

Biography and Society

BIOGRAPHY AND SOCIETY
RESEARCH COMMITTEE 38 OF THE ISA

NEWSLETTER / JUNE 2011

**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT
JUNE 2011**

Dear colleagues,

with this newsletter we can provide you with some little insights into the recently finished EU project on EUROIDENTITIES. This project, coordinated by Robert Miller from the University of Belfast, involved seven teams from Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Poland, Wales and Northern Ireland. I had the honour to be invited as discussant at the final conference of the project in February this year, and was very impressed by the project's results concerning the biographical backgrounds of attachments to or detachments from Europe in altogether seven 'sensitised groups'. From my point of view, the concept of a 'European Mental Space', developed by Fritz Schütze, is particularly inspiring and highly relevant for our scholarly discussions. Even though the participants of the project have been and still are strongly involved in writing the final report as well as in preparing a book publication, Robert Miller, Fritz Schütze, Anja Schröder Wildhagen, Markieta Domecka, Antonella Spanó, Kristel Siilak and their colleagues found some time to offer short summaries of their outcomes for this newsletter – many thanks to them! Their contributions give us a foretaste of the forthcoming full publications from this project which we expect with great curiosity!

For the **next newsletter** we hope to get lots of news on

- projects you are involved in
- interesting call for papers for conferences or publications
- conference reports
- new publications from you, also in your respective native language
- all other news you consider worth sharing within our community.

Thanks to all who have cooperated in renewing memberships and contact details! Irini Siouti kept at it even though she was in the last phase of submitting her PhD. This is done now – congratulations!

For the moment I wish you a good and relaxing summer time

Roswitha Breckner
www.soz.univie.ac.at/roswitha-breckner/
President of the RC Biography & Society

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
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The deadline for the next newsletter is end of October 2011

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Research Committee on Biography and Society RC38

Program (<http://www.isa-sociology.org/buenos-aires-2012/rc/rc.php?n=RC38>)

The **RC 38 programme** at the Second Forum Conference in Buenos Aires is nicely taking shape. We have got twelve interesting and inspiring session proposals which we are about to complete with abstracts.

Please note that the **CALL for PAPERS** will start on **JULY 15 this year**. We will post all sessions on our conference homepage (www.isa-sociology.org/buenos-aires-2012/rc/rc.php?n=RC38) as soon as the titles and contents are fixed, and will circulate the Call also via e-mail.

PAPER FOR DISCUSSION CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE EUROIDENTITIES PROJECT

The Biographical Narrative Method as a Strategy¹

Robert Miller

The Euroidentities project² had its origins in the perception that the bulk of previous empirical work on European identity had been driven by an elitist, ‘top down’, political science perspective that mirrored the approach of eurocentric institutions, most notably the European Union itself, towards encouraging or, depending upon one’s point of view, imposing Europeanization upon reluctant populations. As part of its core strategy, the Euroidentities project employed a minimally-structured mode of data collection – in-depth biographical narrative interviews in order to give its interviewees the maximum possible range to express their lives from their own perspective -- that is, to promote the *agency* of the research subject. Its core method of analysis centres on the biographical narrative approach. Some features that set Euroidentities apart from traditional academic biographical research are its scale – by the end of fieldwork well over two hundred lengthy life story interviews had been collected in seven different nations across Europe – and a strong policy bent as a core feature.³

The biographical narrative method as a strategy

As we well know, the history of biographical life history interviewing as a sociological method of research stretches back at least a century to the *Polish Peasant in Europe and America* and the classic urban sociology of the Chicago School. However, we also know that our method underwent a precipitate decline in the 1930s and was eclipsed in the land of its birth by the rise of American quantitative sociology during the post-World War II period, only reviving in the late 1970s in Europe as part of the qualitative backlash. The method as it is practiced in present-day Europe is strongly influenced by grounded theory, with some of its modern-day progenitors⁴ travelling to North America in the early 1980s to study with Anselm Strauss and then (re)importing techniques into Europe that now have evolved into a set of approaches to collecting and analysing life stories that fall under the general heading of the ‘biographical narrative method’. While there are ‘schools’ of biographical narrative research in Europe⁵, there are distinct features of the approach that have been crucial to Euroidentities’ strategy.

¹ The research leading to this paper has received funding from the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme [FP7/2007-2011] under Grant Agreement No. 213998.

² EUROIDENTITIES: The Evolution of European Identity: Using biographical processes to study the development of European identity’, European Commission Framework 7 collaborative project 213998. www.euroidentities.org

³ Euroidentities is employing a variety of methods to effect significant policy impact. These include: holding both the Interim and Final Conferences in Brussels in order to include policy-makers, their advisors, lobbyists and representatives from civil society organisations with a European interest in the project’s deliberations; generating a number of ‘lay-friendly essays’ and policy briefings (Spanò *et al* 2011; Davis *et al* 2011; Schütze 2011; Draganova *et al* 2011); and, inspired by Abbott’s (2007) ‘lyrical Sociology’, a ‘virtual’ depiction of the project’s results that will be a collection of audio quotes paired with visual photographic images.

⁴ Including prominent members of Euroidentities.

⁵ The substantive differences between which can appear opaque to anyone except the dedicated aficionado.

Crucially for Euroidentities, core features of the biographical narrative method allow a different, 'bottom up', approach to assessing the extent to which a European identity or identities are evolving in Europe.

First, biographical narrative interviews are designed to allow the interviewee maximum leeway in expressing their own life history from their own perspective. This was effected in the Euroidentities project by a non-directive approach to conducting interviews. An interview began with a single 'eliciting question' in which the interviewee was asked to tell the story of their life in whatever manner they wished, emphasizing or speaking about the parts of their life that they desire to cover in whatever chronological or non-chronological order they care to follow. Typically, this led to a lengthy extempore narration. Eventually the interviewee would bring this phase of the interview to an end with a phrase such as: *'Well, that's about it.'* At this point the interview would move to a more 'interrogative phase' in which the interviewer would ask specific follow-up questions. Ideally, these questions initially would relate only to topics or issues that respondents had brought up themselves during the first part of the interview. Finally, sometimes there would be a last phase of the interview that consisted of the interviewer probing more directly by asking about topics that had not been raised up to that point in the course of the interview.⁶ This mode of interviewing is designed to elicit and maintain the *gestalt*, or spirit, of the interview for as long as possible. The researchers cede maximum control of the interview to the interviewee, only gradually imposing their perspective during the latter stages of the interview, and then only reluctantly.

