
52667	Miyuki HASHI- MOTO /Japan	mieux@bf6.so-net.ne.jp	The Non-Nationalized Narrative of Two Korean School Graduates
45582	Yayoi YUKAWA / Japan	marche326@hotmail.com	How Do Students View Their Mentor-Student Relationship?: A Cross-Case Analysis of Narratives of Academic Harassment in Japanese Graduate Education
51605	Kohki ITOH / Ja- pan	khk_110@yahoo.co.jp	Experiences of Difficulties Faced by Hikikomori People Within Everyday-Life: From the Perspective of View of Intimacy

Session 3870: Understanding Social Problems through Narratives by Insiders, Part II

Session Organizers: Tazuko KOBAYASHI (t.kobayashi@r.hit-u.ac.jp) and Mamoru TSUKADA (mamoru@sugiyama-u.ac.jp)

Chair: Mamoru TSUKADA

36512	Nadine JUJSCHAT / Germany	nadine.jukschat@kfn.de	Addictive Gaming: Self-Analyses of Addiction and the Biographical Context. Life Story Interviews with Video Game Addicts
38961	Aleksandra BAR- TOSZKO / Norway	aleksandra.bartoszek@hioa.no	Yet Another Junkie Story? Lived Experiences of Drug Policy in Norway and Why They Matter
40805	Lena INOWLOCKI / Germany	inowlocki@soz.uni-frankfurt.de	Towards Adequate and Accessible Psychosocial Care: A Research Working Alliance with Professionals in Treatment and Counseling
42748	Hidemitsu AOKI / Japan	so000062@ed.ritsumeikai.ac.jp	Social Problems of Parents Who Have Children with Schizophrenia in Japan
44813	Tomiaki YAMADA / Japan	tomi.yamada@nifty.com	An Attempt to Analyze the Narrative World of the Life-Stories of Doctors and Patients Involved in the HIV Tainted Blood Product Incident in Japan

49728	Pinar OKTEM / Turkey	pinaroktem@gmail.com	Reconstructions of HIV and Its Stigma through Biographical Narratives of People Living with HIV in Turkey
45699	Masaya NEMOTO / Japan	asanteni@hotmail.com	Living with Uncertainty, Struggling with Possibility: A Study on Radiation Effects from the Perspective of Atomic Bomb Survivors
49778	Hermilio SANTOS and Priscila SUSIN / Brazil	hermilio@puhrs.br pri.qsusin@gmail.com	Narratives on Violence and the Everyday Life of Children and Families Living in Favelas of Rio De Janeiro, Brazil
Session 3863: Concepts of Inclusion from a Biographical Perspective, Part I Session Organizers: Lena INOWLOCKI (inowlocki@soz.uni-frankfurt.de) and Kathy DAVIS (k.e.davis@vu.nl) Chair: Lena INOWLOCKI			
32381	Rudolf LEIPRECHT / Germany	rudolf.leiprecht@uni-oldenburg.de	Inclusion and Exclusion Intertwined
39582	Laura ODASSO / France	laura.odasso@misha.fr	Intermarriages and Inclusion. Time and Space of Love, Laws and Norms
67941	Julia BERNSTEIN / Germany	jbernste@uni-koeln.de	Inclusion in the Perception and Practice: Findings of the Study on Children of Jewish/not Jewish Intermarried Couples in Germany
34866	Halleh GHORASHI and Melanie EIJBERTS / Netherlands	h.ghorashi@vu.nl m.eijberts@vu.nl	Biographies and the Doubleness of Inclusion and Exclusion
40602	Karen LOWTON and Chris HILEY/ UK	karen.lowton@kcl.ac.uk; chris.hiley@kcl.ac.uk	Dimensions of Exclusion in the Lived Experiences of Adult Survivors of Childhood Liver Transplant: A Micro-Analytic Perspective
45967	Zoran SLAVNIC / Sweden	zoran.slavnic@liu.se	Spectrum of NON-Belonging Temporary Protection, Short-Sighted Pragmatism and Problems of Mixed "Ethnic" Identities
47860	Christine RIEGEL and Lalitha CHAMAKALAYIL / Germany	christine.riegel@ph-freiburg.de lalitha.chamakalayil@ph-freiburg.de	Life Strategies of Families in Marginalised Urban Neighbourhoods: Dealing with Social and Educational Inequalities
52407	Sirpa KORHONEN / Finland	sirpa.i.korhonen@jyu.fi	Refugee Returns – Experiences of Inclusion Here and There

Session 3859: Concepts of Inclusion from a Biographical Perspective II

Session Organizer: Lena INOWLOCKI (inowlocki@soz.uni-frankfurt.de) and Kathy DAVIS (k.e.davis@vu.nl)

Chair: Julia BERNSTEIN

53405	Victoria SE-MENOVA / Russia	victoria-sem@yandex.ru	Construction of Solidarity Through Language Mode: Sociocultural Approach to Internet Discussion Forum
52349	Christoph SCHWARZ / Germany	schwarz@e.mail.de	Educational Policies and Questions of "Inclusion" in the Middle East: The Case of the Palestinian Refugees
41181	Jesus Humberto PINEDA OLIVIERI / Germany	jesus.pineda@ocides.org	From Being Excluded to Becoming a Triumpher: Higher Education Massification Policies in Venezuela and Their Biographical Meaning
38059	Michaela KOETTIG / Germany	michaela.koettig@gmx.de	Does Inclusion Mean Everyone Every Time?! – Critical Reflection on a Popular Concept
44814	Thomas GEIER and Magnus FRANK / Germany	thomas.geier@zsb.uni-halle.de ; magnus.frank@uni-due.de	Inclusion in Society through Religious Orientation? Biographies of Male Students Participating in the 'Gülen Movement' in Germany
68330	Jacek KUBERA / Poland	j.kubera@amu.edu.pl	Renaissance of Ethnicity? Self-Identifications of the Second and Third Generation of Algerian Immigrants in France
67348	Karina BARCENAS BARAJAS / Mexico	kb.barcenas@gmail.com	Religiosity and Spirituality in Lesbian and Gay Identities: From Immorality to Inclusion in the Religious Field
67958	Veronika LEICHT / Germany	Veronika.leicht@fau.de	Inclusion and Structural Processes of Young Recipients of "Unemployment II Benefits"

Session 3860: Biographies in the Global South and Collective Histories. Individual Remembering in Interrelation with Public and Hegemonic Discourses.

Session Organizers: Hee-Young YI (biograf@hanmail.net) and Gabriele ROSENTHAL (g.rosenthal@gmx.de)

Chair: Gabriele ROSENTHAL

39862	Janosch SCHOBIN / Germany	janosch.schobin@his-online.de	The Orphans of History and Fukuyama's Last Men: Concepts of History in the Biographical Accounts of Two Chilean Generations
33177	Raimundo FREI / Germany	raimundo.frei@gmail.com	Social Memories in South America: Generational Narratives in Times of Political Youth Activism

41718	Johannes BECKER and Arne WORM / Germany	johannes.becker@sowi.uni-goettingen.de , aworm@uni-goettingen.de	Biographical Narrations, Discourses and Collective History of Palestinians in Jerusalem's Old City and in a Palestinian Refugee Camp
63383	Marija GRUJIC / Germany	marija.grujic@gmail.com	The Ambivalence of Memory and History – the Case of Kosovo and Serbia in the Biographies of the Kosovo Serbs
40650	Robert MILLER / UK	r.miller@qub.ac.uk	Using Biographical and Family History Methods in Sub-Saharan Africa: Inheritance in Kenya
Session 3861: Biography and Politics Session Organizers: Rosa Maria BRANDHORST (RosaMaria.Brandhorst@gmx.de) and Michaela KOETIG (Michaela.koettig@gmx.de) Chair: Rosa Maria BRANDHORST			
30369	Ingrid MIETHE and Regina SOREMSKI / Germany	in-grid.miethe@erziehung.uni-giessen.de ; regina.soremski@erziehung.uni-giessen.de	Cultural Capital in Movement: On the Dissolution of Traditional Educational Codes by Educational Policy and Social Movements Among First Generation Academics in Germany
32679	Cornelia HIPPMANN / Germany	cornelia.hippmann@tu-dortmund.de	ESA the Position of the Female Gender in the Political Space. An Analytical Biography Access to the Study of East German Female Politicians Career Chances
47841	Hiromi TANAKA / Japan	hiromi@meiji.ac.jp	A Biographical Analysis of Women's Political Participation: The Importance of Politicization in Female Legislators' Biographies
63703	Felicia HERRSCHAFT / Germany	F.herrschaft@soz.uni-frankfurt.de	Politicization of the Youth in Germany – Two Case-Studies About Protest Movements
43031	Hanna HERZOG / Israel	hherzog@post.tau.ac.il	Present Absentees: Internal Refugeeism as Location and Identity in the Second and Third Generations of Palestinian Women Citizens of Israel
41347	Gérard AMOUGOU / Belgium	amou_gerard@yahoo.fr	"Bifurcations" Biographiques et Perspectives de Changement Sociopolitique au Cameroun
35991	Christian-Pierre GHILLEBAERT / France	christian-pierre.ghillebaert@univ-lille1.fr	Biographies: A Heuristic No Man's Land for Political Scientists?
39498	Ngamjahao KIPGEN / India	nkipgen@gmail.com	Writing a Socio-Biography of Pu Mangpithang Kipgen: Recovering Kuki History from Biographical Fragments

