



**RN 03 “Biographical Perspectives
on European Societies”**



Mid-term Conference 2025

**European Sociological Association
RN03 BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EUROPEAN SOCIETIES**

in association with

the Institute for Sociology at the University of Göttingen

23rd and 24th October 2025

Memory, Crisis and Future



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Mid-term Conference 2025

European Sociological Association

RN03 BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EUROPEAN SOCIETIES *the Institute for Sociology at the University of Göttingen*

Memory, Crisis and Future

This mid-term conference marks the 30th Anniversary of ESA RN03—an important milestone and an opportunity to reflect on the network’s legacy in advancing European scholarship through interdisciplinary biographical methods. Over three decades, the network has contributed significantly to understanding contemporary societies and their transformations.

Entering its fourth decade, the network engages with a world shaped by the aftermath of the pandemic, ongoing geopolitical crises such as the war in Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East, and the global environmental emergency—evident in recent floods, wildfires, and ecological disruptions across Europe. These overlapping crises have deeply affected individuals and communities, while debates over how past conflicts, inequalities, and traumas are remembered continue to shape social and political life.

Amid these rapid and often traumatic changes, biographical research offers crucial insights into how people make sense of the connections between past, present, and future (Wengraf, 2001; Roberts, 2002; O’Neill & Nurse, 2024). In times of global uncertainty, economic instability, and environmental risk, this conference seeks to explore the intersections of biography, memory, temporality, and social crisis, as well as visions of the future.

Following Denzin’s (1997) call for a humanistic commitment to understanding lives in interaction, the conference aims to foster interpretive and reflexive approaches to biographical research, attentive to its ethical and political dimensions. In this changing landscape, innovation, reflexivity, and the continual development of ethical and methodological governance remain central challenges for biographical inquiry (Caetano & Nico, 2018).

Conference Organisation Committee: Baiba Bela (Latvia), Ina Alber-Armenat (Germany), Lyudmila Nurse (UK), Maggie O’Neill (Ireland), Micol Pizzolati (Italy), Daniel Guigui (Ireland), André Epp (Germany), Ana Caetano (Portugal), Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas (Poland), Arne Worm (Germany)

The conference is supported by the European Sociological Association



PROGRAMME

Thursday 23rd October 2025

**Location: Adam-von-Trott-Saal / Alte Mensa Tagungszentrum,
Wilhelmsplatz 3**

9.15-9.45 Welcome Dean of Faculty: Prof. Dr. Andrea D. Bührmann, RN03 Ina Alber-Armenat and Baiba Bela, Local Organising Committee and German Biographical section: Ina Alber-Armenat and Arne Worm

9.45-10.45 **Keynote**

Maria Pohn-Lauggas (Ruhr University Bochum): Shame. On the power of an emotion in family memories and intergenerational processes among stigmatised groupings of Nazi victims. *[Chair: Ina Alber-Armenat]*

10.45-11.15 Coffee break

11.15-12.45 **Session 1: Biographies and Crisis** *[Chair: Andre Epp]*

Ines Gottschalk	Biographical Research in the Context of Crisis-Laden Memories as Practices of Witnessing and Recognition: Metatheoretical reflections on possibilities, Requirements, and Limits
Martina Schiebel, Johanna Wahl	Protesting biographers in times of crisis
Katarzyna Waniek	Crisis: between individual experiences and discursively created reality
Lyudmila Nurse	Use of Cultural Artefacts in Biographical Study of Memory and Identities

12.45-13.45 Lunch

13.45-15.15 **Session 2: Crisis and Covid-19** *[Chair: Johannes Becker]*

Adam Mrozowicki	Essential healthcare workers in Poland and the United States: biographical sociology of polycrisis
Jacek Burski	Do We Need Another Type of Capital? The Role of Biographical Capital in Shaping Life Strategies of Polish and American Doctors
Lidia Katia C. Manzo <i>Viktoryia Vaitovich</i>	Adapting Biographical Research in Crisis: Digital Methods and Online Engagement During COVID-19.
Sylwia Męcfal (University of Łódź), Beata Bielska (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń), Adrianna Surmiak (University of Warsaw)	How researchers narrate their work during different stages of the pandemic crisis – cases of qualitative researchers in Poland