Second, the subject of the interviews – the interviewees' own lives – lends itself to the core topic of the Euroidentities project – the *evolution* of a European identity or identities across time. The alternative, a qualitative longitudinal study that would trace changes in identity of a sample of people over their lifetimes or at least some decades, was not feasible; asking people to tell their life stories retrospectively was the best practical option available. Arguably, a biographical interview has the capacity to reveal, albeit imperfectly, the psychological processes and transformations that a person has gone through during their life to arrive at their current sense of self and identity. Being given licence to tell someone, usually a total stranger, the story of your life in any way that you wish without any constraints on the time this may take or on the length that you can dwell on any given facet of your life, with all this taking place in a context in which you have been led to believe that no judgement ever will be made about you choose to reveal, is a unique experience that does not have a parallel in everyday life. In many cases interviewees relate parts of their lives that they have never revealed before. Remarks during interviews such as *'I haven't thought about that for years'* are not uncommon. I would argue further from my own personal interviewing experience that in at least some cases the interviewee may journey back to a previous view they held of the world and, rather than the standard constructionist standpoint that the reality of the interview is one being built up in a hermeneutic interaction between researcher and subject, that the interviewee in fact does (re)experience a previous psy-

⁶ I am presenting a somewhat idealized account. Not all interviews corresponded to this exact format; for instance some interviewees were uncomfortable with the passive role taken by the interviewer and would elicit more involvement from him/her by direct questions that demanded a response, such as *'What would you have done?'* In many cases the rapport and interest generated during interviews meant that they became more like a conversation with the interviewer being drawn into taking on a more engaged role rather than acting solely as a passive audience. Also, each of the seven national teams (and probably different interviewers within the teams) did have somewhat varying styles of interviewing (though my impression as overall coordinator of the project was that these grew together over time, particularly after the initial workshops when we worked together jointly to analyse transcripts from the first interviews).

chological state of consciousness and communicates this to the interviewer. In any case, there is no doubt that the Euroidentities project did succeed in eliciting many lengthy and reflective accounts of lives.

An instrumental digression – ‘sensitized groups’

At the same time, we were aware from pretest interviews that took place before the project began that simply asking a random sample of people to relate their life stories would elicit very little, if any, spontaneous material of relevance to the study of a possible developing sense or senses of being a European. This led to the decision to target a number of ‘sensitized groups’ – aggregates of persons whose life experiences could be anticipated to have caused them to reflect upon their situation of living within the continent of Europe and perhaps to be challenged or changed by these experiences. After some considerable debate, the project chose five ‘sensitized groups’:

- *the Educationally mobile* – People who have had significant experience of study abroad (e.g., as Erasmus exchange students), but interviewed *later* in their lives. Has the cross-national educational experience when they were young had a permanent effect or had it been just a transitory encounter with another society?
- *Transnational workers* – People who have worked or are working abroad for a significant portion of their lives. Here, both instrumental considerations such as coping with different regulatory systems, border controls as well as the encounter with a different culture (including often the imperative to learn a new language) could be relevant. Both ‘high end’ technologically-qualified workers or professionals and ‘low end’ menial workers were interviewed.
- *Farmers* – Farming takes place within a structure of European-wide regulations, subsidies and markets that could be expected to cause farmers, even though they remain located in one place, to think about themselves in a European context.
- *Cultural contacts* – Originally this aggregate was to have focussed upon particular types of transnational workers – those engaged in cultural work and contacts, both in terms of High Culture (e.g., musicians) and ‘low culture’ (e.g., Eurovision or tourism). In the end, this work package concentrated on producers of cross-cultural educational material.
- *Civil society organizations* – Civil society organizations (defined by the project as not-for-profit, non-commercial and in pursuit of a common purpose for the public interest) are an important feature of public life within Europe. The project concentrated on workers within two types of civil society organizations: environmental groups since a core tenet of the ‘green movement’ is that environmental problems transcend borders; cross-border peace and reconciliation groups.

In effect, the decision to target sensitized groups and the actual categories chosen were calculated risks. We could not know for sure that we would elicit relevant material until the first interviews began to take place. Fortunately, it is a gamble that paid off. While few of the interviewees’ life stories have ‘European identity’ as a core theme, Europe as a social field of endeavour and orientations to Europe and European institutions, cultures and issues feature prominently both explicitly and implicitly in the interviews.⁷

⁷Admittedly, the ethical requirements of needing to explain to a potential interviewee the background of the project, why they have been chosen to be approached for an interview and the uses to which their interview material might be put etc., to say nothing of the actual name of the project – *Euroidentities* -- meant that interviewees were well aware of the topic of the research. Many interviewees clearly did attempt to tailor the relation of their life story towards what they knew was the project’s focus.

Preliminary analyses of the interviews led us to decide to generate two additional 'sensitized group' categories from within the body of interview transcripts that had been collected:

- *External to Europe* – During the first main analysis workshop of the project as a whole, we realized that we were in danger of falling into the trap of seeing 'Europe' in a stereotypical way; to put it bluntly, 'white' and 'Christian'. By bringing together interviews scattered across the original 'sensitized group' categories and also carrying out some additional interviews, we created a new category of persons who either had originated from outside Europe⁸ or who had been born in Europe but had spent a significant portion of their lives living outside the continent. The former aggregate reported experience of having one's identity as a European being challenged both officially through issues such as citizenship status and visas and unofficially through 'othering' reactions from the 'native' population ranging from mild scepticism about a person who did not fit into a someone else's stereotype of what a 'European' 'should be' through to xenophobic prejudice and racism.
- *Intimate relations* – Another feature that emerged strongly from the first analyses was the significance of cross-border primary relationships; either being the child of parents from two different countries and/or, even more significantly, having experience of a close personal relationship with a person from another country. In either case, people had close exposure to at least one other national culture that, because the exposure comes about as a consequence of one's closest personal involvements, almost inevitably must affect one's core sense of self.

Third, the grounded theory nature of biographical narrative analysis promotes person-centred, 'bottom-up' results. While there were differences across the teams in their approaches to analysing the interviews, each did follow a common grounded theory mode of analysis. Hence, rather than testing some pre-existing models of Europeanization, the results of the project genuinely have grown out of the interviews. The result has been that Euroidentities has generated a plethora of 'meso-level' findings that are specific to each of its sensitized groups unified under an overarching view of a 'European mental space'.⁹

So, in contrast to the all-too-common alternative (one's privileged method being imposed willy-nilly upon a research topic), the method and methodological approach employed by Euroidentities was one strategically chosen as the best possible practical means of studying the potential evolution of a European identity or identities within the constraints of a research project with a limited time span. This 'fit' between research problem and method was understood by the readers and referees of our Framework 7 grant application, which undoubtedly led to our success in securing its funding from the European Commission. The same 'fit' has been the vital core impetus that has informed and driven the project through to its current 'writing-up' phase, so of the results you will see in the 'work in progress' pieces that follow below.

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⁸ Either through migrating to Europe from outside the continent or being the children of intercontinental migrants.

⁹ 'European mental space' is a complex and nuanced concept that is a key finding of the project whose full explication requires careful treatment (see Schütze (2011), Schütze (forthcoming) and Spano *et al* (2011) and the project website, www.euroidentities.org). To put it baldly, while very few persons would consider themselves to be 'Europeans' over their national, regional, local or other non-geographic identities, many, perhaps the majority, of persons living in present-day Europe have psychological fields of reference or orientation that transcend European regional and national boundaries while still being limited within the geographical and institutional boundaries of the continent.

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On biographical experiences of Participants in European Civil Society Organizations

Fritz Schütze, Anja Schröder-Wildhagen

One work package of the Euroidentities Project is on activists of civil society organizations (CSO workers). The German team was in charge of this work package. In the following our sample and a case example will be very briefly described. Then we will present steps of argumentation from our summarizing paper "Discoverers in the European Mental Space – The Biographical Experiences of Participants in European Civil Society Organizations" (Schütze/Schröder-Wildhagen/Nagel, to be published 2012) referring to basic results of our findings.