Session 3862: Biography, Violence, Gender

Session Organizers: Michaela KOETTIG (Michaela.koettig@gmx.de) and Hermílio SANTOS (hermilio@pucrs.br)

Chair: Michaela KOETTIG

67650	Fabien TRUONG / France	fabien.truong@univ-paris8.fr	Inside the French Hoods. Revisiting Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Relegated Districts
33348	Frank BEIER / Germany	frank.beier@phil.tu-chemnitz.de	Violence and Dissidence. Political Imprisoned Women in the Former GDR
36374	Edna LOMSKY-FEDER and Orna SASSON-LEVY / Israel	edna.lomsky-feder@mail.huji.ac.il o.sassonlevy@gmail.com	Gender and Violence in Women Soldiers' Accounts: The Case of Israel
39406	Tom CLARK / UK	t.clark@sheffield.ac.uk	Normal Happy Girl Interrupted: A Biographical Analysis of Myra Hindley's Life-Story
47896	Maria POHN-WEIDINGER / Austria	maria.pohn-weidinger@univie.ac.at	'Seduction': A Pattern of Interpretation
49848	Hermilio SANTOS and Odil Matheus FONTELLA / Brazil	hermilio@pucrs.br; mfontella@bol.com.br	Between Subordination and Protagonism: Violence Experience of Young Women Through Biographic Narratives

Session 3866: Different Perspectives on Life Stories

Session Organizers Tazuko KOBAYASHI (t.kobayashi@r.hit-u.ac.jp) and Irini SIOUTI (Siouti@soz.uni-frankfurt.de)

Co-Chairs: Tazuko KOBAYASHI and Irini SIOUTI

65644	Bettina DAUSIEN / Austria	bet-tina.dausien@univie.ac.at	Text and Contexts: A Pragmatic Approach to the Interpretation of Biographical Interviews
66120	Catherine DEL-CROIX / France	cadelcroix@wanadoo.fr	Analyzing Recurring Themes in a Life Story with Social Context in Mind
33448	Yosepha TABIB-CALIF / Israel	yosepha.tabib@mail.huji.ac.il	Ethnographic Biography
37367	Rita CARDOSO ERBS and Maria Helena MENNA BARRETO ABRAHÃO / Brazil	didata@ig.com.br; abra-haomhmb@gmail.com	Autobiographical Memorials – The Writing and Listening in Teacher Training
52199	Sirpa KORHONEN / Finland	sirpa.i.korhonen@jyu.fi	Returning Refugees' Life Stories

Session 3868: Reconstructing Gendered Biographies in Transcultural Research Settings: Methodological Challenges

Session Organizers: Bettina DAUSIEN (bettina.dausien@univie.ac.at), Irini SIOUTI (Siouti@soz.uni-frankfurt.de), Hiromi TANAKA (hiromi@meiji.ac.jp)

Co-Chairs: Bettina DAUSIEN, Irini SIOUTI, Hiromi TANAKA

51343	Daniel BERTAUX / France	daniel.beraux@misha.fr	Why Empirical Sociology Needs Life Stories
43720	Rosa BRAND-HORST / Germany	rosa-maria.brandhorst@gmx.de	Multi-Sited Approaches in Analysing Gender Constructions in the Migration Process: Based on the Example of Migration Between Cuba and Germany
50179	Yukie HIRATA / Japan	kirara0616@hotmail.com	For a Happy Encounter Between a Researcher and a Participant Living in the Different Contexts of Social Organization of Gender
33246	Caterina ROHDE / Germany	caterina.rohde@arcor.de	Being a Housewife – Is It a Traditional or Progressive Female Gender Role? Understanding Gender Role Constructions in a Transcultural Russian-German Research Setting
47289	Noga GILAD / Israel	giladnoga@gmail.com	Biographic Self Positioning as Narrated Argumentation

Session 3867: Embodied Biographies and Sexy Stories

Session Organizer: Kathy DAVIS (k.e.davis@vu.nl)

Chair: Kathy DAVIS

47749	Phil LANGER / Germany	langer@soz.uni-frankfurt.de	Intimacy in the Research Process – Methodological and Ethical Implications of Examining the Psychosocial Dynamics of Sexual Risk Behavior in Biographical Peer Research
33090	Janice IRVINE / US	irvine@soc.umass.edu	The Sex Lives of Sex Researchers
41333	Gabriele ROSENTHAL and Hendrik HINRICHSEN / Germany	g.rosenthal@gmx.de ; Hinrichsen.Hendrik@t-online.de	Talking About Sexuality in Order to Deal with Discrimination? Gay Men in Palestine
43237	Robert Lee MILLER / UK	twy@ntlworld.com	Embodiment, Gender and Sex in Virtual Worlds

Session 3864: Constructing Biographies in Different Media

Session Organizers: Roswitha BRECKNER (roswitha.breckner@univie.ac.at), Gülsüm DEPELI (gdepeli@gmail.com) and Maria POHN-WEIDINGER (maria.pohn-weidinger@univie.ac.at)

Chair: Maria POHN-WEIDINGER

39013	Gülsüm DEPELI / Turkey	gdepeli@gmail.com	Autobiographical Narration in Turkish Women Weblogs
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46994	Min-Yue HSIAO / Japan	miesiao@gmail.com	"My Girlfriend Said She Won't Live with My Mom in the Future": Online Discussion About Relationship in Taiwan
36261	Arlene STEIN / Canada	arlenes@rci.rutgers.edu	Performing Transgender Authenticity Through Video Diaries
35992	Kathy DAVIS / Netherlands	k.e.davis@vu.nl	Passion, Experience, and Biography: What Can Tango Dancers Tell Us?
40647	Robert MILLER / UK	r.miller@qub.ac.uk	Researching Virtual Realities – Methodological and Conceptual Issues
36220	Dorett FUNCKE / Germany	Funcke@gmx.net	From Field to Theory and Back – The Biographical (re-) Construction of an Unconventional Family Through a Multi-Variant Range of Data
38992	Roswitha BRECKNER / Austria	ro-switha.breckner@univie.ac.at	Family Photo Albums on the Web

WORKSHOP AND CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Five-Day Training Intensive January/February 2014

Biographic-Narrative-Interpretive Method (BNIM)

Narrative Interview and Interpretation

January 30th -31st (Thursday-Friday) and February 3rd – 5th (Monday-Wednesday), 24a Princes Avenue, London N10 3LR, Muswell Hill, North London, United Kingdom

The value of open-narrative interviewing and insightful interpretation is widely recognised, but rather than having to invent the wheel for themselves, many people welcome a systematic textbook-backed immersion into principles and procedures that have been shown over two decades and many countries to generate constantly high-quality work.

Designed for PhD students and professional researchers, the course provides a thorough training in doing BNIM biographic narrative interviews, together with 'hands-on experience' of following BNIM interpretation procedures. Students develop a sense of how their own research projects might use such aspects and components.

With two tutors (Tom Wengraf and Mariya Stoilova), we ensure close coaching and support for the intensive work that is needed for you to fully acquire both the understanding of principles and also the practical capacity for proceeding with the systematic procedures involved in BNIM – usable both for BNIM but also for other types of narrative interviewing and interpretation.

Please Note: This is the last training of this 10-year series. No further trainings are currently planned.
CONTACT: To apply for a place, please contact tom@tomwengraf.com.

Before, Beside and After (Beyond) the Biographical Narrative

Annual Conference of the Life History and Biographical Research Network

University of Magdeburg, 6-9th March 2014

The conference promises to bring together colleagues and friends from a number of research fields concerned with auto/biography and biographical narrative, and will serve as a forum for young researchers and those longer in the field - so far - from Australia, Korea, Canada, the USA, Sweden, Turkey, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Britain, the Netherlands, Poland, the Philippines, Israel, and Germany. The maps are being rolled out ...

The conference website www.esreabios.ovgu.de is still in the process of being put in order, but essential information concerning important dates, fees, bursaries and ESREA membership, guidelines for paper submissions as well as information about the venue, hotels and getting to Magdeburg can already be found on the site. Information about Keynotes, Round Tables, etc, will be announced.

2nd international conference of Oral History (Greek Oral History Association)**Memory narrates the city... Oral testimonies about the past and the present of urban space
University of Athens - Department of History and Archaeology, Athens, 6-8 March 2014**

How do we remember the cities? How are individual and collective life stories formed by and through the urban space? What kind of city images does memory create? History and social sciences have extensively reflected on the relationship between *memory* and the *city* and shown ways in which memory stems from spatial contexts. Cities are considered a prolific ground for the observation and study of historical change. Within this perspective, they have also been conceived as examples for exploring governmentality as a form of governance since the 19th century: the ruling classes focused on the city in order to pose and answer questions about how modern societies would be governed both in the metropolises and the colonized world. City planning, city life, individual and group experiences of the city as well as different forms of identity connected to those experiences, were all components of modern urban government equally important to disciplining and policing techniques. Moreover, urban practices and spatial representations that shape the city landscape can either stress internal continuity and communication or reveal cultural, economic and class barriers, shedding thus light to the variety of identities that run through the everyday life of cities in different historical contexts. It is this variety that can record different versions of the same city, the cities within the city, rendering the notions of urban space as metaphors of social change.

Memory is one of the most important processes through which *the city* is produced. The conference is indented to focus on the different ways in which oral testimonies express the relationship between city and memory. Within this perspective the city is conceived as a keystone for the structuring of oral narratives. We would like to explore how memory selects and mediates the experience of the city, how it deals with the traumatic and the everyday. How individual and collective memory converge to or diverge from one another; how social memory resists to or complies with master narratives of the urban space.