15.15-15.45 Coffee break₄

15.45 -17.00 **Session 3: Panel: Euroborderwalks** [Chair: Maggie O'Neill and Tomasz Ferenc]

Maggie O'Neill, Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas, Krešimir Žažar, Aleksandra Sobańska	EuroBorderWalks. Walking Borders, Risk and Belonging: advances in ethno-mimetic research in the making and re-making of three European borders
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17.00-17.20 BIRTHDAY CAKE

17.20-18.50 **Special Session 4: 30th Anniversary RN03** (Chair: Lyudmila Nurse and Micol Pizzolati)

19.00-20.15 DINNER BUFFET

Friday 24th October

**Location: Adam-von-Trott-Saal and Taberna / Alte Mensa
Tagungszentrum, Wilhelmsplatz 3**

9.00-10.00 **Special Session 5: Reconstructions of Biographical Research in German-speaking countries: Histories and Futures** (Adam-von-Trott-Saal)

(Chair: Arne Worm and Ina Alber-Arment)

Maria Pohn-Lauggas, André Epp, Martina Schiebel

10.10 -11.40

Session 6a: Memory and Generations (Chair: Marta Eichsteller)	Adam-von-Trott-Saal	Session 6b: Solidarity and Society (Chair: Lyudmila Nurse)	Taberna
Ana Gonçalves (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa)	<i>In search of fragile matters: Memory traces and horizons of possibilities</i>	Natalia Grimm, Andrea Hense, Ina Kaufhold (Sociological Research Institute Göttingen)	How biographical experiences and crises shape ideas of social cohesion
Gheorghe-Calin Goina (Babes-Bolyai University)	<i>How a research grounded on life-accounts can empirically explore the relevance of the concept of generation as understood by Mannheim?</i>	Baiba Bela (University of Latvia)	Social Networks and Community Resilience: Personal Experiences in Strengthening Communities at the Local Level

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Biographical Research: Inequality and Innovation

Benjamin Neumann (TU Dortmund University), Marliese Weißmann (Sociological Research Institute Göttingen)	The Challenges of Legacy in Wealthy Families: Memories, Wealth Transfer, Inter- and Intragenerational Relationships	Margherita Cusmano (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity)	A Visual and Narrative Study of “Images of Society”
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11.25 -11.45 Coffee break

11.45-13.15

Session 7a: Varieties of Work (Chair: Oksana Žabko)	Adam-von-Trott-Saal	Session 7b: Migration, Displacement and Memory I (Chair: Baiba Bela)	Taberna
Ksawery Olczyk (University of Łódź)	Precarious work in the biographical experiences of young adults	Gianluca Gatta (University of Milan)	Crisis, Sociability, and Mnemonic Solidarity between Afghan and Somali Diasporas in Italy: Creative Biographical Perspectives
Julia Edthofer (Universität für angewandte Kunst, Wien)	Women’s Perspectives on the Intertwinement of Living and Working in peripheral Council Housing. An intergenerational Case Study in Vienna	Kamil Łuczaj (University of Łódź)	Experiencing Academic Migration, Remembering Technology: How Does Technological Advancement Shape the Biographies of Expatriate Professors?

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Memory, Crisis and Future

Aleksandra Drączyk (University of Łódź)	Sharing biographical experiences on social media – influencers and platform work	Maija Krumina (University of Latvia)	Post-Exile as Crisis: Biographical Narratives of Return, Belonging, and Identity
Agata Krasowska (University of Wrocław)	Work and Mental Health Crisis: An Analysis of Biographical, Reproductive and Paid Work	Benita Kawalla (University of Kiel)	Between mitigating the critical present and praying for a better future - Acts of citizenship of Jordanian mother's in mixed-status families

13.15-14.30 Launch and Business Meeting (Adam-von-Trott-Saal)

