

Biography and Society



XXI ISA World Congress of Sociology,
Gwangju, South Korea 2027



Biography
and Society

NEWSLETTER/AUGUST 2025

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENCY

Dear Colleagues,

We are delighted to open this new issue of the RC38 – *Biography and Society* Newsletter by recalling the recent ISA Forum in Morocco. RC38 organized 20 sessions and received a record number of submissions. Our sessions were very well attended – some with more than 70 participants – and attracted many who joined out of curiosity. The discussions were lively, at times even heated, and once again highlighted the vitality of biographical research and the many directions in which our community is advancing.

Overall, the Forum was excellently organized, and Rabat proved to be a very pleasant, beautiful, and welcoming conference city. At the same time, the event was marked by debates surrounding calls for a boycott of Israeli researchers and the temporary suspension of the collective membership of the Israeli Sociological Association by the ISA. These issues also triggered discussions and concerns within RC38 in the run-up to the conference.

During the RC38 Business Meeting, which brought together around 50 participants, members voted on changes to our Statutes. Most importantly, these changes will enable us to conduct voting procedures online for the next elections, scheduled to take place during the World Congress in 2027. After the meeting, we had the pleasure of watching a film by our former President, Hermílio Santos, on the history of biographical research, which he generously made available for one of its first public screenings.

On the next page, you will find some pictures from RC38 events at the Forum.

Soon, we will begin preparations for the World Congress in Gwangju, South Korea, as well as for the diverse activities we are planning in the interim. We will keep you informed as these plans develop.

This issue of the Newsletter brings together a wide range of contributions, including recent publications, research updates, project reports, and reflections on current debates in our field. We warmly thank all contributors for sharing their work, and we invite our readers to engage with the texts, be inspired, and continue strengthening the ties within our community.

With warm regards,

Johannes Becker, Martín Hernán Di Marco, Maria Pohn-Lauggas, Priscila Susin, Georgios Tisolis

RC 38 at the ISA Forum in Rabat 2025



Membership fees

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

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

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

If you have any questions concerning the membership, please contact Priscila Susin for advice: pri.qsusin@gmail.com

The deadline for the next Newsletter is at the end of November 2025.

Please send us:

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

Send your contribution directly to: isa-rc38@isa-sociology.org

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MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENCY, 2023-2027

Johannes Becker (President)



I am currently a research fellow at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) Berlin, where I lead the research project "Migrant arrival contexts in transregional comparison". Before, I have been a researcher at the Center for Methods in Social Sciences at the University of Göttingen, for more than 10 years. Both my doctoral and postdoctoral research have been centrally related to sociological biographical research. In my PhD, I combined biographical research and approaches from the sociology of space and in my subsequent research with approaches of historical sociology and migration. As a biographical researcher committed to global exchange among qualitative sociologists and with an international research agenda, RC 38 has been a central reference point in my scholarly career.

Maria Pohn-Lauggas (Vice-President)



I am a sociologist and Professor of Qualitative Methods at Ruhr University Bochum, Germany. She is doing research on impact of violent collective past of National Socialism. Within this topic, she asks for biographical processes constituted by narratives and photographs. She teaches interpretative methods and multi-method designs. Her main research fields are: intergenerational transmission, visual and verbal memory practices, collective memory, discourse analysis, biography research and image analysis. From 2014 to 2018 she was secretary/treasurer of the RC 38, since 2018 she is one of the vice-presidents of the RC 38.

Giorgos Tsiolis (Vice-President)



Giorgos Tsiolis is a Professor of "Research Methodology in Social Sciences – Qualitative Research Methods" at the Department of Sociology, University of Crete (Greece) and is currently Head of the Department. His academic interests include issues on social research methodology, qualitative methods, qualitative data analysis, and the biographical narrative approach. His research focuses mainly on issues in the sociology of work (de-industrialization, unemployment, precarious employment). He has published in international journals as well as in collective scientific volumes. G. Tsiolis has also written two books in Greek on the biographical narrative approach and on qualitative analysis methods and has edited volumes on related issues. He is also the author (in common with Michalis Christodoulou) of the monograph "Social Causation and Biographical Research. Philosophical, Theoretical and Methodological Arguments" London / New York, Routledge (Serie: Routledge Advances in Research Methods), 2021.