The definition of this Europe-sensitized group of CSO workers includes members of civil society organizations, who take over tasks of reconciliation and relationship-building in formerly conflicting national groups in Europe. With the initiation of cooperation projects and the establishment of communication platforms that allow for encounters and memorial work, late effects of World War II and especially of the crimes of Nazi Germany that take form, for example, in solidified resentments and mutual cultural alienation, are dealt with. CSO workers in reconciliation organizations promote understanding, for example, between Germans and Poles by organizing and moderating bi- and sometimes tri-national meetings of young people from these countries (a third nation is often invited in order to have third, neutral perspective). Moreover, cooperation and other work projects where young Europeans from other European countries come together are promoted by these reconciliation activists and the reconciliation organizations respectively. In addition, CSO activists in Northern Ireland who deal with reconciliation processes between Protestants and Catholics were interviewed. Also interviews were conducted with CSO workers, who take care of migrants being national and cultural strangers in Europe. Finally, environmental activists of civil society organizations in Europe whose projects transgress national borders were an important sub-group in our sample.

Altogether, we have about twenty cases in this sensitized group of CSO workers. As for the method: after narrative interviewing, we posed narrative questions so that also work experiences of the CSO activists and problems related with CSO work as well as successful CSO work activities would be taken into consideration of our analysis.

It is a characteristic feature of CSO work that it is done by activists with high personal commitment and with strong biographical identification. It is of a kind which one finds with professional workers, too. CSO workers often develop a distinct ability for taking over the perspective of the other (as defined by George Herbert Mead) and, connected with that, an ability to facilitate long-term and coordinated cooperation work on cross-cultural platforms between CSO workers from different European countries. A European orientation of CSO workers develops in experience processes that are essential for the working of international and intercultural encounters. In these learning processes CSO workers become sensitized towards the cultural other in Europe. They learn to understand relevancies of work and action of the European other with regard to socio-historical formation in different national-cultural and also culturally shaped organizational contexts. CSO workers who are sensitized in this way become able to combine different aspects as articulated in the respective perspectives, and learn to be open for mutual learning processes. By doing so, the activists support new European community structures such as transnational project-oriented social arenas. The European dimension of biographical identity of the CSO workers is characterized by a stabilized perspective that transcends one's own national and biographical shaping through European experiences.

In the case of the young environmental activist Miriam from Germany one can see, for example, that this CSO worker already learns in her childhood and early adolescence to deal with cultural foreignness which, later in her life, makes it possible for her to facilitate cooperative transnational project work. When the German border opens in 1989, Miriam – at the age of thirteen – begins to do excursions to new places in the Eastern German neighborhood that were unknown to her before. She begins to realize that perspectives on life (as well as perspectives on environment protection issues) are culturally formed and that different relevancies in these perspectives are legitimate grounds to stand on. At the time of the interview when Miriam participates as a project worker from a German environmental organization in a transnational social arena where activists from the Czech Republic meet with German colleagues, she feels obliged to adhere to the principle of taking the perspective of the (cultural) other. She is almost immune to violate implicit requirements of reciprocity of arena work and thus becomes an important protagonist who builds up and harmonizes an important collaborative European project on the protection of border region nature areas. Moreover, Miriam is sensitized to problem potentials of arena work, for example, the danger of underestimating differences of context conditions of the participators or to overly focus on tenuous topics of historical issues (such as the expulsion of Sudeten Germans).

Now, as for the argumentation steps of our summarizing paper:

1. Most of the activists in civil society organizations like those of reconciliation work, trans-border work, inter-cultural educational work as well as environmental work are educational protagonists of Europe in terms of exploring, shaping, mediating and disseminating a European transnational culture of cooperation.
2. But: they are guided by a typical down-to-earth orientation: they demonstrate that their intercultural work of communicative understanding and cooperation does not need essentialist definitions of Europe.
3. The activists in civil society organizations like those of reconciliation work, trans-border work and intercultural educational work underwent peculiar life courses and a peculiar biographical unfolding that sets conditions for the development of a special sensitivity regarding cultural otherness as well regarding intercultural communication and cooperation. To a certain degree the three different biographical backgrounds represent (a) the generations of the grandparents, who experienced World War II and the eclipse of humanity, (b) the generation of the

- parents, who experienced their more or less total seclusion within the state-socialistic societies or in poverty-stricken and terror-endangered civil war life situations in the two Irelands or in several Balkan areas, and (c) the generation of the grandchildren who have been already born into a lively or even vibrant and, at the same time, institutionally stabilized European culture of transnational communication and cooperation.
4. At least in the third generation the orientation towards Europe is very much inbuilt within the developmental processes of childhood or adolescence of CSO workers. But even in the adolescence of the two older generations one can find the emergence of basic humanistic ideas towards the creativity of experiences of otherness as well as of intercultural communication and cooperation. In all three generations these incipient ideas are partially linked to an imagined enabling-framework of European institutions. Later the orientation towards a humanistic Europe will continually become stronger during the life course of the CSO worker – even before the onset of specific professional CSO work as such. And it will not be incrementally disillusioned during the life course notwithstanding the encounter with maledictic political communications about European bureaucracy in Brussels and with cumbersome bureaucratic European processes of handling students' and practicum exchanges across borders.
 5. CSO workers are professional practitioners of mutual intercultural understanding and of work projects of intercultural cooperation. They are oriented towards a European mental space, and they practically use, enact, shape, activate, broaden and deepen it.
 6. The first generation of CSO workers learns the basic mechanisms of trans-border and intercultural role-taking sensitivity by themselves through their awkward (and often clumsy) biographical work and the biographically connected as well as biographically implicated preliminary encounters with concrete atonement and reconciliation work, border-transgressing work, communication work of taking the perspective of others as well as intercultural networking. The two other generations have the chance of doing that learning on a second, much more developed level in the medium of quasi-ethnographic traveling, by engaging in international voluntary work, by studying abroad, etc. And the latter will be normally very much supported by pertinent learning milieus and learning institutions in European educational frameworks.
 7. Although having been involved in their strenuous cooperative work projects with all its red tape (especially writing the pivotally necessary applications and reports to the Brussels administration), there cannot be witnessed, as one would expect at first glance, that the ongoing unfolding of professional identity of the CSO workers is more and more shaped by a bureaucratic or even cynical mentality not interested in the content of the intercultural work of enhancing understanding and cooperation between nations, minority and majority groups or ethnic-religious groups. Their strengthening of the inner biographical identification with Europe as a mental space for communication, cooperation and joint work is the best empirical proof for the enormous pedagogical impact of European programmes of cross-border and intercultural understanding.
 8. Exactly because CSO workers do not grade up their "being European" by means of higher predicates of a European collective identity, by means of essentialist ascriptions to substantive features of a homogenous European culture as well as by means of contrast sets of "power entities" like EU vs. US, they are able to orientate themselves and their work flexibly and concretely on the levels of supra-national and sub-national cooperative activities. They are "down to earth", since they are able to move within a non-essentialist mental space of orientation, action and cooperation above and below the collectivity frame of the nation.