The conference focuses, among other things, on the following main questions:

- How are formal narratives and social memory of the city involved in the personal experience of the city? How are collectivities and political identities constituted through urban places of memory (the *topoi* of city memory)?
- What kinds of identity does the memory of the city shape?
- Who are the “others” in the city, what types of memories do they carry, what types of memory do they encounter in the new place in which they arrive, and how does this encounter influence the older memory layers?

If you need further information please contact **Georgios Tsiolis** (tsiolisg@social.soc.uoc.gr)

Call for Papers**Nationalist Responses to Economic and Political Crises****Nationalism Studies Program at Central European University (CEU) and Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN)****Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, 12-14 June 2014**

The focus of the conference Nationalist Responses to Economic and Political Crises will be nationalism and ethnic conflict in Central Europe, the Balkans, the former Soviet Union, the Middle East and Central Eurasia. Special attention will be given to themes discussing the relationship between economic crises, nationalism and politicized ethnicity.

The year 2014 will be the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, and also the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust in Hungary. Thematic panel proposals and individual papers dealing with these events, as well as with the connections between them (both in the Hungarian context and more generally), are also welcome.

The conference invites proposals devoted to comparative perspectives on nationalism-related issues, empirical case studies as well as papers on theoretical approaches that need not be grounded in any particular geographic region. Disciplines represented include political science, philosophy, history, anthropology, sociology, international relations, economics, political geography, sociolinguistics, literature, and related fields.

The keynote lecture will be delivered by Donald L. Horowitz (Duke University).

IMPORTANT: All proposals must be sent in *a single email message*, with an attached proposal in a Word document (PDFs will not be accepted) containing contact information, an abstract, a biographical statement, as well as the Fact Sheet (or multiple Fact Sheets, in the case of co-authors and/or panel proposals). Proposals including contact information, the abstract and the bio statement in separate attachments, or over several email messages, will not be considered.

Deadline for proposals: January 27. Proposals must be submitted to: asn.ceu.2014@gmail.com, Conference website: <http://nationalism.ceu.hu/Conference2014>

Postgraduate Symposium: 'Muslims in UK and Europe'**Centre of Islamic Studies, Cambridge, 17-18 May 2014**

Applications are invited from current Masters and PhD candidates to present their research on issues pertaining to Muslims in the UK and Europe, from any discipline. The postgraduate symposium will be a platform for students to present and exchange current research on any topic in this field in a lively and dynamic forum.

All travel and accommodation expenses will be covered by the Centre of Islamic Studies. **Deadline for application 14 February 2014.** Information <http://www.cis.cam.ac.uk/news/post/233-call-for-participants---muslims-in-uk-and-europe-postgraduate-symposium-17-18-may-2014>.

WORKSHOP-REFLEXION

The International Workshop: “New Challenges in Transnational Biography Research” took place at the Department of Sociology, University of Crete, Greece 27-28. September 2013. It was organized by: Irini Siouti, Fachbereich Gesellschaftswissenschaften, J.W. Goethe Universität Frankfurt, Germany (Siouti@soz.uni-frankfurt.de) and Giorgos Tsiolis, University of Crete, Sociology, Greece (tsiolisg@social.soc.uoc.gr) In cooperation with the RC 38 Biography and Society/International Sociological Association (ISA).



Below you will find the keynote speech by **Kathy Davis, VU University, Amsterdam**

Dancing Across Borders: Tango as transnational cultural space

Introduction

We live in a globalizing world. It is a world where there are more people who have had to move at some point in their lives, than people who have always lived in one place. Biographical research has a long and rich tradition of investigating the ways in which mobility - migration, displacement, and exile – disrupts biographical continuity and forces individuals to adopt new strategies to regain control over their lives. Moving from one place to another usually has dramatic repercussions on people’s identities, family life, opportunities and aspirations, sense of belonging to a community, and much more. So, biographical research has already been confronted with the impossibility of even thinking about people’s lives as being lived in only one national or cultural context and most biographical researchers will, therefore, probably already recognize the need to adopt a transnational perspective on biography and biographical research.

Today I am going to be making a case for extending this transnational biographical perspective from people who move to also include people who stay in one place. This means that I will be elaborating an approach which focusses primarily on histories of migration to an approach which explores what I call transnational cultural spaces. I will be arguing that transnational cultural spaces are a part of most people’s lives today, whether or not they have ever moved away from home. In our contemporary world, people across the globe – North and South, East and West – are constantly engaging with people, practices, commodities, and ideas, which have emerged in and travelled from other places. These encounters with difference, with ‘otherness’, with the ‘elsewhere’ – as the sociologist Mica Nava¹ puts it – structure their feelings, relationships, and everyday lives. If we, as biographical researchers, are to understand how even people who have never left home may move in and out of transnational cultural spaces in ways that both disrupt and transform their lives and their identities in meaningful and important ways, then we need to expand our transnational biographical perspectives from a concern with geographical mobility to an approach which also encompasses cultural mobility.

Since this may sound a bit abstract, let me illustrate it with an example taken from my own biographical research on people who are passionate about dancing Argentinean tango. Tango is a dance which

¹ Nava, Mica. 2002. “Cosmopolitan Modernity. Everyday Imaginaries and the Register of Difference.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, 1-2:81-99.

originated in the slums of Buenos Aires at the turn of the 20th century. It was initially seen as a disreputable and immoral dance by the Argentinean upper classes. For them, tango was a dance for impoverished immigrants and prostitutes. However, after it travelled to Europe and became the rage among the cultural elite of Paris and London, affluent Argentines quickly reappropriated tango as their own, even declaring it to be THE symbol of their national identity. In fact, Argentina has recently persuaded the UNESCO to include tango on the world list of cultural heritage artifacts in need of protection².

Since its early travels, Argentinean tango has fallen in and out of fashion, both in Argentina and elsewhere in the world. During the mid- 1980's, tango underwent its most recent revival, this time becoming a truly global dance. It now has a growing and world-wide sub-culture of fervent fans, who are willing to devote a considerable part of their lives to listening to tango music and attending tango venues – called salons.

The focus of my research has been to understand and explain the current global popularity of Argentinean tango. With so many people dancing tango outside Argentina, you can easily see why this research forced me to think transnationally. I not only had to think about tango as something that travels across national and cultural borders, but I also had to think of tango as something which people across the globe do without ever leaving home. I had to tackle the problem of how people participate locally in a global dance culture and what this means for their lives, their aspirations, and their sense of themselves in the world around them. In other words, I needed to find a way to analyse their tango biographies from a transnational perspective.

The case of Mr. Sugiyama

Since we are all biographical researchers here, let me start with an individual case. It is a fictional example, taken from the Japanese film *Shall we Dansu?* directed by Masayuki Suo in 1995. Some of you may have seen this film, but probably in the US remake *Shall We Dance* starring Jennifer Lopez and Richard Gere. This is the sugar-sweet and domesticated version. The original Japanese film is quite different. This is the story of a middle-class, hard-working accountant, Mr. Sugiyama, who has a monotonous office job in Tokyo and a house in the suburbs where he lives with his wife and teen-age daughter. One evening on his way home from work in the commuter train, he looks into the darkness outside his window and sees a beautiful woman with a melancholy expression on her face. She is standing in the lighted window of a dance studio. After many more times of looking up and seeing dancers moving across the window of the dance studio, he finally gathers up his courage. He gets out of the train, enters the dance studio, and asks to take dance lessons.

The rest of the film is devoted to Mr. Sugiyama's struggles to learn to dance and to the complications he encounters trying to keep his passion for dancing a secret from his colleagues and family. While social dancing has been around in Japan since the early 1930's, it is still considered slightly scandalous. It is not appropriate for men and women to touch in public and even married couples would consider hugging one another in a dance venue 'embarrassing.' So, it is not surprising that Mr. Sugiyama has to wrestle with his forbidden passion for dancing. However, the longer he dances, the more important it becomes to him. As he puts it, 'I feel more and more alive every day.' Ultimately, his secret is revealed after his wife hires a private detective to uncover what her husband has been doing and everything comes tumbling down on his head. I won't reveal the end of the story, but I can tell you that the

² "Tango takes a turn on UN cultural body's list of intangible heritage," *UN News Center*, 30 September 2009.

viewer is left with the hope that Mr. Sugiyama will continue with this strangely improbable and yet delightful activity which has taken him out of the rut of his routine life, dispelled his mid-life crisis, and given him his moment of freedom.

The film raises several questions. Why would a dance from another time and another place appeal to a person living in such different circumstances? And why would this person be willing to endure years of costly lessons and put up with countless humiliations in order to learn such a strange dance? How can an otherwise normal and even conventional person like Mr. Sugiyama become so obsessed that he is willing to risk the disbelief, shock, and sorrow of his family, friends, and colleagues who can't understand what has happened to the person they thought they knew?

Research

Mr. Sugiyama is, of course, only a fictional example about whom we can merely speculate. However, in my research, I tried to find answers for these questions by talking with real-life people who had become passionate about dancing tango. They came from very different places – from Amsterdam to New York, Montreal, Sydney, Berlin, Rome, Paris, Tokyo, Sao Paulo and – of course – Buenos Aires. I wanted to find out what dancing tango meant to them. And, in fact, I discovered that for many of these tango *aficionados* and *aficionadas*, dancing tango changed their biographies in ways that were similar to what happened to Mr. Sugiyama. As in the film, they also found out about tango quite by chance. But once they discovered it, they were hooked. They couldn't help themselves; they just had to do it.