**Priscila Susin** (Secretary)

Priscila Susin is a research fellow at the Center for Research & Development in Human Factors and Resilience at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. She is co-coordinator of the Research Committee 29 "Biography and Society" of the Brazilian Society of Sociology (SBS). Her areas of interest include qualitative research methods, reconstructive biographical research, gender studies, inequalities and social stratification in urban contexts, and organizational and work studies.

**Martín Hernán Di Marco** (Treasurer)

Argentinean sociologist with a Ph.D. in Social Sciences from the University of Buenos Aires. Assistant Professor in Violence and Violence Prevention at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA), Leiden University. His work focuses on the intersection of harm-doing, femicide, and biographical analysis in Latin America.

CALL FOR PAPERS

**DGS DEUTSCHE
GESELLSCHAFT
FÜR SOZIOLOGIE**

Sektion
Biographieforschung

in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie



Annual Conference of the Biographical Research Section in the DGS
The Biographical Paradigm in Migration Research.
Current Theoretical and Methodological Challenges and Perspectives
March 12-14, 2026
Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences

Since its beginnings in the sociology of the Chicago School, the biographical approach has established itself as an interdisciplinary field of research. Biographical approaches have been widely used in the social sciences, especially in recent decades. With its process-oriented and innovative approaches, biographical migration research has made an important contribution to the theoretical conceptualization of transnational migration processes from a subject- and action-oriented as well as from a historical perspective. Empirical studies have combined various theoretical perspectives with multimethodological designs to research migratory processes, transnationality, boundary drawing and belongings. This has led to a very lively theoretical discussion in the field of biographical migration research, which has significantly shaped the discourse on migration studies by incorporating perspectives from the sociology of knowledge and figurational sociology, transnationalism, feminism, and postcolonialism. With its process-oriented and innovative approaches, biographical migration research has made an important contribution to the theoretical conceptualization of transnational migration processes from a subject-based, action-oriented and historical perspective.

Global developments have raised new epistemological questions for the field, both theoretically and empirically, which challenge the theories and methods of biographical migration research. While criticism of methodological nationalism and Eurocentrism has been formulated within biographical migration research, it has also led to critical questioning and reflection of biographical migration research itself and its theoretical and methodological premises.

The insights gained from the biographical theory perspective clearly enable us to examine the complexity and processual nature of transnational migration and to fo-

cus on interactions with global, regional, and local interdependencies. In view of current social challenges, it is nevertheless important to explore the possibilities and limitations of the biographical approach for researching migration processes and to further develop biographical approaches conceptually.

As part of the annual conference of the Biography Research Section, which also marks our 40th anniversary, we would like to address current theoretical and methodological challenges in biographical migration research and explore the question of how this perspective can contribute to reflexive and critical social research. We welcome submissions that address the following questions:

- ☐ What insights do biographical theory and biographical analysis offer for research into migration processes?
- ☐ How does research into the interplay between migration and biography contribute to reflexive and critical social research?
- ☐ How can transnational, postcolonial, post-migrant, and anti-racist perspectives on migration-related processes and constellations be appropriately taken into account in social-scientific biographical research?
- ☐ How is migration negotiated socially in local, regional, and global contexts, and how have these negotiations changed historically?
- ☐ To what extent are migration-related topics and discourses also addressed in biographical research projects whose primary focus is not on migration? What opportunities do biographical approaches offer for linking migration-related topics with other aspects such as violence, collective memory and cultures of remembrance, social mobility, political participation, etc.?
- ☐ What opportunities for further development are offered by participatory and creative approaches to biographical research methods, and what methodological and practical research challenges need to be taken into account?
- ☐ How can research ethics principles, data archiving issues, and the secondary use of empirical data be conceptualized and implemented in the context of migration-related research?

Please send proposals for individual presentations or panels that address these questions (max. 2400 characters) to the following email address by October 15, 2025:

KomSI@fb4.fra-uas.de

The event is organized by the Spokesperson Group of the Biography Research Section in cooperation with the Institute for Migration Research (IMiK) and the Competence Center for Social Intervention Research (KomSI) at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences.

