

Belongings and Borders – Biographies, Mobilities, and the Politics of Migration

24-25 January 2019 – University of Strasbourg, France

Keynote speakers:

David Bartram (University of Leicester)
Monica Massari (University of Naples Federico II)
Monika Salzbrunn (University of Lausanne)

Deadline for abstract submission: 15 May 2018

ESA's Research Network 35 "Sociology of Migration" will hold its next midterm conference at the University of Strasbourg January 24-25, 2019. The conference is organized in close cooperation with the Institute DynamE, the Institute of Advanced Studies (USIAS) of the University of Strasbourg, and the French-German University (UFA/DFH) and is thematically linked to the international research project MIGREVAL (<http://migreval.hypotheses.org/>).

We invite all interested scholars to submit proposals for single paper presentations or thematic sessions by 15 May 2018. We want to provide a platform for those who have already met at earlier conferences to continue our discussions, and at the same time invite other scholars to join us in this endeavour. For our midterm conferences, we aim for lively and focused debates. Hence, submissions that have a strong link to the conference theme will be given priority.

Conference theme: Biographies, belongings, borders

Current political and media discourses on the questions of "integration", "belonging" and "borders" are dominated by the perspectives of Western nation states. The objective of our midterm conference is to shift the focus to the perspectives of those who are labeled and talked about in these debates and who become the target of ever-more complex and differentiated border and mobility regimes. Our conference will, in other words, interrogate the way belongings and borders are presently challenged and reshaped on different levels (local, national, international) and how biographical perspectives in migration research can shed new light on these processes. This general topic will be discussed along three overarching axes:

1. Biographical evaluations, migration and citizenship policies, and orders of belonging: The methodology of "biographical evaluation" (Apitzsch et al. 2008; Delcroix 2013) serves as inspiration and conceptual focal point for the first thematic axis. The aim is to analyze the way public measures in different sectors in society are embedded in individuals' trajectories and courses of action, how they affect biographies and are mediated by them in a longitudinal and dynamic perspective. This axis will welcome papers on the way migrants have experienced different policies related to education, employment, language learning, marriage, borders, and rights of entry, of residence and others (on the communal, regional, national and international level) and on the way these experiences shed light on the concrete effects of public measures. These accounts may also include experiences of resistance of migrants and their families to the encountered policies. Apart from this general change of perspective, biographical accounts enable a reconstructive approach that allows going back in time. For example, interviews with family members of several generations make it possible to take into account long term processes and intergenerational dynamics. This approach gives insights into how families relate to memory on a public and private scale. It also includes the experience of migrants in their regions of origin before their migration and, especially, the interplay of these experiences with different orders of belongings and borders.

2. Belongings and borders and the current dynamics of migration regimes: The second thematic axis will concentrate on current migration regimes and their dynamics on the communal, regional, national, and international level. Among others, the perspectives, responsibilities, and roles of various actors (including professionals, “experts” or volunteers) who are related in one way or another to the politics of migration will be taken into account. How did different (individual as well as institutional) actors develop, implement or resist to measures and policies in different contexts and on different levels? How did these measures and policies evolve over time? How do different levels (local, national or international) converge or contradict each other? What do these developments tell us about the current transformational dynamics of global migration regimes? Contributions taking into account the biographical development of actors and “turning points” in their practices will be particularly welcome.

3. Theorizing belongings, borders and mobilities – reconfiguring migration research? The interplay of biographies, belongings, and borders also leads to important conceptual and methodological questions. How can belongings, mobilities, and borders be meaningfully integrated into current frameworks and debates? What epistemological and methodological challenges are linked to researching social structures, institutional configurations, and biographies/subjectivities in their interplay? These questions need to be discussed in relation to two more general issues. First, migration has lately been discovered as a topic by mainstream human and social sciences. How do changing orders of belongings and borders challenge dominant perspectives in various research fields? And how is migration research challenged and/or inspired by problematizations from these research areas? Second, the links between migration research and general social theory need to be reconsidered. What implications do established perspectives – be it the theoretical frameworks of grand sociologists or current debates in (critical) political economy – have for our understanding of the links between biographies, borders, and broader social formations?

Format: As in our past conferences, we aim for an interdisciplinary and multi-methodological dialogue that brings younger and well-established scholars from across Europe and beyond together. Paper proposals on these topics including a transnational and/or comparative perspective are particularly welcome.

Apart from single papers, we invite proposals for thematic sessions. A session proposal should include three to maximum four papers (titles and abstracts) and a brief indication of the session’s overarching theme. Please be aware that there is no guarantee that sessions can be integrated in the suggested form into the final programme.

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

Proposal submission: Please submit your abstracts (max. 300 words) plus a short biographical note to kenneth.horvath@unilu.ch by May 15, 2018. Decisions will be communicated in June 2018.

Organizing team

Local Organizing Committee:

- Ursula Apatzsch (Goethe-University Frankfurt)
- Daniel Bertaux (CNRS, Research Center DynamE, “Dynamiques Européennes”)
- Catherine Delcroix, (University of Strasbourg, Research Center DynamE, “Dynamiques Européennes”)
- Lena Inowlocki (Goethe-University Frankfurt)
- Elise Pape (University of Strasbourg, Research Center DynamE, “Dynamiques Européennes”)

RN 35 board members:

- Dilek Cindoglu (Abdullah Gül University)
- Catherine Delcroix (University of Strasbourg)
- Kenneth Horvath (University of Lucerne)
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- Maria Xenitidou (University of Surrey)