14.30-16.00

Session 8a: Crisis and Future (Chair: Katarzyna Waniek)	Adam-von-Trott-Saal	Session 8b: Migration, Displacement and Memory II (Chair: Maggie O'Neill and Kamil Łuczaj)	Taberna
Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas (University of Łódź)	Icons of compassion - the phenomenon and its significance in turbulent times	Oksana Žabko, Ilze Koroleva, Hanna Pali (University of Latvia)	Dealing with the interrupted life: civic engagement as crisis coping strategy for displaced Ukrainians
Marta Eichsteller (University College Dublin)	From Narratives to Freedoms: Reimagining Sen's Capabilities through Biographical Narratives	Liudmyla Skokova, Nataliia Kostenko (National Academy of Science of Ukraine)	Collective memory: peculiarities of civil discourse during the russian war against Ukraine

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<i>Maria Carmina Sgambato (University of Foggia), Angelo Maria De Fortuna (University of Urbino)</i>	<i>Addressing uncertainty: a dialogical educational process for a possible future</i>	<i>Monica Massari (University of Milan)</i>	<i>Anatomy of a disaster. Memory practices and oblivion politics around a shipwreck in the Mediterranean</i>
<i>Tonina Liriel Aurel (University of Vienna)</i>	<i>Children's Future Conceptions in the Context of Parental Mental Illness</i>	<i>Andrea Glauser (University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna)</i>	<i>„The future is unclear, but I'm alive.“ Biographical narratives and perspectives of displaced artists</i>

16.00-16.15 Coffee break

16.15-17.45 **Session 9: Methodological Changes/Developments** (Chair: *Arne Worm*)

<i>Jacek Kubera (University of Poznań)</i>	<i>Memoir-Writing Competitions: The Birth of the Method, Its Developments and Methodological Challenges</i>
<i>Micol Pizzolati (University of Bergamo)</i>	<i>Engaging Collectively in Biographical Insights: Students Embodiment in Memory Work Workshops</i>
<i>Piotr Szenajch (University of Łódź)</i>	<i>Afro-Poles through the lens. Concerns with visual interviewing as part of biographical research</i>
<i>Małgorzata Bogunia-Borowska (Jagiellonian University)</i> <i>Justyna Kopczyńska (University of Warsaw)</i>	<i>The phenomenon of aeternalization. Expansion of human biography in the digital world</i>

17.45-18.00 **Closing remarks** (Chair: *Ina Alber-Armenat and Baiba Bela*)

Biography of Keynote Speaker

MARIA POHN-LAUGGAS



Professor Maria Pohn-Lauggas completed her degree in sociology at the University of Vienna in 2004 where she also completed her doctorate in 2012. From 2013 to 2016, the researcher held a Hertha Firnberg Fellowship at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Vienna, funded by the Austrian Science Fund FWF, the equivalent of the German Research Foundation. From 2017 to 2018, she was a Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Sociology at the University of Vienna. From 2018 to 2024, Maria Pohn-Lauggas was Junior Professor of Methodological Plural Social Research at the Institute for Methods and Methodological Foundations of the Social Sciences at the Georg August University of Göttingen. In fall 2024, she moved to Ruhr University Bochum as Heisenberg Professor for Qualitative Methods of Social Research.

Maria Pohn-Lauggas researches collective histories of violence and their impact on contemporary societies. She focuses on the persecution of certain groups under National Socialism, such as homosexuals, so-called asocials and Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as slavery and the slave trade in certain regions of Ghana and Brazil. In every case, her approach results in an international framework. The Heisenberg project, for which she is funded with her professorship, is based on the key question: "How can qualitative and interpretative methods be combined in contexts that are permeated by taboos, collective experiences of violence and specific power relations?"

Maria Pohn-Lauggas is a biographical researcher. One of her main research tools is the biographical-narrative interview in combination with family discussions, participant observation, discourse analysis and even visual sociology, i.e. the analysis of images and interviews about images that significantly shape our memories.