Organisation: Irini Siouti, Michaela Köttig, Minna Kristiina Ruokonen-Engler, Quentin Reeb, Anna Schnitzer, Arne Worm.

WORKSHOPS

Open Workshop: Interpretive Biographical Methods

Tuesday, 27 August 2025 – 8:30–13:00

Prof. Johanna Sagner (Universidad de La Frontera – UFRO, Chile)

Prof. Martín Hernán Di Marco (Leiden University, The Netherlands)

The workshop was co-organised by Leiden University (The Netherlands) and the Universidad de La Frontera – UFRO (Chile), and funded by FONDECYT (Chile).

This workshop addressed the basic premises of interpretive and hermeneutic approaches in biographical research, together with different analytical tools: techniques for the study of visual data, the use of breaching experiments, projective techniques such as the life line, and the identification of biographical turning points and frames of reference.



Femicides: What do the Perpetrators' Biographies 'Tell' Us?

Wednesday, 27 August 2025 – 11:00–13:00

Prof. Martín Hernán Di Marco (Leiden University, The Netherlands)

The activity was co-organised by Leiden University (The Netherlands) and the Universidad de La Frontera – UFRO (Chile), and funded by FONDECYT (Chile).

This presentation, based on the *upcoming book Taking Lives*, explored interviews with men who committed intimate femicides in Latin America, using life stories and trajectories as a basis of analysis. It examined the emotions commonly present in their narratives and the ways in which they managed to avoid detection and prior intervention by institutions and peers.



FEMICIDIOS: ¿QUÉ NOS 'DICEN' LAS BIOGRAFÍAS DE LOS PERPETRADORES?

La presentación, basada en el libro *Taking Lives*, explora entrevistas con varones que cometieron femicidios íntimos en América Latina a partir del análisis de relatos de vida y trayectorias, indagando qué emociones comunes aparecen en sus narraciones y cómo evitan la detección e intervención previa de instituciones y pares.

Prof. Dr. Martín Hernán Di Marco
Leiden University
Miércoles 27 de Agosto de 2025 11:30-13:00 hrs.
Auditorio Pablo Neruda Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Empresariales

Organizan Fondecyt N°11241078
Proyecto de Extensión EKS25-Departamento de Ciencias Jurídicas
Doctorado en Ciencias Sociales

Agencia Nacional de Investigación e Innovación
Universiteit Leiden
UNIVERSIDAD DE LA FRONTERA

TAKING LIVES: THE NARRATIVES OF FEMICIDE PERPETRATORS IN LATIN AMERICA
Martín Hernán Di Marco

PROJECT REPORTS

MEMODIAS – Memory Practices of the Afghan and Somali Diasporas in the USA and Italy

Gianluca Gatta (University of Milan, principal investigator), Monica Massari (University of Milan, supervisor), Alexandra Délano Alonso (The New School, NY, supervisor).

Funded by: The European Union - European Research Executive Agency (REA), Horizon-MSCA-2021 Global Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Duration of the project: 3 years (1 nov. 2022 – 31 oct. 2025)

MEMODIAS explores how memory practices support adaptation and transnational belonging among Afghan and Somali diasporas in Italy and the United States. Grounded in a biographical and participatory methodology, the research employs ethnographic fieldwork, biographical-narrative interviews, and creative workshops to foreground the lived experiences of diaspora members, who are engaged as co-researchers. It examines how memories of conflict, displacement, settlement, and return are shaped by global dynamics and changing conditions in countries of origin. By highlighting the interplay between individual and collective memory, MEMODIAS addresses a gap in memory studies, which often overlook inter-diaspora connections and solidarities. Drawing on interdisciplinary frameworks – memory, migration, media, gender, and critical global studies – the project aims to generate scholarly outputs and practical tools for policymakers, educators, and civil society actors. The project is conducted in collaboration between the University of Milan – which hosts MEMODIAS – and the Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility at The New School (New York).

<https://www.instagram.com/memodias.project/>

Key words: Memory, diaspora, solidarity, creative biographical research

ITHACA – Interconnecting Histories and Archives for Migrant Agency

Monica Massari (University of Milan, local PI), Simona Miceli (University of Milan, researcher).

Funded by: European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme (GA No 101004539).