One of my informants, Avi, a 23-year old student, remembered going on a vacation with his parents and seeing people dancing tango along the river Seine in Paris. This is what he told me:

I didn't know what it was then, but I saw them dancing in this funny embrace. They were in this dream-like state in the middle of the city, with the buzz of traffic all around them, and they were just holding each other very tight and dancing. It really spoke to me. It was just something that stuck in my head and I knew: 'This is my dance.'

Like Mr. Sugiyama, all my informants went to great lengths to dance tango, which is a difficult dance to learn. They had years of lessons, coped with difficulties in getting the steps right, and experienced anxiety and sometimes even panic about how to manage the interactions in the dance venues (which were, as one of my informants put it, 'a real jungle'). And yet they persisted. Many began attending tango salons once a week, then two times, three times, four times a week. Some even went dancing every day. They stopped going out, lost interest in movies, playing football, or attending a concert. Dancing tango started to take over their lives. As one of my informants told me, '*I used to listen to classical music and go to operas, but it's all tango now.*'

Not only did their interests and lifestyles change, but they began to neglect their friends who didn't dance tango. They dreaded family gatherings if it meant they would miss going dancing. Vacations without tango became an ordeal; something they couldn't imagine even surviving.

This is what Maya, a 47-year old physical therapist with two teen-aged children, had to say about it:

'Three weeks at a camping site without dancing??? I'm sorry, but there ARE limits to how long I can go without dancing. You know? Now I have a bad name in my family circle... They just can't understand that I can't stay at home with them. I'm always going to be trying to go dancing.'

Despite the disruptions that their dancing tango caused in their lives and their relationships, the dancers I spoke with, seemed to have found themselves in the throes of something bigger than themselves. Like Mr. Sugiyama, it is not that they did not realize that they had crossed the line. They knew that this was more than a 'normal' hobby. Many described themselves as 'having gone off the deep end,' as 'being totally obsessed.' Many freely admitted that they were 'addicted,' but it was, as many of my informants assured me, being '*addicted in a nice way.*'

This is the way Dany, a 42- year old performance artist, explains it:

'Tango is just so intimate. Like I'm always thinking: "How can I be this intimate with a person I don't even know?" That's what makes it addictive. We don't act this way normally, on the street, with people we don't know, even with people we do know. But in tango, you can be vulnerable. You have to be vulnerable, otherwise it doesn't work.... And I think that's what we all want.'

Biographically speaking, taking up dancing tango can have the effect of what Norman Denzin³ has called an epiphany. Dancing tango takes people out of their everyday lives and places them in a space in which they can experience themselves in a different way. They can be physically intimate without having to worry about complications. Or they can play with masculinity and femininity in ways that are normally frowned upon in egalitarian, late-modern societies. Or they can connect with a person who is totally different than who they might meet in their ordinary lives – of a different class or ethnic background, of a different nationality, younger or older, shorter or fatter. Dancing tango is an encounter with difference, with otherness, and with the 'elsewhere.' It is an experience which leaves a mark on a person's life, fundamentally altering its structure and the person's sense of self.

Transnational biographies/ Transnational spaces

That tango changes many people's biographies should, by now, be clear. But how does dancing tango make a biography transnational? In order to talk about transnationality, it would be easy to focus on the biographies of tango dancers who actually move from place to place. After all, mobility is the usual way to talk about transnational biographies. In the world of tango, there are also many good examples of dancers who travel in order to dance in other cities or even other countries. Many people combine tango dancing with business trips or vacations. Others regularly attend international tango workshops and festivals in other countries. They form networks with dancers from other places, keeping one another posted through FaceBook about up-and-coming tango events and offering each other a place to stay during festivals. As one of my informants put it: '*We are like a family of tango nomads.*' There is even a website for tango travellers to hook up in an airport, so they can kill time between flights with a quick dance.

Posting on *Terminal. Tango*, under title 'Stranded At An Airport, Tango Meet-up': 'Sitting at Midway Airport during a lightning storm, just sensing there is a Tanguera⁴ here with her Comme Il Fauts⁵ in her carry-on waiting for a flight. And we miss the opportunity to dance. This group is to make sure that never happens again.' Steve

³ Denzin, Norman K. 1989. *Interpretive Biography*. Newbury Park: Sage.

⁴ A woman who dances tango.

⁵ A well-known brand of women's dancing shoes.

Of course, most serious tango dancers also travel to Buenos Aires, the Mecca of tango, at least once in their lives. However, some go every year and a few may even decide to pack their bags and settle in Buenos Aires permanently, just to be close to the salons there. These are the tango exiles – individuals who are so smitten that they are prepared to burn all their bridges behind them. They are willing to leave family, work, and homeland, just to dance tango.

Such biographies can easily be seen as transnational because they involve people – literally – moving across national borders in order to dance tango. But what about the passionate tango dancers who prefer to stay in their home towns and dance tango in their local salons? What about those people who do not have the funds to travel, or who, like Mr. Suchiyama, cannot imagine leaving family and work behind?

Do these dancers have transnational biographies, too? I would argue that they do and let me explain why.

Any tango dancer knows what to expect as soon as he or she enters a tango salon. It does not matter where the salon is. Tango dancers know, for example, that they will be hearing the same familiar music – music from tango's Golden Age (which was from 1935-1955), sung by men with whiny voices, and recorded from scratchy records. They also know that they can enter an embrace with another dancer and that they will both know exactly what to do. They don't have to talk because they will be able to communicate without words. And, most importantly, they can assume that their partners will be longing for the same experience of connection. They, too, will want to come together across all of the possible differences that normally divide people – gender, age, appearance, age, class, ethnicity. All of this will happen anywhere in the world.

As Renate, a 35-year old occupational therapist from Amsterdam put it:

'You don't have to go the Buenos Aires to dance tango. You can create the same thing here. Tango is in yourself. You don't have to travel that far in order to find it.'

The global revival has made dancing tango available to people of different genders and ages, from different class and ethnic backgrounds, in urban and rural settings across the globe. By dancing tango, they enter a transnational cultural space, which they share – literally or imaginatively - with an international community of *aficionados*, some of whom they may, but most of whom they will never encounter. These spaces may be close to home or far away; but as soon as a dancer enters such a space and hears the familiar music and sees other dancers locked in a close embrace, circling the floor, he or she will have the uncanny sense of being both 'home' and 'elsewhere': neither here nor there, not in the past, but also not entirely in the present – in short, somewhere in between, lost –as it were – in translation.

Conclusion

Tango is obviously just one example of a transnational cultural space, and an idiosyncratic one at that. After all, very few people actually want to dance tango and even those who do, are not automatically in danger of going off the deep end like the people I have been talking about here. However, tango is a good example of the kind of transnational cultural spaces that every person in our contemporary world enters, often casually, sometimes reluctantly, and, upon occasion, passionately.

We all routinely enter transnational cultural spaces. We do it when we prepare and eat foods from other places and when we use food as a way to tell stories about who we are, where we have been

and where we want to go. We enter transnational cultural spaces when we participate in so-called alternative health practices (from yoga to holistic Hindu medicine), or watch US soap operas (which people do across the globe, from Trinidad or Dubai), or listen to Arab Rock or Klezmer bands in Berlin or New York. We enter transnational cultural spaces when we read books (Reading *Lolita* in Teheran) or we engage in scientific theorizing and ‘borrow’ ideas and theoretical paradigms from other places. Whether these encounters are only a momentary adventure or end up becoming a life-time passion, we all become entangled in spaces which are deeply and irrevocably transnational. These entanglements change us, making us different persons than we were before. In these spaces, we may find something that we are missing in our ordinary lives: difference, escape from the normal, a taste of elsewhere. These spaces allow us to both lose ourselves and find ourselves; to become different persons or even the persons we have always been all along, but just didn’t know it yet.

In conclusion, I would argue that transnational cultural spaces have become important for most individuals in contemporary societies. This means that we, as biographical researchers, need to be thinking transnationally in all of our research – not just research about migration, displacement or travel. Thinking transnationally should be a standard feature of our methodological repertoire.

But, perhaps this does not go far enough. If every biography is a transnational biography, as I have been suggesting, then perhaps, for the sake of argument, we need to ask whether we actually need the concept ‘transnational biography’ at all. If all biographies involve people participating in transnational cultural spaces, then the adjective transnational is redundant or even misleading because it implies that some biographies are local, home-bound and sedentary, while others are mobile and involve the crossing of borders. In that case, we would need to be re-thinking biographical research with an eye toward understanding and analyzing the ways all of our lives are already and continue to be deeply interconnected with the lives of others across the globe.

PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION

‘Doing Biographical Reflexivity’ as a Methodological Tool in Transnational Research Settings⁶

Minna-Kristiina Ruokonen-Engler and Irini Siouti

Abstract

The transnational approach has broadened the theoretical understanding of complex migration processes and challenged traditional migration research approaches. Researchers are constantly required to adapt and refocus their work in accordance with changing social realities. This poses challenges to methodologies and methods used in qualitative research, and forces researchers to reflect on the possibilities and limitations of applying these methods in transnational research contexts. In the field of biographical research, the transnational perspective requires us to reconsider previously developed premises of biographical research and to reflect on current research practice. In this paper we introduce „biographical reflexivity“ as a theoretical and methodological tool to deal with the trap posed by methodological nationalism.