Cross-cultural intimate relationships

Katrin Paadam, Kristel Siilak, Liis Ojamäe, Anneli Leemet (Estonia)

Antonella Spanò, Pasquale Musella, Elisabetta Perone (Italy)

This work is aimed to discuss the analysis of cross-cultural intimate relationships in Europe based on twenty biographical narratives interviews, conducted mainly in Italy and Estonia, plus contributions deriving from interviews sensitized towards other cross-cultural experiences. The cross-cultural narratives of intimate experiences involve individuals moving from a large variety of European and other origins and in all directions, not only along the traditional migratory axes (i.e. from developing to developed countries), but also from more to less affluent countries. They also allow looking at this experience as at a fundamental biographical change for both the people having actually moved abroad as well as having received a partner from abroad. Either way it is considered that the spatial/geographical arrangements of intimate relationships in Europe, i.e. concerning country of residence and the experience of a shared home (or shared in the past if separated, divorced or widowed) refer to a complicated set of emotional, social, cultural, symbolic and economic issues. The interviewees are forming the following main groups:

- individuals having moved to and living in their partner's country of origin
- individuals having stayed in their country of origin with a partner having moved there from another country
- individuals having started a home and family in their own country and having moved later to the partner's country of origin
- individuals having moved to a 'third' country with both partners as non-natives
- couples of the same origin having moved to another country (additional group)

Biographical experiences of individuals in intercultural intimate relationships allow the understanding of the dynamics of cultural contacts which, by unfolding on everyday conduct of individual lives, bespeak also of the transforming societal scenes of Europe. The enlarging scales of structural opportunities and globally diversifying ways of mobility, on one hand, and individualizing self-reliant strategies, on the other hand, enhance the probability of people from different cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds to meet and engage in bicultural/culturally mixed intimate relationships in modern Europe and (from) beyond. The widespread of multicultural encounters in contemporary societies, which today defines the availability of choice for transnational lifestyles particularly for younger generations, was missing in the practices of older generations. Thanks to the intensified internationalisation of living contexts due to technological advancement, the improved knowledge of languages, the profound political changes (EU enlargement) the intimate behaviour patterns of the young generations from WE and CEE countries are also bearing gradually greater resemblance.

The cross-cultural and transnational interconnectivities deriving from the shared experiences in various fields of human conduct contribute into the constitution of broader mental frames of reference, defined by Schütze as the "European Collective Mental Space of Reference", involving the encounter with the stranger and the strange, allowing to accept the otherness and diversity; or, in Deleuzian terms, it contributes into the continuous becoming of European mentality or yet in many ways differentiated co-existing mentalities.

Concerning the construction of identity within cross-cultural intimate relationships, which bridge over the cultural/national boundaries, this experience has, however, proved to demand a considerable effort from the individuals involved in this type of a relationship, compared to ordinary intimate practices constituted between people of similar origin in familiar places, cultural and societal conditions. Intertwined with collective practices, in fact, this experience entails perceiving, understanding, learning and acting in the transformed conditions of relations, structures, spatial and symbolic points of reference. Therefore the biographical responses to these multiple offers of moving across cultures and the art of managing the subsequent circumstances of individual life prefigure a great challenge to individuals in the experience of trans-nationalisation of intimacy.

Singularity of cross-cultural relationships

The experience of intercultural intimacy is very different from cross-cultural conducts in other fields like education or work, because it allows to take an in-depth perspective of the realities in another culture and society. Especially, individuals in intercultural intimate relationships moving to another country are alone in their new circumstances of life, in a sense that they have no pre-given identity (on the contrary, e.g. an Erasmus student can base his/her conduct on a sort of “script” connected to the role). Their new identity has to be created through the relations with significant other(s), building social capital and validating themselves in all fields. Intercultural intimate relationships, with their ubiquitous nature, make them visible not only in all fields of social life in a particular society, but also make Europe present and interconnected through the daily conduct of private and public lives.

Even if there is no doubt about the significance of cultural exchange mediated through activities like work or study in Europe, conduct across cultures in these fields might remain less visible due to individuals’ temporal presence, limited focus and no direct responsibilities other than defined within a specific field, having thus less resonance widely in the community. And when it happens, as is the case of many of our interviews, that a cross-cultural conduct of a more formal nature leads to an intimate relationship with a partner from another culture, the birth of a stable and long-lasting love relationship with a foreigner poses the question of identity building into a different perspective. Indeed, when an intercultural intimate relationship is reached through a specific other field, once it is established, it tends to profoundly affect biographical action in all fields of individuals’ conduct.

Moreover, the quintessential nature of intimate interactions is that the encountering and/or confronting of different mentalities at crossing cultures takes place in the privacy of a shared home. Home, indeed, represents the primary arena where creative learning, making decisions, establishing the daily routines and, by no means, re-inventing European cultures occur. In this perspective, we can say that home delineates as a sort of connecting agency between individuals and structural contexts in multiple dimensions – professional careers, educational opportunities, child rearing, gender relations – and moreover appears as a key element towards the development of a renewed sense of citizenship for its centrality at intermediating the private and public realms.

Earlier dispositions and motivations for mobility

The experiences of moving across Europe and elsewhere in the world might be a complex consequence of different reasons and motivations formed at a particular phase of individual life. The interview data suggests that it is the complex mix of circumstances, that characterizes each singular life, which inform decision of moving away from home and the motivations of this decision. In our interviews we can observe at least two typical paths, which sometimes are also interwoven: trajectories of

“escaping from troubles” and trajectories of “pursuing new opportunities”. In the first case, moving from one’s own country to another can be seen as a response related to problems experienced in various social spheres encountered during the individual’s growth, such as the family, school, and surrounding social context. With regard to family, we found for instance intra-familial conflicts, sibling rivalry and stories of authoritarian parents. Regarding to school, we have cases of isolation from the dynamics of friendship and love among the other school-mates, for instance because of negative self-perception of the body or because of diversity (e.g., homosexuals growing up in homophobic environments). As for the social context, it has emerged from the research that there are a wide range of reasons why people wish to leave the places where they come from and where they feel ill at ease. In all these circumstances Europe offers ‘rescue’ at a need for an ‘escape’. In particular, we may assert that intercultural European intimate relationships provide a potential opportunity for personal development for especially the individuals who have a long-standing practice of identifying themselves as different in their native cultural relations. Moving to another country enables maintaining different identity, staying different without deviation from the normative cultural expectations, releasing psychological strain from being different due to the acceptance of difference attributed to a stranger.

In the second case - that we have called “pursuing new opportunities” - we refer to people who moved in search of a more suitable self-definition somewhere else: for instance women aspiring to more egalitarian contexts in terms of gender roles or gay people searching for social recognition. It must be said that gender relationships is still today a crucial element in the gap that separates countries where there is a greater institutional commitment to gender equality from those where the patriarchal system (whose primary consequence is the persistence of inequality of opportunity based on gender, and a rigid division of the productive/reproductive roles according to sex) is barely being eroded. So, we could say that in the relationship between gender and mobility an essential role is played by the *social imaginary* regarding gender roles in different countries.

Moreover, we have to take into account that there is also another element which can constitute a mainspring of mobility that is the search for identity, which particularly involves young people. In fact, the time spent abroad can be seen as a sort of “extra time” for learning about oneself and one’s own abilities, desires, projects. Of course, this search for adventure and for identity cannot be limited to the EU Member States, but it is a fact that the EU – thanks to both geographical and cultural nearness among the EU countries, and thanks to institutional programs, such as Erasmus, for example - facilitates an attitude to move and promotes reversible decisions.

Apart from individual’s skills and dispositions, there are other kinds of resources necessary to support mobility which are deeply linked to social stratification. Our research illustrates that the predisposition to mobility is significantly connected to the family of origin and its capitals. Generally, it is the cultural capital to nurture the motivation for internationalization attitude but we have not to forget that also the economic and the social capital are relevant in influencing the quality of the European experience, especially when this involves a move abroad.