Duration of the project: 4 years (1 January 2021 – 31 March 2025)

Project description: ITHACA is a research project that collects, preserves, and analyses migration narratives from the Mediterranean through an interdisciplinary lens. Concluded in March 2025, it was carried out by an international consortium of universities and NGOs operating both in Europe and in the Mediterranean area (Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan). The University of Milan's research unit conducted a case study on undocumented forms of migration across the Central and Eastern Mediterranean over the past two decades, gathering diverse research materials now archived in the ITHACA digital collections (<https://ithaca-dev.memooria.org/s/dataset/page/search>). Key outputs include biographical interviews with asylum seekers and refugees whose journeys often involved extreme risks and violence; creative biographical workshops with migrants and social workers; and policy council meetings with stakeholders in the migration field. Migrants' biographical perspectives were complemented by interviews with institutional actors to examine how migration is experienced and represented in the Italian context. Grounded in a biographical approach, the analysis shows how vulnerability can coexist with agency and aspirations, framing migration as a subversive social movement that resists restrictive border regimes. By combining empirical analysis with action-oriented recommendations and participatory practices, ITHACA seeks to inform policies, foster inclusive public discourse, and promote a politics of voice that values migrant narratives as drivers of social transformation.

<https://ithacahorizon.eu/>

NEW BOOKS AND ARTICLES

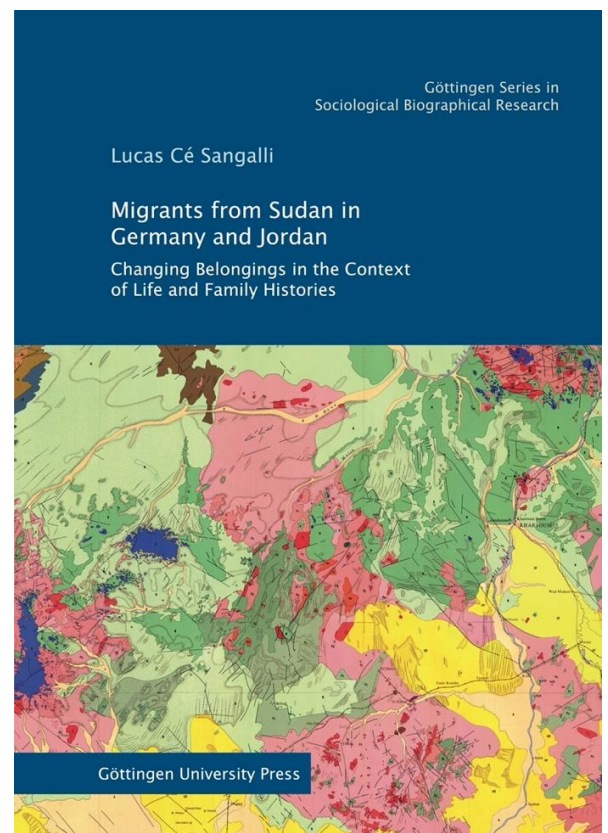
Migrants from Sudan in Germany and Jordan: Changing Belongings in the Context of Life and Family Histories

Lucas Cé Sangalli

Göttingen Series in Sociological Biographical Research, Göttingen University Press, 2024

Open access: <https://doi.org/10.17875/gup2024-2653>

Migration often intensifies both how people construct a sense of belonging and how they are labelled or categorised by others. However, the ways in which power transformations shape these processes across generations and throughout a person's life are rarely analysed in relation to experiences of different forms of violence. This book – winner of the 2024 prize for the best dissertation at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Göttingen – provides an analytical framework for studying the transformation of autobiographical constructions of belonging through empirical cases of individuals and families who have migrated from Sudan. Through a transnational comparison of Sudanese diasporas and different generations of migrants, the book demonstrates that belonging for migrants and their descendants is shaped not only by their experiences and processes of remembering, but also by sociohistorical power inequalities, different forms of violence and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