Keywords: transnational research, methodological nationalism, biographical research, biographical reflexivity

1. Introduction⁷

The emergence of the transnational perspective as a new theoretical approach in the field of migration research has posed challenges not only for migration theory in general, but also for the methodologies and methods that have been used in qualitative empirical migration research. Traditionally, the epistemic and methodological framing of migration research has taken place in the context of the nation-state. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003: 577-578) regard this as „methodological nationalism“ and distinguish between three variants: “1) ignoring or disregarding the fundamental importance of nationalism for modern societies; this is often combined with 2) naturalization, i.e. taking for granted that the boundaries of the nation-state delimit and define the unit of analysis; 3) territorial limitation which confines the study of social processes to the political and geographic boundaries of a particular nation-state.” As a consequence, it can be argued that a mononational, nation-state research perspective cannot adequately capture the increasing mobility, complex migration processes, multiple belongings, and interconnectedness of people beyond nation-states in today’s globalized world. The critique of the nation-state framing of theoretical and methodological approaches in the social sciences has forced a questioning and rethinking of common methodological premises of qualitative research, and has led to reflections on contemporary research and fieldwork practices (see Amelina/Faist, 2012; Levitt/Glick Schiller, 2004). As a consequence, researchers are currently tackling the questions of how and with which methodological tools it may be possible to investigate the emergence of transnational social spaces, transnational belongings, and transmigration processes, in such a way that research can be conducted beyond „methodological nationalism“ (Wimmer/Glick Schiller, 2003). However, the ques-

⁶ First published in *Transnational Social Review*. 2/2013. pp, 247-261

⁷ This article is based on our paper “Looking back. Looking forth: Reflections on the meaning of migration experience of the researcher in a transnational research setting,” presented at the XVII International Socio-logical Association World Congress of Sociology, Gothenburg, Sweden, July 2010.

tion of how researchers gain access to transnational phenomena has largely been ignored, not only in these debates but also in the social sciences in general. Our own research and teaching experience in the field of transnational migration studies has indicated the necessity of methodological reflection on and explicit disclosure of the role of the researcher in the qualitative research process (Ruokonen-Engler/Siouti, 2010). In the following discussion we will examine this aspect and discuss it in the context of transnational research practices. We first consider the challenges that the transnational perspective poses to qualitative inquiry in general. Second, we discuss the biographical research perspective as a way of gaining access to narrated life experience in transnational research settings. We conclude by introducing the concept of „biographical reflexivity“ (Ruokonen-Engler/Siouti 2010), which we have developed as a methodological tool to understand the role of the researcher as a participant in the construction of knowledge in transnational research fields.

2. Challenges of the Transnational Research Perspective

In an age of migration and transnationalization, not only people but also cultural practices and discourses have become “moving targets” (Welz, 1998: 177). As a result, researchers are constantly required to adapt and refocus their work in accordance with changing social realities. This poses challenges to methodologies and methods used in qualitative research, and forces researchers to reflect on the possibilities and limitations of applying these methods in the context of transnational migration research (see Amelina/Faist/Nergiz, 2012; Amelina et al., 2012; Greschke, 2007; Köngeter/Wolff, 2012; Lauser, 2007; Nieswand, 2008).

The transnational approach was theoretically and empirically developed at the beginning of the 1990s in the field of migration studies (Glick Schiller/Basch/Szanton-Blanc, 1992), and was introduced into the German-speaking social and cultural sciences with some delay at the end of the 1990s (Faist, 2000; Pries, 1996, 1997). It has been used as an analytical perspective to examine a wide range of cross-border phenomena ranging from economic relations to social movements, communication, migration, tourism, belonging, migrants’ ties to their homelands, and so on. The transnational approach has drawn attention to the importance of analyzing the intersections and interconnectedness of the local and the global, and has underlined the need for approaches that frame research beyond nation-state borders. In contrast to globalization studies, the transnational approach opens up the possibility of investigating transnational phenomena at the level of the acting subject and the social spaces those subjects bring into being (Homfeld/Schröer/Schweppe, 2006).

Unlike classical theoretical approaches to migration, which focus on „traditional“ forms of international migration as emigration, immigration and remigration, the transnational migration approach conceives transmigration as a „new“ form of migration which lies at a tangent to both the region of origin and the region of settlement (Glick Schiller/Basch/Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Pries, 2001). The transnational approach thus opens up new and challenging ways of understanding more profoundly the dynamics and complexity of migration processes and border crossings, beyond the questions of integration and assimilation of the migrants within a nation state. Therefore, research focuses more on the inter-relatedness of migrations across nation states than on one-way migration processes seen from the perspective of the country of arrival and its national interests.

At the theoretical core of the transnational migration research approach is the assumption that geographical and social spaces have become decoupled from each other (Faist, 2000). The decoupling of social and geographical-physical spaces is discussed at a theoretical level with the help of the concept

of the emergence of „transnational social space“ (Faist, 2000; Pries, 1996), which has been introduced as a central category in migration research to explain spaces that extend beyond the nation-state frame of reference. The concept of „transnational social space“ indicates that, in addition to the nation state, under-stood as a container space, transnational space also exists, constituted across nation-state borders and generating “new plurilocalized, partially deterritorialized social realities” (Herrera Lima, 2001: 77). The essential questions, however, concern how these spaces are constructed and how it may be possible to investigate them. The transnational approach therefore poses not only a theoretical but also a methodological challenge for the social sciences. As Glick Schiller and Wimmer (2002, 2003) have pointed out in their critique of methodological nationalism, social science research has been framed by national borders and nation-state paradigms as natural and normative framings of research. However, in the age of globalization, transnationalization, increasing mobility and migration, the frames of research need to go beyond nation-state borders and to widen the normative frame of analysis, not only theoretically and epistemologically but also methodologically.

Since the beginning of transnational research in the 1990s, researchers have primarily relied on ethnographical research traditions to overcome methodological nationalism. The debate about methodology so far has focused primarily on the concept of multi-sited ethnography (Falzon, 2009; Marcus, 1995) and global ethnography (Burawoy et al., 2000; Molyneux, 2001; Gille/Ó Riain, 2002). Ethnographic studies on transmigration apply the concept of multi-sited ethnography and carry out their research using ethnographical field observation by following people, connections, associations, and relationships across space (Falzon, 2009). Biographical studies use the concept of biography as a theoretical and methodological tool for investigating invisible structures of transnational migration spaces as “embodied experiences” (Ruokonen-Engler, 2012a; Ruokonen-Engler/Siouti, 2006, 2010). In the field of transnational migration studies, the biographical approach is particularly well suited to empirical investigations of transnational migration processes because it offers a way of reconstructing diversity, complexity, and the transformational character of transmigration phenomena through biographical narration and analysis (Apitzsch/Siouti, 2007; Siouti, 2013). On the one hand, the biographical research perspective offers a promising way of responding to the methodological challenge that the notion of transnationalism brings into the field of qualitative empirical migration research. On the other hand, the biographical approach and its analytical key concepts are challenged by the transnational perspective and need to be methodologically reflected.

3. Biographical Research in Transnational Migration Contexts

The classical biographical approach goes back to the tradition of the interpretative paradigm developed by the Chicago School sociologists William Isaac Thomas and Florian Znaniecki. In their empirical study, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1914-18), the biographical research approach was developed as an innovative method in the social sciences in order to explain complex, migration-specific social phenomena (Apitzsch, 2006). Later on, quantitative research replaced the biographical method in American sociology and caused an interruption in its development. The method was re-discovered by European, and particularly German, sociologists during the 1970s. Further development of the biographical research approach was strongly influenced by European and North American traditions of interpretative sociology (Apitzsch/Inowlocki, 2000; see also Chamberlayne, 2004).

In the biographical research approach, the concept of biography is conceived as a social construction which “constitutes both social reality and the subjects” worlds of knowledge and experience, and which is constantly affirmed and transformed within the dialectical relationship between life history

knowledge and experiences and patterns presented by society” (Fischer-Rosenthal/Rosenthal, 1997: 138). Biographies can thus be seen as a result of interactive and reflexive processing of biographical experiences. At the same time, the biographical perspective opens up both theoretical and methodological access to subjectivity and to the embeddedness of biographies in social micro, meso and macro structures (Dausien, 1994: 152). In biographical research methodology, the data collection process primarily consists of narrative biographical interviewing (Fischer-Rosenthal/Rosenthal, 1997; Rosenthal, 1993, 2004; Schütze, 1977, 1983)⁸. This involves impromptu autobiographical narration by subjects, who narrate their life history in an interview setting. The biographical analysis follows the key principles of abduction, reconstruction and sequentiality (Kraimer, 2000; Maiwald, 2005; Rosenthal, 1993) and proceeds in a methodological way that avoids confronting the empirical material with pre-defined categorizations and classifications (Apitzsch/Inowlocki, 2000; Apitzsch/Inowlocki/Kontos, 2008). As a result, biographical research methodology is characterized by a degree of openness that allows for the emergence of new, empirically grounded middle range theories (Merton, 1967) about the phenomena being investigated. The biographical research perspective provides an appropriate and analytically rich way to make theoretical sense of changing social phenomena in the age of globalization. The biographical research approach makes it possible to reconstruct social change and its influence on biographical subjects. This approach uses the concept of biography as a theoretical and methodological key concept for investigating invisible yet objective structures of transnational migration spaces (Apitzsch/Siouti, 2008). It provides a complex and differentiated analysis of transmigration processes that takes into account the social situation of migrants in the country of origin and the country of arrival, and can thus reconstruct the agency and positionings of these subjects in transnational fields. Recently, several studies have shown that the biographical approach opens up a new perspective for the investigation of transmigration and the constitution of transnational social spaces (Fürstenau, 2004; Kempf, 2013; Lutz, 2007; Ruokonen-Engler, 2005, 2012a; Siouti, 2013). Through the narrative reconstruction of biographical processes and subject positions, it is possible to explain how agency gets constructed around transnational belongings and positionings as a result of the interplay between individual biographical resources and structural constraints, emerging through the interplay and intersections of a range of locations and dislocations in relation to gender, ethnicity, class and racialization.