In sum, the interviewees’ stories let us know that since the earliest biographical phases, the dispositions which inform, enable or instigate biographical action are constituted to a considerable degree in the inter - generational context of home and are advanced in further conduct in other fields. The experience of a cross-cultural intimate relationship may thus be viewed as predisposed with a certain amount of predictability, due to individuals’ dispositions developed prior to this event to happen as well as due to institutional conditions facilitating individuals’ biographies to be bound to Europe.

Being involved in a cross-cultural intimate relationship

Regardless of the type of personal experience in terms of spatial moving, an intercultural relationship *per se* represents moving across cultures. In this perspective, a successfully managed cross-cultural intimate relationship can be seen as a function of adaptation to a strange culture either entered abroad or encountered at home. As shown by our interviewees, this adaptation process has implications on practicalities of everyday life (mediation and negotiation of habits and lifestyles; creation of new “mixed” routines, communication of the emotions in a language that for one of the two is not the mother tongue, commitment to bicultural education when there are children) but more significantly on the development of emotional/psychological and communicative abilities of partners on various levels of interactions. In situations of cross-national intimate relationships, in fact, processes of learning may be observed that are bound to identity transformations in terms of an increasing ability to take on the culturally different perspective of the other. Through different phases of its history, intercultural intimate relationships may be viewed as a continuous event recreated within the communicative process between biographical actions of (re) invention of identities and (re) encountering otherness.

However, it must be pointed out that both learning and adaptation have not to be taken for granted. Acceptance of otherness, in fact, is related to individuals’ capacity and willingness to learn about different cultures and to overcome prejudice based on meaning-constitutive structures present at encountering a stranger. Moreover, cross-cultural unions presuppose mutual support of partners in the exchange of capacities to provide for cognitive (understanding and taking the perspective of the other), instrumental (adaptation to adequate behaviour in the society) and emotional (continuous involvement in supportive partnership to avoid negative experiences) advancement of individuals in a relationship: this means that a special effort in terms of biographical work is required by both the partners. Finally, the experience of our interviewees shows that all movers need support systems provided by communities to enable adaptation; in other words, a good level of tolerance of difference is needed.

Besides, tolerance of difference seems to depend on the nature of difference, the culturally embedded dispositions and traditions and the threats to collective identities perceived as existing in dealing with a stranger. Encounters with strangers - what the intimate cross-cultural relationships are about in increasing circles of relationships from the privacy of the “home” to the public realm - raises the question of “trust”, meant as the whole of the cognitive certainties which constitute essential symbolic frames of reference on the very basic human psycho-emotional level. Changes involved in encountering diversity, and hence the emerging feelings of uncertainties it brings along, often evoke the stereotypical categorizations as the more readily available structures of cognition to cope with the uncertainty. In fact, the research indicates that collective identifications given from outside are easily projected on individuals; this allows viewing collective identities as individuals’ symbolic capital of both positive and negative nature and also gives an idea of how much the adaptation process can be complicated.

Some general remarks

Behind cross-cultural intimate relationship we found not only a response to personal problems and projects but also the diversity among the various European countries with regard to the economic, political, cultural and symbolic structures. In fact, notwithstanding the existence of a shared European mental space of reference, European space appears as relatively diversified in the interviewees’ expe-

riences with regards to the opportunities for the construction of a self-reflexive lifestyle. We could even say that people's moving has as its background the differentiated space of European mentalities - a set of dispositions and actions based on accepted values- and cast light on ways it is experienced. The stories appear especially insightful on how the space of mentalities is managed in terms of its resourcefulness within biographical endeavours and in the realm of intimacy in particular. Resourcefulness may be conceived as various instances of individually perceived favourable social and cultural conditions for self-building, particular mentality supporting biographical aspirations of individuals, symbolic structures warranting a desired quality of life.

Whatever the reasons for embarking on a cross-cultural intimate relationship, it always implies a learning process, focussed on the ability of take the perspective of the other, which always initiate a great biographical work and often leads to profound transformation of identity. Though learning process is addressed to adaptation (in the two-way meaning of accepting others and being accepted from others), and often leads to both mediation and integration of differences – so contributing to the Europeanization of lifestyle and culture - adaptation is not a granted result. In fact, identification processes occurring in cross-national intimate relationships, and especially the capacity of collectively creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding and acceptance, are strongly connected firstly with the biographical work people are able to do on the difficulties, the misunderstanding, the stereotypical over-generalizations; secondly, with the concrete opportunities offered by the context; finally, with the symbolic structure which makes tolerance of diversity more or less likely.

We have also to consider that being involved in a cross-cultural relationship, as for all the situations of moving abroad, always implies biographical costs that can be of different nature: from the emotional costs connected with separation, adaptation and loosening of emotional bonds, to the professional costs, where it is discovered that the opportunities at home country have been lost and those abroad are not very promising.

Finally, we have to mention the additional work that the cross-cultural families are called to carry on. In these kind of families, in fact, even the actions that usually are so habitual as to be automatic (what to eat, what language to speak) require reflection and intentionality in order to provide a bicultural education. From this point of view we can say that the study of cross-cultural intimate relationships not only informs about the nature and evolvement of these relationships but potentially also indicates in what areas the European societies could intervene in order to offer opportunities for individual advancement in these culturally mixed circumstances. Policies aimed to the preservation of the rich European heritage, e. g. in the educational systems enabling acquiring, advancing and maintaining knowledge on languages, to give identities a chance also in intergenerational transfer as well as on history, to fend for acceptance and tolerance and trust over the stereotypical images of collective identities still vital in modern Europe; policies addressed to gender equality; policies in the area of residential/housing enabling creating homes: all they could be useful tools to enable the European differences to be transformed into a creative catalyst for the development of its cultures.

European belonging as a biographical task in the process of physical and mental movements in and out of Europe¹⁰

Markieta Domecka

At the start of the Euroidentities project we asked the question to which extent ordinary¹¹ people would identify with Europe or in other words, what role would Europe play in the unfolding of their biographies. In the project we used the method of autobiographical narrative interviews [Schütze, 1992; 2005 (1984); 2008]. Initially we focused on five 'sensitized groups' of people who have been more exposed to different 'European experiences': (1) 'educationally mobile' people who participated in the Erasmus programme, language exchange programmes, etc.; (2) 'transnational workers', previously or currently working in a country other than that of their origin; (3) individuals who were involved with civil society organisations, with a special focus on environmental and peace and reconciliation organisations; (4) farmers, who are subject to Europe-wide markets and European Union systems of regulation and subsidy; (5) individuals involved in cultural contacts across European borders. After conducting and analysing first interviews, a new sensitized group of cross-cultural intimate relationships was added and later, during further data collection and analysis, we realized that we needed to extend the scope of our research to two more categories previously not taken into account, namely: (1) people living in Europe whose origins lie outside the continent and (2) people who were born and raised in Europe and who have lived a significant portion of their lives in other continents. Both categories also include transnationals, people having the experience of living in many European and non-European countries, where they maintain their networks of family, friends, colleagues and business partners. A number of persons interviewed for the original sensitized groups (CSO activists, transnational workers, educationally mobile and others) fall into these categories. At the time of the interview these informants lived in different European countries (Estonia, Poland, Germany, Ireland and the United Kingdom) and had experiences of living in East and South Asia, Southern Africa, North and Latin America and New Zealand.

This paper is focused on the narratives of people, moving in and out of Europe, physically and mentally. Analysing the autobiographical narrative interviews conducted with them we realised how problematic, on the one hand, and how biographically important, on the other, European belonging is.