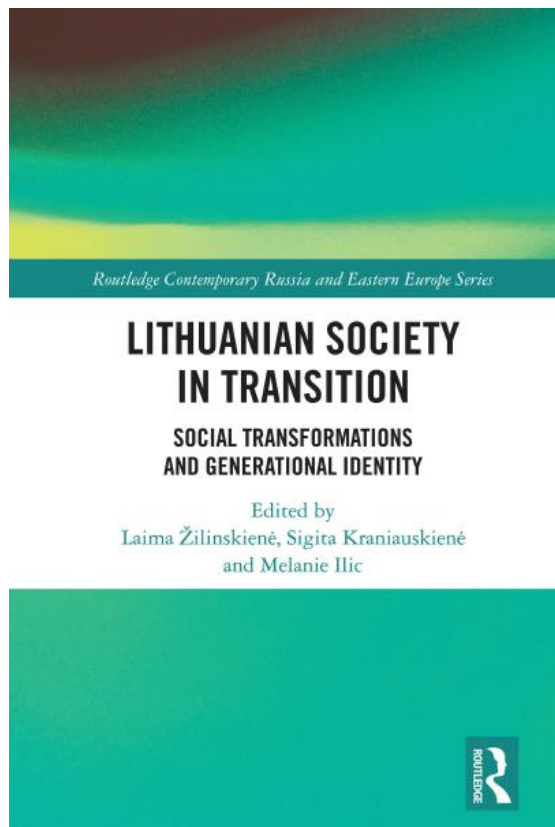


Lithuanian Society in Transition: Social Transformations and Generational Identity

Edited by Laima Žilinskienė, Sigita Kraniauskienė, and Melanie Ilic

Central Asian, Russian & Eastern European Studies, Routledge, 2025

<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032686882>



This mixed-method study examines the life experiences and generational identity of individuals born in Lithuania between 1980 and 2000, a cohort whose early socialisation took place amidst the profound social, political, and economic transformations of the post-1990 period. It explores how these cohorts were shaped by the post-Soviet transition, technological change, and global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. A substantial part of the analysis (Chapters 2, 4–7) draws on 67 life-story interviews conducted within the project Growing Up in Independent Lithuania: Life Courses of 1980–2000 Cohorts, Behavioural Strategies, and Their Contexts.

The study pays particular attention to the transition to adulthood by examining both demographic and normative milestones and the subjective understanding of adulthood. Respondents frequently differentiated between adulthood and maturity, highlighting the tension between

socially prescribed expectations and lived experiences. It further considers the influence of family environments and parental adaptive capacities during the transformation period of institutional and structural conditions in society, thus shaping opportunities and constraints. Employing the concept of the “social career”, the analysis demonstrates how labour market dynamics, educational trajectories, and family contexts produce both continuity and rupture in life courses. It concluded that this generation was required to negotiate agency and autonomy within shifting structural conditions, developing resilience, and adaptive strategies in a rapidly transforming society.