On the basis of our own research and teaching experience in the field of transnational migration, we suggest that the biographical approach provides a promising way of investigating transnational migration experiences and processes. At the same time, however, we acknowledge that some aspects of biographical theory and method need to be revised and reconceptualized for transnational research settings.

First of all, it is important to consider that the methods of biographical narrative interview and narrative analysis were not developed in the context of migration, but in the context of monolingual⁹ re-

⁸ The main idea of the biographical-narrative interview is to generate a spontaneous autobiographical narration which is not structured by questions posed by the interviewer but by the narrator’s structures of relevance. On the narrative interview technique see Schütze (1977, 1983) and Fischer-Rosenthal/Rosenthal (1997).

⁹ The question of multilingualism is currently being discussed in the field of biographical migration research, but this is done from a perspective in which multilingualism and translation are regarded as exceptions and a problem in an interview situation and analysis (e.g. Tuijer, 2009, 2011). However, our research practice over a long period of time has shown that multilingualism is no longer an exceptional occurrence, but rather the norm in the field of biographical migration research. It seems to us that the problematization of multilingualism has more to do with the logic of methodological nationalism and the reproduction of monolingualism as a norm.

search on local community power structures in Germany at the end of the 1970s (see Riemann, 2006). Later on, the biographical approach was also applied in the field of migration studies (Apitzsch, 1990). The biographical perspective made it possible to gain access to „twofold perspectivity“ (Gültekin, 2003; Gültekin/Inowlocki/Lutz, 2003) on biographical processes in the context of migration, which helped to shed light on the perspectives of immigrants and the receiving society (Gültekin, 2003). Even though the biographical perspective on migration represented an expansion and differentiation of research on migration, one could criticize the way in which classical biographical migration studies focused on the life situations of migrants from the perspective of the receiving societies. Accordingly, the assumption that nation-state borders frame research and analysis is often reproduced in these studies (e.g. Breckner, 2005; Hummrich, 2002; Juhasz/May, 2003; Ofner, 2003; Philipper, 1999; Ricker, 2000). Thus, the transnational perspective forces us to rethink previously valid premises of biographical research at the level of methodology and methods, and to reflect on current research practice.

Furthermore, deeper reflection is needed in the method of biographical analysis in regard to the frames of the analysis (normative cultural expectations), the research relationship, and the role of the researcher in the field of „transnational knowledge production“ (see Apitzsch/Siouti, 2013; Ruokonen-Engler/Siouti, 2010). The question at stake here is how experience influences the research conducted and the research perspective adopted. By underlining the need for biographical reflection, we acknowledge the situated nature of knowledge production (Haraway, 1990) and ask how the experience of the researcher (and, in this case, the experience of migration) influences the research process and how the reflection of subjective experience can be considered as a productive method for doing research in transnational research settings. In the following, we focus on the role of the researcher and suggest „biographical reflexivity“ as a necessary methodological tool in research practice. We argue that there is a need to include „biographical reflexivity“ the theoretical and the methodological advancement of biographical analysis in transnational contexts in order to overcome the trap posed by „methodological nationalism“ (Wimmer/Glick Schiller, 2003).

4. ‘Biographical Reflexivity’ as a Methodological Tool

If we now look at the theoretical and research work done so far in the field of transnational migration studies, it can be argued that the transnational perspective has been developed by scholars who themselves have a migration background or have been influenced in one way or another by their experiences with migration phenomena (see e.g. Basch/Glick Schiller/Szanton Blanc, 2000). Both migration processes and scientific knowledge production are characterized by transnationality. Thus, globalization and transnationalization are influencing the production and circulation of scientific knowledge. Academics, as public intellectuals, are engaged in scientific networks in which theories travel from one place to another (Said, 1983).

In the field of transnational migration studies, however, the tricky question is about the influence of the researchers and theorists themselves, the scholars who are engaged in scientific knowledge production processes. What is the role of the researcher in a research process that investigates emerging transnational social spaces? A look at the research done so far indicates that the majority of the researchers active in this field have their own biases, which is to say that they have their own experiences of migration. However, in most cases this implicit knowledge is not openly articulated and methodologically integrated. We argue that this implicit knowledge needs to come under scrutiny. This is especially important in the field of migration studies, where the researcher’s own biographical entanglements with migration play a central role both in relation to the story of the origins of the re-

search topic and in access to and construction of the research field, the analysis of data, and the resulting transnational production of scientific knowledge. However, it is not the migration experience, but a methodologically controlled reflection of the researcher's own experiences and their influence on the development of the research process that prove to be a resource for carrying out the research. This means that the constitution of the research design needs to be explicit about the meaning of the researcher's experiences as part of the construction of the research field.

However, the researcher's personal involvement with the topic is seldom made explicit and visible. The question "why do I do what I do" (Langer, 2009), and how this is linked with transnational knowledge production (see Bender et al., 2013; Köngeter, 2012) remains invisible both in classical and in transnational migration theory; it is, however, reflected in neighbouring disciplinary discourses, for example in interdisciplinary gender studies, cultural anthropology and post-colonial approaches. The aspects of reflexivity and knowledge production have been discussed in greater depth in feminist standpoint theories (Harding, 1993; Hartstock, 1983) and in the ethnographical research tradition in relation to the topic of the researcher's positionality, a development that has been influenced by the "writing culture" debate in cultural anthropology (Clifford/Marcus, 1986).

Recently in transnational studies, the relationship between the researcher and the re-searched has been discussed as boundary (re)-drawing in the context of multiple and changing positionalities and power relations in transnational research fields (see Shinozaki, 2012). However, the crucial question is about the influence of the researcher's own biographical experiences on the research and knowledge production processes.

One would assume that biographical migration research is likely to involve explicit reflection on the personal involvement of the researcher, but this is seldom the case. It can be argued that there is a certain paradox in the biographical research that has been done so far. Even though the biographical approach initiates a process of biographical reflection on the part of the biographer or the person who tells his or her life story, the question of what happens with the researcher during the research process is rarely explicit. It seems as if there is an invisible resistance to the articulation or non-articulation of the researcher's own biographical entanglements with the research topics. There is no doubt that this has to do with the historical continuity of the traditional idea of „proper,, scientific knowledge production as objective, and the problematization of research subjectivity in a research process. In her critique of the concept of scientific objectivity, Haraway (1988: 581) calls this kind of understanding of objectivity "a god's trick" that means "seeing everything from no-where." Instead of defending the illusion of objective knowledge and knowledge production that is not influenced by the researcher him/herself, Haraway argues that we should always consider knowledge claims as contextualized and thus situated. As Haraway argues (1988: 583), "[f]eminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subjects and objects. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see." If we follow Haraway and understand knowledge production as situated, the question is how this notion should be reflected in the use of biographical research methodologies and methods. And what does it mean to talk about the importance of subjectivity in knowledge production?

We suggest that the question of subjectivity of/in research methods, as well as that of intersubjectivity in a research process, need to be reconsidered not only in relation to trans-national migration studies but also in biographical and general social science research. As Shields and Dervin argue (1993: 67), "we bring to our research our own cultural experiences of race, age, ethnicity, gender, and economic

status. Instead of striving toward some unattainable objectivity, we need to investigate what role our own subjectivities bring to our research strategies and results." Therefore, the methodological debate in transnational migration studies needs to reflect upon the researcher's subjectivity as a part of the construction of the research field. The question is how the researcher's biography influences the transnational research process.

We argue that the methodological tool of „biographical reflexivity“ opens up a way to reflect on the meaning of one's own involvement in a research process. We rely here on the theoretical concept of „biographicity“, which refers to individuals' reflexive capabilities in coming to terms with the social world (Alheit, 1995). Furthermore, we consider reflexivity in the sense of „scientific reflexivity“ (Bourdieu, 1993: 366), which sees reflexivity as a way to develop further the means of knowledge production. However, we argue that the idea of scientific reflexivity needs to be reconceptualized so that it explicitly includes the notion of „biographical reflexivity.“ This means that reflections on of the researcher's own experiences and involvement become a methodological part of the research process. The question is, however, how and at what phase of a qualitative research process should the reflection on embodied experiences take place.

Reflecting on the researcher's own involvement can be done by formulating sensitizing concepts out of one's own embodied biographical experiences. Sensitizing concepts enable researchers to see, organize and understand experience and deepen perception as points of departure for further research (Charmaz, 2003). These function as heuristic devices, and can be productively included and capitalized on in an abductive theory-building and research process. In this way, the reflection on one's biographical experience becomes part of an interactive research process in which embodied biographical knowledge is brought into dialogue with a multivocality of theories. But how can this reflection be implemented as part of research practice?