At the start we thought about the individuals born and raised on other continents as 'external to Europe' but in the course of analysis we understood that the distinction on 'internal' and 'external' is highly problematic. The sensation of familiarity our interviewees experienced coming to Europe from Latin America, South Africa and other places, was comparable to the experience of homecoming (Schutz: 1945). Comparing the architecture, fashion, products available in the shops and interactions in the streets they have a feeling they have always lived in Europe but Europe transported to other continents. On the other hand, we realised that some of our interviewees born, raised and living in Europe and therefore being 'European' by definition so to speak, view Europe as an external entity. For them Europe is somewhere else. By the people living on islands it can be identified with continental Europe or with European institutions. A few of our informants throughout their lives have made conscious

¹⁰ The paper is the result of collective work done during analytical workshops, meetings and conferences organized within the Euroidentities project. It was developed together with my Belfast team: Robert Miller, Dirk Schubotz and Maruška Svašek.

¹¹ By 'ordinary' we mean 'non-elite' people; in the Euroidentities we have adopted a 'bottom up' perspective, focusing on the formation and change of European identities from the point of view of the everyday citizens.

effort aimed at distancing themselves from Europe or some of the aspects of political, economical and cultural life they associated with Europe.

Due to different reasons, European belonging turned out to be problematic for many of our interviewees; problematic to the extent it had to be dealt with reflexively. European belonging and non-belonging became a biographical task, which had to be addressed and coped with through biographical work. Moving in and out of Europe changes perspective; it raises questions and encourages reflection on one's belonging but at the same time, it brings new ambiguities.

The narratives of individuals coming to Europe from other continents have demonstrated that on the one hand, they have a great desire to belong, accompanied by certain identity claims and the effort made in order to 'fit in', and on the other hand, they experience the resistance of European societies and policy makers to treat individuals coming from 'outside' as fellow European citizens deserving equal treatment. Arriving to Europe itself is accompanied by contradictory feelings. Many of our interviewees had a sensation they were at the same time 'homecomers' and 'strangers' (Schütz: 1945; Schütz: 1945). Europe is biographically significant to them. It is the entity they feel a part of and want to belong to. Europe is the symbolic universe, idealised and criticised, and it is a concrete point in space, easily recognisable on the surface and strangely distant when explored more in depth.

Living previously in the parts of the world marked by the colonial legacy, our interviewees had multiple experiences with Europe even prior to their arrival on the European continent. They would go to 'European' schools, learning one of the European languages, usually different from their mother tongues, have contact with European popular culture and maintain connections with relatives and friends already living in Europe. Those transnational links via family, religious communities and other organizations played then an important role in facilitating the process of transition to Europe. In some cases, through holidays and regular visits of family members living in different parts of Europe, experienced from early childhood on, Europe became easily incorporated into one's life world. Therefore, upon the arrival in Europe, many of our interviewees had a strong feeling of familiarity. Two of our informants, Adriano, coming from Argentina and at the time of the interview living in Estonia, and Andrew, originally from South Africa and now based in the UK, express particularly vividly their first experiences after arriving in Europe with their mixed sensations of familiarity and strangeness. Adriano recollecting his first visit to Barcelona reconstructs the feeling of familiarity he experienced: "I felt it so mine, it was so familiar, as if I had been living there for my whole life". A similar sensation he also had in Rome: "it was just like Buenos Aires with some Roman monuments and ruins, but the same shouting, same people greeting each other on the street, the same ice cream parlours, the same stuff". The familiarity with Europe, comparable to the experience of homecoming (Schütz: 1945) is described as 'a strange sensation'; it is surprising and overwhelming. There are feelings of familiarity, engagement, belonging and appropriation. Later on, however, as Andrew's story showed us, this 'weird' feeling of familiarity is replaced by the conscious or semi-conscious effort to familiarize in order to maintain the sense of belonging and a final conclusion that European belonging is very problematic, comparable to the experience of a "bastard son".

Already at the very beginning of the interview Andrew identified himself as South African and as a 'descendant of Europeans'. Saying that he describes his roots going back to his grandparents and great-grandparents, who were mainly of Greek origin on the one hand, and English and German, on the other. By doing it he deals with the ambiguities of his belonging but also reconstructs the hierarchies existing in South Africa, with different social strata parallel to different degrees of Europeaness.

Those coming from the south of Europe were viewed as “lower Europeans” and therefore would be discriminated; not to the same degree, however, as the native inhabitants. The picture reconstructed by Andrew is also an excellent example of ‘Europe existing out of Europe’, with its hierarchies, racial prejudices and ‘colonial mess’.

The picture of Europe as a historical sphere of influence stretching far beyond the boundaries of the continent is the immediate outcome of our analysis. The colonial legacy is strongly imprinted in the childhood narratives especially of those of our interviewees who belonged to unprivileged classes of the indigenous population. The presence of white men in their home countries is associated with physical and symbolic violence. In the childhood narrative of Luke, a Zimbabwean artist living in the UK, white people are portrayed as cruel soldiers searching for partisans, and as teachers and students in a boarding school, where only English language was allowed. Through all those experiences Luke developed an active and inventive strategy of dealing with ‘the other’. He is pragmatic about his multiple identities and he can use them strategically, depending on the actual context of action. Speaking Zulu, English and Gaelic, being married to an Irish woman and living in the UK, Luke has many potential identities at his disposal. Dealing with the ambiguities in relation to his European belonging Luke says that being European is ‘more than about pigment: it’s about a state of mind (p. 31: 45-46). He continues: ‘I made a conscious decision through my experiences that I belong to this place.’ (p. 32: 7-8), ‘I am as European as the next European’ (p. 31: 36). Such explicit identity statements are very rare among our interviewees. In case of Luke, they are the reaction of a person whose identity and the right to belong are constantly challenged. Due to his skin colour and origin, in various interactive situations Luke’s belonging to Europe gets questioned. This is a biographical problem and the way Luke decides to deal with it is the strategy of strengthening his own and his children self-confidence as well as strengthening the attributes of his identity choices. Some other strategies are being tried out as well, like the one of appropriation of ‘European culture’, according to one’s understanding of it, as it is believed, it could safeguard one’s right to belong. This strategy would consist of learning languages, even as narrowly spread as Gaelic, taking up certain life style, including eating and dressing habits, and cultivating relationships at the work places and local communities. Some individuals try to win their right to belong through active involvement in civil society organisations and in many other ways only to see that their Europeaness can be questioned any time. The first and most common reason for challenging one’s right to belong to Europe is the skin colour. We have numerous narratives of people of non-white origin being verbally abused and questioned. Even after taking a conscious decision to make Europe their home and after living for decades on the continent they may realize that they are still perceived as ‘strangers’ or ‘guests’, who are treated differently than their fellow European citizens.