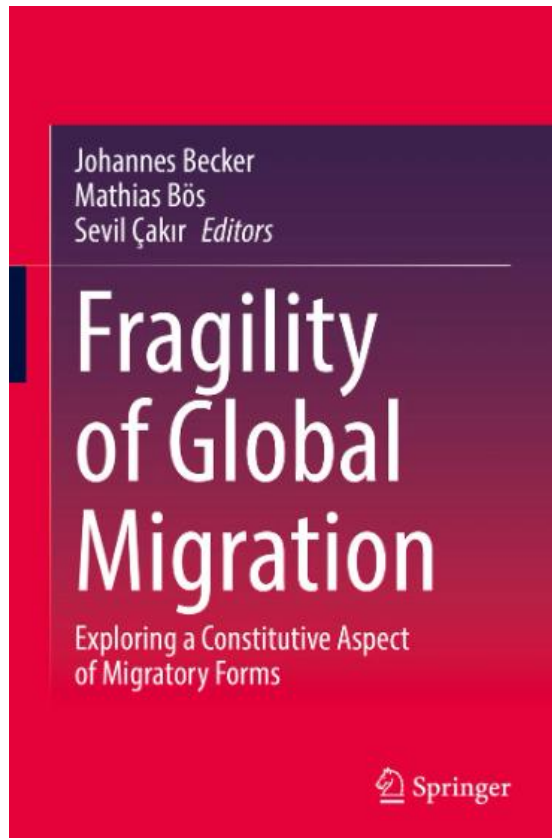
Fragility of Global Migration

Exploring a Constitutive Aspect of Migratory Forms

Edited by Johannes Becker, Mathias Bös, Sevil Çakır

Springer, 2025

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-89292-9>



This book demonstrates the analytical power of the concept of fragility as a central and defining aspect of global migration processes. To this end, the book brings together authors from the Americas, South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, fostering a global dialogue on the social structuring of migration fragility in and between the Global North and the Global South. The various chapters of the book focus on two aspects. First, it discusses the multiplicity of the migrant as a social figure. There is not just one type of migrant, but a multiplicity of different fragile configurations that lead to the migrantization of people. Secondly, the same applies to the process of migration itself. There is a plethora of different articulations of fragility in crossing borders and organizing a new life somewhere else. Both perspectives show that the fragility of migration is not an aberration from “normality”. Fragility is an intrinsic part of the stabilization of social inequalities of migration between different migrants and different countries and regions of

the globe. As such, this book is an important resource for researchers and students interested in the study of migration processes.

Youth Memory Practices. Multimethod research on dealing with the past and present

(German original: **Jugendliche Erinnerungspraktiken. Methodenplurale Forschung zur Auseinandersetzung mit Geschichte und Gegenwart**)

Stephan Bundschuh, Marike Flömer, Judith Hilgers, Timo Voßberg, Eren Yıldırım Yetkin

Barbara Budrich Publishing House, 2025

<https://shop.budrich.de/produkt/jugendliche-erinnerungspraktiken/>



This study grapples with memory practices and chances of social participation among young people in postcolonial, post-Nazi, and postmigrant German society. The monography "Youth Memory Practices" is based on the multimethod and interdisciplinary research project "Participatory Remembrance Education in Koblenz and Surrounding Areas" (PEPiKUm), which was conducted from 2020 to 2024 with funding by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) (funding code: 13FH052SX8) at Koblenz University of Applied Sciences. It examines the diverse memory practices of young people in Germany, which are shaped in their environments by family narratives, institutional experiences such as those at school, and peer exchange. It reflects on both historical references to National Socialism and current racist acts and events practised in the Federal Republic of Germany. Utilizing participatory approaches, the project team

worked with four different youth groups with and without experiences of racism. The young participants of the project were reached out to through youth work institutions (e.g., youth centres) and youth associations. The project team ethnographically documented this collaboration to accurately reconstruct the processes of participatory research. In addition, the project team conducted semi-structured interviews with young co-researchers and non-co-researchers to achieve a diverse sample of biographical experiences and perspectives concerning collective memory, historical awareness, and exclusion mechanisms in the contemporary German society. The analysis took place through a pluralistic approach combining qualitative content analysis and case reconstructions, especially of the participatory research groups. Through the multimethod framework, the authors examine the potential and limitations of participatory approaches. The study reflects upon the complex structures of young people's memory practices, which emerge in group settings and their interactions with narratives of the past circulating in various settings such as family and peer groups, and especially outside of institutionalized paradigms of memorials and museums.

Intersektionale Figurationen in der soziologischen Gedächtnisforschung: Reflexionen aus postkolonialen Forschungskontexten

Eva Bahl, Maria Pohn-Lauggas

Sozialer Sinn, 26(1), pp. 53–74

<https://doi.org/10.1515/sosi-2025-0004>

Ausgehend von einer biographietheoretischen und figurationalen Forschungsperspektive steht im Mittelpunkt des Beitrags die Auseinandersetzung mit intersektionalen Positionalitäten in postkolonialen Forschungskontexten. Empirisch basiert diese auf einem Forschungsprojekt zu kollektiven Gedächtnissen der Erfahrung von Versklavung und des Handels mit versklavten Menschen in bestimmten Regionen in Ghana und Brasilien. Anhand ethnographischer Memos von Feldinteraktionen diskutieren wir, in welcher Weise Positionalitäten und die mit ihnen einhergehenden Zuschreibungen die Feldinteraktionen und den Zugang zu kollektiven Erinnerungspraktiken strukturieren. Der intersektionale Ansatz wird in diesem Zusammenhang als heuristisches Instrument herangezogen, um im Sinne des „ask the other question“ immer wieder das Ineinandergreifen und das Wechselspiel verschiedener Differenz- und Ungleichheitskategorien zu erfassen.