5. 'Doing Biographical Reflexivity' in Research Practice

As Dausien (2007) has pointed out, reflexivity should be considered as a methodological tool in both research and teaching settings. In our research and teaching experience during the last decade, we have realized that university students who decide to investigate migration phenomena in their dissertation theses have a tendency to make visible their own experiences with the topic of migration (see also Inowlocki/Herrera Vivar/Herrschaft, 2004). Those students who have a migration background complement theoretical discussions about migration phenomena with their own experiences. This shows how students with a migration background start to reflect biographically on their own and their family's experiences of migration and living as a member of a minority group in German society. The need to speak up seems to emerge out of the need to challenge dominant and often stigmatizing discourses and negative perceptions about migrants and to open up new ways of thinking about these issues. The question is, however, how migration experiences influence the research done and the research perspective that is adopted. We would like to clarify this with the help of the following case study taken from our experience in our research group on biographical and migration research (Forschungswerkstatt).

5.1 Researching Transnational Religious Fundamentalism

The field of transnational religious fundamentalism research is closely intertwined with stigmatizing and racist political discourses. This poses a challenge for researchers who want to gain access to this field and to investigate the social phenomenon of religious fundamentalism from a biographical per-

spective. With the help of the following example, we would like to introduce a question scheme that we have developed in order to reflect methodologically the researcher's own biographical entanglements with the topic.

We got to know Sami Masaad, as we call him with a pseudonym, when he started work on his research project on religious fundamentalism in transnational contexts. He grew up in a transnational migrant family and his biography is characterized by commuting migration. He lived in a transnational social environment where he became sensitized to the question of religious fundamentalism. This motivated him to start a research project on this topic from a biographical perspective. His access to the social field was facilitated by his transnational social networks, migration background, gender, religious affiliation and language skills, which enabled him to investigate a transnational field that is very difficult to access. At the beginning of the research project these biographical entanglements functioned as a resource that gave him an advantage. Further in the research process, however, this closeness became troubling and he had difficulty continuing his research. He disappeared for months, and none of us heard anything from him. After a couple of months he suddenly appeared in our research group meeting and told us about the problems he had encountered in working on his empirical material. At a certain point Sami felt unable to find the distance needed for the interpretation and categorization of the biographical narrative interviews he had collected. His closeness to the field had led him to a situation in which he tried to understand the social field of religious fundamentalism from a perspective that reproduced stigmatizing public discourses. The case of Sami Masaad can be seen as an example of how a researcher's own biographical entanglements, and in this case migration experiences, should not automatically be considered as a resource in transnational research settings. Instead, it is necessary to reflect methodologically a researcher's own positionality and biographical experiences and their influence on the development of the research process.

Sami's case is one example among a number of similar cases we have encountered in our research and teaching. As a consequence, we have started to ask how to find a way to deal methodologically with one's own biographical experience in a research process. As a result of this reflection, we have developed the following scheme in order to reflect on these biographical entanglements and make them productive in the research process. Our methodological notes and the tool of „doing biographical reflexivity“ are grounded in our own research projects about transmigration processes in the European context. We both have a so-called „migration background“ (Migrationshintergrund) and were forced to reflect methodologically our own biographical entanglements with migration while researching transnational social fields (see Ruokonen-Engler, 2012a; Siouti, 2013).

5.2 Biographical Reflection Scheme

1. What personal experiences do I have with migration?
2. How did I come to study the specific topic in the field of migration?
3. What is my relationship to the topic being investigated?
4. How did I gain access to the field?
5. How does my own position (age, gender, class, economic status etc.) influence interactions in the field and the data collection process?
6. What is my interpretation perspective?

These questions induce a biographical reflection process that leads to a heuristic moment of epistemo-

logical significance. In Sami Masaad's case, the discussion of his research problems in the transcultural research group led to a process of biographical reflection that enabled him to become aware of the meaning of his own biographical migration experience and his social positioning and its influence on the research process. In that social context, he realized that the public and political discourse he was engaged in differed from his experiences of and perceptions about the emergence of religious affiliations. It became obvious that it was important to make this visible and to show how the research and the interpretation process were intertwined with his own biographical experiences and expectations. The biographical reflection took on a central role in the formulation of sensitizing concepts and abductive theory-building in his research process.

As a consequence, we argue that the biographical reflection on one's own positionality not only indicates the researcher's own entanglements but also encourages her/him to continue this reflection in all phases of the research process, in a) the development of the re-search question, b) the research field construction and research fieldwork, c) the biographical-narrative interviews, d) the reconstructive biographical analysis, and e) the research writing process. The biographical reflection process should be written down field notes that are systematically included in the research interpretation process (on this point, see Glaser/Corbin, 1990). Even though these different research phases are presented here separately, they are intertwined in an abductive research and theory building process.

The individual reflection process, however, should be fostered by collective group discussions that take place in formal collegial research group sessions (Forschungswerkstatt). The collective endeavour supports the individual's biographical reflection process, which in turn profits greatly from the diversity of the research group members. Working in a group of multilingual researchers with migration experiences and interdisciplinary backgrounds forces everyone involved to reflect on their own positionality and entanglements. This demands reflections on conscious as well as unconscious theoretical assumptions, competing knowledge claims, power relations and hierarchies in (trans)national research settings. Both the individual and the collective biographical reflection have a methodological meaning for the further development of the research process. These facilitate the generation of sensitizing research concepts that can be seen as a starting point for the more grounded reflection of the implicit and explicit limits of the theories, concepts and methods that are framed by „methodological nationalism“ (Wimmer/Glick Schiller, 2002, 2003).

6. Concluding Remarks

In our paper we have underlined the need to include the analytical concept of „biographical reflexivity“ as a theoretical and methodological tool in transnational research settings. We argue that biography methodology needs to integrate systematically the principle of „bio-graphical reflexivity“ in transnational research contexts, in order to overcome methodological nationalism (Wimmer/Glick Schiller, 2002, 2003). The investigation of transnational social phenomena that transgress nation-state borders requires not only mobility but also „biographical reflexivity“ on the part of the researcher. In order to understand how places and people are intertwined in different ways across nation-state borders and how transnational life worlds emerge, it is important to follow the routes and reconstruct the signs of mobility and emerging social spaces. This means that the subjectivity of the researcher needs to be taken seriously, as do reflections on subjectivity as an analytical part of the research process. In order to implement these principles in research practice in transnational biography research settings, we developed a narration scheme for „doing biographical reflexivity.“ By following the biographical reflection scheme, the researcher can widen her/his research perspectives and can analytically reflect on

her/his biographical experiences and positionality in the research process. To conclude, we argue that the methodologically controlled biographical reflection on the researcher's experiences and her/his personal entanglements with the research topic should be seen as a meaningful part of the constitution of transnational research settings. Both the researcher's scientific skills, and the biographical reflection on her/his biographical knowledge contribute to the constitution of the transnational research field. The central question therefore becomes that of how a researcher can transform biographical knowledge into scientific functioning. We argue that this is only possible with the help of methodologically controlled biographical reflection that acknowledges the sociological significance of one's own personal experiences in the re-search process. With the help of the methodological concept of „biographical reflexivity,“ it is possible to make visible the implicit, embodied biographical knowledge that is often a more or less unconscious part of a qualitative research process. Even though we have discussed biographical reflection and the articulation of the researcher's own entanglements with the research topic in a particular context, we would like to suggest that they should be seen as a central part of academic research practice and ethical reasoning not only in the field of transnational migration studies but also in qualitative social research in general. Acknowledging the situated nature of transnational knowledge production makes it possible to reflect on the biographical groundings of sociological imagination and question its ethical, emancipatory and critical inputs.

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CONFERENCE REPORT

ESA 11th Conference: Crisis, Critique and Change¹⁰

28 – 31 August 2013, Torino/ Italy

The 11th ESA Conference: *Crisis, Critique and Change* focused on the causes and effects of crisis in a very broad sense. The CfP called for contributions 'both on the political agenda, and on individuals' and family lives' (<http://www.esa11thconference.eu>). Most sessions dealt with the interdependency of crisis, critique and change in different geographical, political, social and historical contexts. The local organisation team paid special attention to the consequences of all kinds of crisis. They offered less expensive accommodation for researchers from countries 'affected by the financial crisis', they ordered catering from a social project and distributed re-usable water bottles to be re-filled in order to protect the environment. The interdependency of social sciences, policy, political and everyday action in times of crisis was a recurring topic during different plenary and semi-plenary sessions at the conference.

The report focuses mainly on the contributions of the Research Network 03- *Biographical Perspectives on European Societies* (RN03) as the conference hosted more than 2000 papers. Yet, it was a very nice venue for organising such a huge event as it had an attractive patio where people could meet and talk during breaks.

The RN03 hosted 9 sessions, in which 38 papers were presented. The *Author meets Critics*-session at mid-day on Thursday 29 August was well attended and chaired by Maggie O'Neill. The authors Kaja Kaźmierska (Łódź) and Robert Miller (Belfast) presented key arguments and features of the book "The Evolution of European Identities: Biographical Approaches". The publication is the result of an international research project on European identities, in which many members of the RN03 were involved. The research results are based on the analysis of in-depth interviews by biographical researchers throughout Europe and offer a unique 'bottom-up' perspective on the development (or its lack) of a sense of 'European mental space'. The latter concept was discussed lively during the session. Discussant was Wolfram Fischer (Kassel) who made clear that the book would not offer a definition of 'European identity' but show a deep insight into the strength of the biographical approach to the topic.