European belonging remains an issue also for many people born, raised and living in Europe who have developed a view on Europe, which is quite distanced and critical. The biographical analysis demonstrated, however, that this type of view is only one dimension of a much more complex attitude. As the analysis of our interviews demonstrated, on one level Europe may be fiercely criticised for its foreign policies, its all-pervasive red tape and the discrepancies between the discourse and the praxis. On the other level, however, Europe may be treated as a platform for mobilizing activists contesting the decisions taken by the European governing bodies. Some of our interviewees’ life stories have shown that Europe can provide an opportunity for discovering new we-groups (cf. Spanò et al, unpubl.) and by these means for going beyond the local context and local divisions and participating in broader social worlds. Suzanne, an animal rights activist born and raised in Northern Ireland provides a good ex-

ample of this process. Growing up in a divided community, by birth and residence being ascribed to one of the conflicting sides, Suzanne felt out of place. Neither her immediate neighbourhood nor school could provide her with a we-group. Having a working class background and a strong accent, she felt isolated in her middle-class school environment. She also did not see her Republican-Catholic community giving her many options: "it seemed to me growing up that you either become a hoodlum/so you stole cars, you sniffed glue\, you drank... booze on street corners. Or else you joined – an organisation". Trying to go beyond the restricted spectrum of choice provided by her community, Suzanne started searching for an alternative way of living. A chance for new identification appeared together with joining a group of animal rights activists in her home city. Soon she felt it was not enough and together with her friend, she embarked on a journey¹² across Europe, practically and symbolically. Through many adventures and coincidences, they met like-minded people, vegans, animal rights activists, anarchists and squatters. Living in an alternative community Suzanne first becomes an observer and then an active participant in the protests organized against the EU governing bodies. The experience of fighting for the good cause gave Suzanne a feeling of belonging and sharing some goals with a "great bunch of people". Participating in Euro Marches Suzanne experienced a great mobilization of activists coming from different parts of Europe. Going into the streets together, protesting and fighting with the police forces, taking care of the arrested ones, participating in the workshops and discussion groups all this led to a feeling of community, solidarity and togetherness. Interestingly, Europe, highly contested as the political entity, provided Suzanne with the opportunity to participate in a broader social context, discovering the common goals of international or even global importance and by these means giving her the possibilities for new identifications. Europe as a platform for people's mobilization, with the facilitating role played by internet and other media, commonly appears also in the interviews with CSO activists, be it in the field of environmental or human rights protection. European space is frequently used for building networks, which may have at the same time a global range and very tangible local impact.

Different perspectives on Europe together with the questions on European belonging are formed and re-formed processually, simultaneously to people's physical and mental movements in and out of the continent. Multiple and constant interconnections across borders result in numerous attachments, which need to be reflexively and practically negotiated. In the autobiographical narratives Europe becomes thematized usually when it is connected to some unresolved biographical issues, be it the problem of belonging, exclusion, identity, or other. Being caught up in the difficult position of an 'in-between man', which often is a consequence of movements in space and time as well as the result of social misrecognition, one needs broader entities playing a role of a potential source of identification. Europe can play this role. As our analysis has demonstrated, the in-between position, if approached reflexively, can be successfully transformed into resources necessary for mediation work in different European and non-European conflict zones. As a result of biographical work done on the disappointments connected with one's misidentifications Europe may be also thematized as a 'state of mind' potentially open to all having the Jamesian will to believe in Europe as a space for sense-making practices and the source of identification.

¹² The category of 'embarking on a journey' comes from Ulrike Nagel.

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CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENTS – CALL FOR PAPERS

BIOGRAPHIC-NARRATIVE-INTERPRETIVE METHOD (BNIM)

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.

You will be expected to have looked at (not read!) chapters 6 and 12 of Tom's textbook, *Qualitative research interviewing: biographic narrative and semi-structured method* (2001: Sage Publications). Before the course starts, you are expected to have studied some bits and scanned others of the most recent version of the BNIM Short Guide and Detailed Manual which will be sent to your email address. Your previous preparing-by-reading means that most of your time during the 5 days can be spent on clarification and practical exercises, learning-by-doing-and-discussing.

June 16-17, and 21st to 23rd, October 6th and 7th, and 10th to 12th, Muswell Hill, North London, United Kingdom, Program and contact: tom@tomwengraf.com

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL

Memory, Culture & Identity

International Summer School on Cultural Sociology
15th to 29th June 2011, Brno, Czech Republic
<http://sun.fss.muni.cz>, Facebook: International Summer School on Memory, Culture & Identity 2011

The Faculty of Social Studies of the Masaryk University and the Centre for Cultural Sociology present the International Summer School. Summer school participants have the opportunity to debate topics like the role of cultural memory in identity formation and actors strategies in memory struggles in an international academic environment, and to broaden their knowledge in the field of cultural sociology. Group of 30 students provides better interaction among the participants, active participation of all members and friendly atmosphere in the class. The International Summer School is designed for both undergraduate and graduate students.



The aim of the International Summer School is not only to offer a high-quality study program but also to prepare a rich cultural and social program for its participants. Optional excursion of historically and architecturally important cities are scheduled and evening events are prepared.

Applicants must submit required documents to the e-mail address sun@fss.muni.cz This e-mail address is being protected from spambots.

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL

"Classifications and the Construction of Belongings"

September 20th to 23rd 2011 in the city of Essen (Germany)

www.uni-due.de//soziologie/iss2011.php

"The Summer School is organized jointly between the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Duisburg-Essen (Prof. Dr. Anja Weiß), the Department of Social Science at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (Prof. Dr. Ludger Pries), and the Essen College of Gender Studies (Dr. Maren A. Jochimsen). It is funded by the organizers and the main research area "Change in contemporary societies" of the University of Duisburg-Essen and the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (Essen).

Objectives

Belongings are intensively debated in the public sphere. Belonging to specific social groups and spaces is crucial for human beings. Belonging is the outcome of on-going processes of (1) self-ascription and ascription/recognition by others and (2) claims making/resource mobilization according to layers like ethnicity, religion/beliefs, sex/gender, social class, residential area, citizenship or common social values/identity in general (like human rights).

Belongings are cultural categories whose meaning changes through processes of making and pointing at (socially constructed) differences, of ascribing and being ascribed, and of claiming rights and other resources. Belongings are formed on the basis of personal and collective self-identification and they are incorporated and become part of the habitus. While some classifications such as ethnicity, religion and gender are very prominent in public discourse, other categories such as class, region or milieu may be as important in their impact on belongings and on social structure. Using classifications is a particular challenge for scholars of migration as presumably scientific categories tend to interact with normatively loaded ascriptions in the highly contentious field of migration politics.

The international summer school will provide insights into theoretical concepts and empirical research on the topic. The focus is on classifications and belongings which tend to change or at least to become debated in the course of migration, such as civil, ethnic and religious identities, gender and class. We will look at the negotiation of classifications and belongings in the spheres of discourse, politics, public and private statistical data-collection, life-worlds and biographies.

During the Summer School lectures of renowned scholars will give an overview on the state of the art research in the field. In addition, qualitative as well as quantitative research methods are introduced

and discussed in more detail in small working groups. Overall, the program offers Ph.D. and some advanced M.A. students the opportunity to present and discuss their research projects in a professional environment of scholars and experts.

Program

The program consists of a mixture of plenary lectures and parallel workshops. All scholars will present their Ph.D. projects in a plenary and poster session. In addition, many projects will be discussed in depth during two parallel workshops.”