<https://forschung.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/professor-maria-pohn-lauggas>

ABSTRACTS OF SESSIONS

Keynote

MARIA POHN-LAUGGAS. Shame. On the power of an emotion in family memories and intergenerational processes among stigmatised groupings of Nazi victims

This lecture focuses on emotions in biographical research. Specifically, I discuss how shame plays a role in shaping family memories and how shame structures intergenerational processes. I do this using the example of families from extremely marginalized groupings persecuted under National Socialism, including in particular those families whose members were persecuted for socially racist reasons. This persecuted grouping was affected by the fact that their experiences of persecution were not included in the public culture of remembrance for decades and were not recognized as victims of National Socialism. Against this background, I discuss how shame and the persistent social fear of descendants of being devalued and excluded are closely linked to the continuity of the stigmatization of social background and lifeworld into the present, but also to the absence of collective counter-memories. Using two cases, I trace how the history of persecution is inscribed in intergenerational relationships and actions through shame, and remains biographically significant in the present.

Session 1: Biographies and Crisis

INES GOTTSCHALK. Biographical Research in the Context of Crisis-Laden Memories as Practices of Witnessing and Recognition: Metatheoretical reflections on possibilities, Requirements, and Limits

Biographical-narrative interviews are more than just a method for collecting and reconstructing life stories—they create moments of genuine human encounter between Researcher and participant. Depending on the situation and research context, a relationship might arise in which Researchers and participants position themselves and each other as members of a different social group. I focus on scenarios of co-construction in which Researchers become ascribed members of a group that has caused harm to the group the participants feel a belonging to. In such settings unrecognized experiences of suffering can come to light.

From a normative perspective – focusing on the necessity of human interaction in a time of an increased use of AI – biographical research has the potential to serve as practices of witnessing and recognition. This applies to the selection of research design, the sample, the interview, as well as the analysis and representation of the data. The (belated) recognition of crisis-laden memories, as well as moments of resilience and resistance, can then carry symbolic and representative significance.

I focus on metatheoretical reflections based on empirical examples, which focus on possibilities, requirements and limitations of these fragile practices, which hold both the potential for healing and the risk of overburdening.

MARTINA SCHIEBEL, JOHANNA WAHL. Protesting biographers in times of crisis

Protest-based political engagement is currently an global phenomenon that can be interpreted as an expression of dissatisfaction with the political handling of global crises. At the same time, these forms of protest can be seen as symptoms of a broader democratic crisis, as they reflect a loss of trust among protesters towards political and parliamentary processes. However, it is not a new phenomenon that socio-political crises and transformation processes can provoke protests and thus also become catalysts for biographical change processes: as social constructs, biographies always refer to social rules, discourses and social conditions (Völter et al. 2005). In our ongoing research project "Generations in

Protest", current civil societal and protest-oriented engagement across various political spectrums in the Federal Republic of Germany is examined from a biographical and intergenerational perspective. The study investigates the processes of forming generational affiliations, intergenerational transmission or differentiation, and the role of media discourses. The lecture focuses on the mutual constitution of biographical experiences, political and media discourses and public spheres. A triangulating methodological approach (cf. Denzin 2012; Alber/Schiebel 2018) will be introduced to adequately analyse these interrelationships.

KATARZYNA WANIEK. Crisis: between individual experiences and discursively created reality

Referring to the collection of the project "Post-transformation in the perspective of biographical experiences of people born between 1980 and 2005. A sociological analysis" and the Schütze's method, an attempt will be made to distinguish between the individual experience of crisis (related to the concept of the trajectory of suffering) and the discursively shaped and reproduced (multi)crisis-affected picture of society. In recent years, the word "crisis" has been continuously "used" in public discourse (the financial crisis, the migration crisis, the climate crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, etc.). It is often accompanied by scientific discourse that without reservation assumes that the phenomena and processes often called "unsettling events" are an indisputable dimension of everyday reality. However, the interviewees startlingly rarely refer to these events and processes in their autobiographical renderings. Although the ongoing discussion of the crisis, especially in the media discourse, seems to shape the daily reality and experiences of ordinary people, suggesting descriptive categories, schemes of interpretation and ways to explain social phenomena, it is still perceived as someone else's problem – disorder and suffering are located elsewhere. The etic (adopted by researchers) categories should be treated critically and should not overshadow the emic (narrators') perspectives.