Schlüsselwörter: Kollektive Gedächtnisse; Versklavung; Intersektionalität; Biographieforschung; Figuration

Rethinking Women's Return Migration: Evidence from Tunisia and Morocco

Stellamarina Donato, Consuelo Corradi, Umberto Di Maggio

Societies 2025, 15(7), 180

<https://doi.org/10.3390/soc15070180>

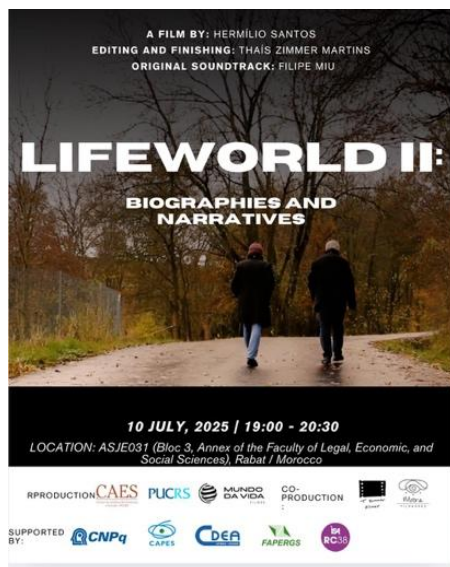
Return migration is frequently associated with failure, particularly in the context of women returnees from the global south. This research challenges this notion, focusing on women returnees from Italy to North Africa. It aims to analyze return migration by focusing on women who returned to Morocco and Tunisia in the last 15 years, and the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, emphasizing the transformative potential of migration experiences for themselves and the local community. Women returnees not only redefine their roles in society but also foster socio-economic development, community building, and political changes in the countries of return. The study employs thematic analysis to examine 25 semi-structured interviews conducted with returnees aged 25–60, where women shared insights into their migration, re-adaptation experiences, and challenges upon return. Returnees utilized skills gained abroad to achieve economic empowerment, often starting businesses or finding new jobs. However, they faced cultural challenges, particularly societal expectations of traditional gender roles. Nonetheless, migration empowered many returnees to question these policies and norms, and contribute to societal change.

Keywords: migration; return migration; women; returnees; MENA; Italy; Morocco; Tunisia

FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES

Lifeworld II: Biographies and Narratives

Directed by Hermílio Santos



"Lifeworld II: Biographies and Narratives", the 8th documentary film directed by Hermílio Santos (Brazil) was screened in a RC 38 Session during the ISA Forum in Rabbat, last July. The very first screening took place in Vienna in April this year during the Conference of the Alfred Schutz International Circle. "Lifeworld II" is the sequence of "Lifeworld: The Sociology of Alfred Schutz" (dir. Hermílio Santos, 56', 2018), which was screened in the ISA Congress in Toronto (2018), in the ESA congress in 2019 and in many universities around the world. In "Lifeworld II", the director interviewed sociologists that contributed for the establishment of diverse biographical research approaches, as Martin Kohli, Fritz Schütze, Wolfram Fischer, Daniel Bertaux, and Gabriele Rosenthal, with special attention to the reconstructive biographical perspective, as well as sociologists that adopt biographical research in their investigation of many aspects of social realities in countries as Japan, Germany, France, Brazil, Israel, Poland, and Palestine, among others, for instance Roswitha Breckner, Johannes Becker, Bettina Völter, Michaela Köttig, Maria Pohn-Lauggas, and Priscila Susin. For copyright reasons the film cannot be freely available yet, except for in person screenings. Interested in organizing a screening should contact the director directly through his e-mail: Prof.hermilio@gmail.com. The teaser is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp_Fw_aA-x0.

reconstructive biographical perspective, as well as sociologists that adopt biographical research in their investigation of many aspects of social realities in countries as Japan, Germany, France, Brazil, Israel, Poland, and Palestine, among others, for instance Roswitha Breckner, Johannes Becker, Bettina Völter, Michaela Köttig, Maria Pohn-Lauggas, and Priscila Susin. For copyright reasons the film cannot be freely available yet, except for in person screenings. Interested in organizing a screening should contact the director directly through his e-mail: Prof.hermilio@gmail.com. The teaser is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp_Fw_aA-x0.

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