European identity was also dealt with during two other sessions of the research network dealing with *Biographical Perspectives on European Societies* and *European Identities*. The questions concerned the building of identities in times of crisis and their biographical impact.

One session was organised in collaboration with RN07 – *Sociology of Culture* and dealt with *Biographical Approaches to the Study of Culture*, focussing not only on (auto)biography and culture but also on the entanglement of doing art and doing research. The interdependency of science and other social spheres was also debated in other sessions.

A very lively discussion evolved from the session on *Biographical methods and their uses in policy and practice*. The members of the RN03 agreed unanimously that the differences between theory – practice – methodology and their mutuality should be discussed further. Therefore the next mid-

¹⁰ The report was originally published in „Newsletter/ Rundbrief 65 der Sektion Biographieforschung in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie“, December 2013.

term meeting to be held at Durham University in the North East of England in 2014, might deal with the topic.

During the business meeting of the RN03 the Chair and Vice-Chair of the network were re-elected for a second term and a current board was also agreed. Growing the network and encouraging early career researchers and PhD students to get involved was put on the agenda of the RN03. In case you are interested, please contact the [ESA homepage](#).

Biographies of Work, Organisations and New Social Movements were presented in a session that hosted mainly junior researchers. They gave insight into interesting empirical work and theoretical generalisations introducing case studies from Poland. The issue of agency and competence was discussed in that session as well as in the session named explicitly *Biographical Competence*. The latter concept was also introduced by Wolfram Fischer in his keynote at RN03 mid-term conference at Łódź 2012 leading to a lively discussion. In Turin the discussion of biographical resources and competences in times of crisis, presented from different European backgrounds, was continued.

Biography, time & memory had attracted so many papers that the session was doubled. Biographical research with its perspective on processes and history offers of course a lot to be debated around the issue of time and memory. The papers presented dealt with collective memories, especially from times of war and crisis, migration and the changing cultures of remembrance in a globalising world.

Another session dealt with *Biographical research on the Mediterranean periphery* and featured mainly studies concerned with the life stories of migrants from this geopolitical region. Many of the papers evoked questions concerning the use of biographical methods in different cultural contexts. Not only did RN03 deal with the questions of globalisation and internationalisation of research. It was a rather recurring topic during the conference. There was, for instance, a mid-day session organised by the RN20 - *Qualitative Methods* and chaired by Gerben Moerman (Amsterdam), in which Uwe Flick (Berlin), Giampietro Gobo (Milan) and Anne Ryen (Agder) discussed the *Internationalisation of Qualitative Research - Perspectives and Challenges*. They talked about the use of qualitative methods that were usually developed in one cultural context in other settings. There was a lively discussion about colonialism, the lack of attention by Western scholars for the work of Asian or African colleagues, and the ethnographic methodology in general. This is an interesting issue to be hopefully followed up in further conferences and workshops.

Another vivid discussion evolved around the demands and opportunities of archiving qualitative data in the RN20 session *Archiving and Using Archived Qualitative Data: Dilemmas or Possibilities?* The different papers showed different perspectives, both pros and cons. But it became clear, especially from the reference by Aileen O'Carroll (Maynooth) to the Boston College Case¹¹, that protecting sensible data should be the most important goal of qualitative research even if university policies sometimes interfere with this effort. So the interdependencies of policy, practice, and science could be seen in many different cases and examples throughout the conference. For a full description of all the papers presented, please see the updated programme book online:

http://www.esa11thconference.eu/skins/default/static/ESA_2013_Programme_Book_updated.pdf

Ina Alber (Germany), Maggie O'Neill (UK)

¹¹ Concerning the demand of legal forces for access to interview tapes with former IRA members conducted by researchers from Boston College: <http://bostoncollegesubpoena.wordpress.com/category/boston-college-case/>

NEWS

Doctoral Program and Fully Funded PhD Research Grants in Economics, History and Civilization, Law and Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute's (EUI), Florence, Italy

The EUI is a unique academic institution with one of the world's largest doctoral and postdoctoral programmes in the social sciences. Our intellectual community comprises of more than 1000 scholars from over 60 countries. The EUI offers a structured doctoral programme with excellent supervision and opportunities to participate in cutting-edge research that transcends national academic traditions.

The EUI is proud of bringing together top academics from all over the world in an international research and teaching environment to train the next generation of scholars and provide them with the theoretical and applied skills needed for successful careers in leading universities, research-oriented organisations, international organisations and government agencies. Grants for doctoral candidates are available.

The deadline for applications for the academic year 2014/2015 is 31 January 2014. Information <http://www.eui.eu/ProgrammesAndFellowships/Index.aspx>

Scholars to Conduct Field Research in Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates

The Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research is pleased to accept proposals from visiting Doctoral and faculty scholars from a wide range of disciplines and professional fields are invited to apply, and proposals should address issues related to the Foundation's research priority areas: Education - Public Health (social dimensions) - Urban & Community Development

The next deadline for Doctoral, Faculty, and Seed Grant submissions is 1 March 2014. Eligibility criteria and grant inclusions vary based on the specific program. In addition, the Al Qasimi Foundation has a limited number of internships annually available for students in undergraduate and master's programs.

Additional details can be found by visiting the Al Qasimi Foundation's website. Specific inquiries can also be sent to info@alqasimifoundation.rak.ae.

Liwa Journal Invitation for Articles on UAE and Arabian Gulf

Liwa, the refereed bi-annual (June and December) historical journal of the National Center for Documentation & Research (NCDR), invites the submission of scholarly articles and book reviews in English and Arabic on archaeology, history, heritage and oral history of the UAE in particular and the Arabian Gulf region in general.

Articles in English should be unpublished original research studies based on authentic source materials. Manuscripts must not exceed 7,000 words including captioned illustrations, references, maps, tables and appendices and should include an abstract on the front page. For more information, write to Nouf Salem Al Junaibi at liwa@ncdr.ae or visit their website at www.ncdr.ae.

ISA-NEWS



Information from Michael Burawoy, President of the ISA

1) Results of the vote concerning the redistribution of the responsibilities for the Program

The ISA Secretariat has reported the result of the vote concerning the restructuring of the ISA that involves the redistribution of the responsibilities for the Program of the World Congress.

The vote was as follows:

- Votes cast: 85
- (out of a possible 109 – 55 Research Committees and
- 54 National Associations in good standing)
- Votes for: 72
- Votes against: 6
- Abstentions: 7

According to the statutes the proposal passes if: "if a quorum of at least one half of the members in good standing have voted and if a simple majority of the voters is in favour" (Statutes 7.5(c)). So the proposed amendments to the Statutes passes. That means in the elections to the next Executive Committee for the term 2014-2018 there will be no Vice-President for Program. Details of the changes can be found at <http://www.isa-sociology.org/restructuring-of-the-isa/>

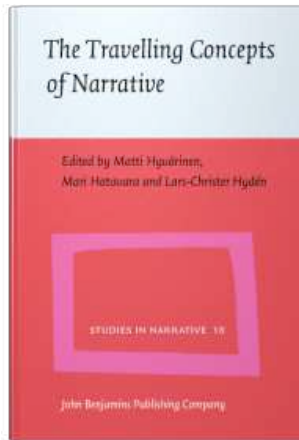
The vote concludes a lengthy process of discussion first in the ISA Executive Committee and then, more broadly, within the ISA, culminating in the electronic ballot.

2) ISA initiatives

a) In an attempt to build a community of young sociologists we have a new site <http://www.isa-sociology.org/abstracts-dissertations/> for posting abstracts of PhD dissertations either in progress or completed in the last 5 years. These can be searched in multiple ways. I urge all junior sociologists to post their abstracts and learn what others are doing in different places. I urge supervisors to encourage their students to submit abstracts. I'm hoping this will be the beginning of an exciting global exchange.

b) The second initiative is a new series of *Journeys through Sociology* – interviews with former Presidents of the ISA about the challenges they faced, what they accomplished and what they wanted to be when they grew up. These can be found at <http://www.isa-sociology.org/journeys-through-sociology/presidential-series.htm>

NEW PUBLICATION



Hatavara, Mari/Hydén, Lars-Christer/Hyvärinen, Matti (eds.) (2013): The Travelling Concepts of Narrative. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, ISBN 9789027226587, EUR 95.00, USD 143.00

Narrative is a pioneer concept in our trans-disciplinary age. For decades, it has been one of the most successful catchwords in literature, history, cultural studies, philosophy, and health studies. While the expansion of narrative studies has led to significant advances across a number of fields, the travels for the concept itself have been a somewhat more complex. Has the concept of narrative passed intact from literature to sociology, from structuralism to therapeutic practice or to the study of everyday storytelling? In this volume, philosophers, psychologists, literary theorists, sociolinguists, and sociologists use methodologically challenging test cases to scrutinize the types, transformations, and trajectories of the concept and theory of narrative. The book powerfully argues that narrative concepts are profoundly relevant in the understanding of life, experience, and literary texts. Nonetheless, it emphasizes the vast contextual differences and contradictions in the use of the concept.

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Concluding reflections

Twists and turns: The circulation of narrative concepts across disciplines and cultures (Andreea Deciu Ritivoi)

Please let us know about changes of

- **your e-mail address**
- **your full mail address**

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The deadline for the next newsletter is end of May 2014

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