Workshops

Anne Juhasz: **Reconstructing narratives of belonging: second generation youth in Europe**

Prof. Dr. Ludger Pries: Classifications in migration research: ethnicity, roots and other pitfalls

Ralf Bohnsack: **Constructing Typologies**

Janine Dahinden: Categorizations, belonging and other challenges for qualitative migration research

Claudia Diehl: **Quantitative research on migration and ethnicity: data sources and data problems**

CALL FOR PAPERS

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH SECTION BY THE GERMAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (DGS)

The Medialization of Auto/Biographies: Different Forms and their Communicative Contexts

December 2nd - 4th, 2011, University of Hamburg, School of Business, Economics and Social Sciences

People reflecting of their own biography and of others' may use various medialized means of communication. Their range encompasses diaries, letters, autobiographies, memoirs, novels, poetry, visualized artistic forms of expressions in pictures, photography, motion pictures, and theatrical staging or digital presentations in New Media. Taking this variety into account important questions emerge with regard to a medialized modulation and transformation of life stories. Auto/biographical reflections often develop their unique style through the use of motion pictures, pictorial and written works as well as by using corresponding communication spaces. Different auto/biographical forms of expression have an important communicative function in societies. They represent important social ways of imparting knowledge and information as well as an interactive exchange of experiences. This interdisciplinary conference on "*The Medialization of Auto/Biographies: Different Forms and their Communicative Contexts*" will especially focus on observable practices of public communication in which auto/biographies are revealed – and it will do so by dealing with theoretical, methodical and empirical

aspects. The practical differentiation of medialized auto/biographical forms of communication poses great challenges for disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. New research perspectives in the social sciences and humanities are likely to ensue in the wake of different “turns” (linguistic turn, performative turn, medial turn, iconic/visual/pictorial turn, biographical turn). Persisting culturalistic self enquiries across all disciplines are leading to a dilution of social and cultural ontologies in favor of performative and media-based/media-related views.

The annual conference of the Section on “Biographical Research” of the German Sociological Association takes into account these new interdisciplinary developments. On the one hand, the conference explores the theoretical and methodological interplay of mediality and auto/biographical communication, on the other hand it focuses on the empirical research of auto/biographical self-presentation and reflection and relevant communicative contexts. We would welcome contributions to themes like the following:

- Auto/biographical content in media-based/media-related presentations
- Institutions of auto/biographical communication and their media formats
- Communicative contexts of auto/biographical communication formats
- Methodology and theory of different forms of auto/biographical communication and media formats

Apart from academic presentations, we warmly welcome various “performances” as well. In addition, we offer the opportunity to discuss “work in progress” in small working groups or workshops. In order to provide the working documents, we kindly ask you to inform us if you are interested in this kind of work.

Abstracts are welcome until July 15th 2011. Please send your abstract to the organisation team of the conference: biographie2011@orga-team.eu Team: Carsten Heinze (Hamburg), Jana Balllenthien (Hamburg), Hanna Haag (Hamburg), Monika Müller (Schwerin), Martina Schiebel (Bremen) und Elisabeth Tuidler (Kassel)

CALL FOR PAPER

40TH WORLD CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOCIOLOGY (IIS)

The conference will take place at India Habitat Centre in Delhi on 16-19 February, 2012. The theme of the congress is *After Western Hegemony: Social Science and Its Publics*. During the afternoons of the congress (on Friday, 17 February, Saturday, 18 February, and Sunday, 19 February), there will be room for a large number of parallel regular sessions. Each session is 90 minutes long and consists of an oral presentation of 3 to 4 papers.

All regular sessions (including abstracts and contact details) are listed on the congress website: www.iisoc.org/iis2012. If you are interested in presenting a paper in one of these sessions, please con-

tact the session convener directly with an abstract. Please note that the deadline for submitting a paper proposal for the regular sessions is on **25 August, 2011**.

Session conveners administer (take in abstracts, select the most appropriate papers to be presented in their session, and communicate the results to applicants/selected participants) as well as chair their session at the congress. Notification of acceptance will be given by the session conveners by 25 September, 2011 at the latest. Please note that a person only can be incorporated in the Congress programme twice.

You are welcome to contact the IIS Secretariat at iis2012@iisoc.org if you have any further questions

**CALL FOR PAPER FOR THE SESSION:
COMPARING ESCAPES FROM POVERTY: EVIDENCE FROM LIFE HISTORIES**

During the 40th World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology (IIS) (Delhi on 16-19 February, 2012) the panel **Comparing Escapes from Poverty: Evidence from Life Histories** will be organized.

This panel will explore the different patterns and causes of upward mobility out of absolute poverty in a number of developing countries, and reflect on appropriate policy responses. The evidence will be drawn from studies using life histories as the basic method of inquiry into socio-economic mobility. It will include a comparative paper which compares the findings of four recent studies, in Bangladesh, Kenya, Senegal and Tanzania, written by the convenor and a colleague. This paper will offer an analytical framework and a comparative analysis, and will provide a degree of coherence for the other papers.

The life history method has been extensively used in poverty analysis by the Chronic Poverty Research Centre, and details can be found at www.chronicpoverty.org.

Name of Session Convener: Andrew Shepherd, University/Organization: Overseas Development Institute, London, Email: a.shepherd@odi.org.uk. The panel organiser will select the best 2 or 3 papers which are offered.

NEWS

The journal **Educational Action Research (EAR)** is planning a special edition around narrative and action research. If you are interested in contributing to a **special issue of EAR on Narrative Inquiry and Action Research**, please contact the Editor Julienne Meyer by email (j.meyer@city.ac.uk) to discuss your ideas.

Authors will need to send their papers, together with requirements for the reproduction of any images, to The Editors, Educational Action Research, The University of Nottingham, (ear@nottingham.ac.uk) by **31st July 2011**. Publication is expected in 2012. Author's instructions are available on the EAR website (<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/09650792.asp>)

PUBLICATIONS

Bernstein, Julia (2010): Food for Thought. Transnational Contested Identities and Food Practices of Russian-Speaking Jewish Migrants in Israel and Germany. Frankfurt a.M./New York: Campus

The book is available in German bookshops and in the USA under <http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/F/bo10342145.html>

Russian-speaking Jews who migrated to Germany or Israel are often confronted with complex challenges and paradoxical hopes and demands. The book provides extraordinary ethnographic insight into the everyday life of the ex-Soviet migrants.

Focusing on "Russian" food products, their packaging, sale and consumption patterns, an in-depth analysis is presented of the migrants' dynamic socio-economic and cultural life worlds. It turns out that transnational references play an important part in coping with contested belongings



Breckner, Roswitha (2010): Sozialtheorie des Bildes. Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag

In this book a new method for interpreting pictures is developed: the *Segment Analysis*. The methodological concepts are based in the theory of symbolization as developed by Susanne Langer (following Ernst Cassirer, Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead), in recent picture theories (W.J.T. Mitchell, Gottfried Boehm, and others), as well as in principles of Interpretive Sociology (Alfred Schuetz, and others). Their transfer to concrete steps of analysis is exemplary shown in four picture analyses. One of them extensively deals with a private photo album from a biographical perspective.

The concept of the book is accessible in English as outline, together with an analysis of a photograph by Helmut Newton, in the article 'Pictured Bodies. A Methodical Photo Analysis'. In: INTER (Interaction, Interview, Interpretation) Bilingual Journal for Qualitative-Interpretive Social Research in Eastern Europe, Russian Academy of Social Sciences Moscow, Vol. 4: 125-141. You can find this article following this link:

http://www.soz.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/inst_sociologie/Personen/Institutsmitglieder/Breckner/Breckner_Pictured_Bodies.pdf

Bertaux, Daniel/Delcroix Catherine/Pfefferkorn Roland (dirs.) (2011): Migrations, racism, résistances. Dossier (Introduction au numéro, suivie de neuf articles), Migrations Société, janvier-février, vol. 23, n°133

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The **deadline** for the next newsletter is end of **October 2011**

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