LYUDMILA NURSE. Use of Cultural Artefacts in Biographical Study of Memory and Identities

The paper discusses methodological approach and findings of a study which explored the role of cultural artefacts in formation of identities through an investigation of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Ukraine in the context of the conflict in east Ukraine (2014-2022)(Thompson, Nurse and Fazel 2023, Nurse and Thompson forthcoming 2025). Studies of music, songs and language conducted in Eastern Europe established the significance of cultural artefacts (music, poetry, literature, physical objects) in relation to memory and identities in multi-cultural societies (Bolhman 2004; Brubaker et al 2006; Frolova-Walker 2004; Hudson 2007, Laitin 1998; Nurse & Sik, 2011, Nurse 2011). The theoretical framework is drawn from cultural historical theory. The idea of dialectical relations between actual minds and the creation of possible worlds (Bruner, 2009; Holland et al, 2001) has been further nuanced in a growing body of work on transformative agency (Stetsenko 2017). In order to understand how displaced people (young people and their parents) were using cultural artefacts to envisage a new way of being an interactive activity with cultural artefacts was embedded in the narrative biographical interviews. Cultural artefacts were analysed along with the biographical narratives from the perspective of their changed meanings from before and after the individuals' and families' flight from conflict places and settling in new places, including the artefacts influence on the new ways of being and the processes and contexts that support that transformation.

Session 2: Crisis and Covid-19

ADAM MROZOWICKI. Essential healthcare workers in Poland and the United States: biographical sociology of polycrisis

The paper discusses the concept of polycrisis from the perspective of biographical sociology and proposes its empirical application in biographical comparative story of workers' experiences and the ways of

coping with the COVID-19 pandemic as a moment of polycrisis in health care and social care in Poland and the USA. I propose to conceptualize polycrisis as a situation in which structural crisis of social reproduction overlap and intersect with sudden, usually exogenous shocks. I argue that biographical sociology can provide an adequate set of theoretical tools for studying the subjective aspects of polycrisis, including, the concepts of biographical process structures, biographical resources, biographical work and life strategies. Next, based on the selected cases from a collection of 61 biographical narrative interviews with care workers in hospitals, nursing homes and home care collected between 2021 and 2024 in Poland and the USA (mainly in New York State), I analyze the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic was remembered in workers' life stories from the perspective of their overall life strategies, biographical resources and interlinked social crises affecting their lives. In explaining Polish-American similarities and differences, particular attention is paid to institutional factors, intersecting inequalities, and the ways in which care work was discursively framed during the COVID-19 pandemic in both countries.

JACEK BURSKI. Do We Need Another Type of Capital? The Role of Biographical Capital in Shaping Life Strategies of Polish and American Doctors

This paper explores the concept of biographical capital as an extension of biographical resources, the term defined as the tacit knowledge and skills gained from past experiences that individuals use to navigate life and pursue personal goals. While biographical resources help explain how people draw on past experiences, this study argues that they are insufficient to account for how individuals contextualize these experiences, derive meaning from life events, and shape their biographical identity. Thus, this paper examines whether a biographical approach can offer an alternative perspective on the problem of social capital.

The study is based on 22 biographical narrative interviews, including 18 with Polish medical doctors and 4 with American counterparts, conducted between 2021 and 2024. Selected cases will be analyzed to illustrate the role of biographical capital in professional and personal identity and life strategies formation. The discussion is framed within the broader context of recent global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing crisis in public services, and the war in Ukraine. These events serve as a backdrop for understanding how individuals mobilize biographical capital in times of uncertainty and change (with Polish-American comparisons and insight).

LIDIA KATIA C. MANZO. VIKTORIYA VAITOVICH. Adapting Biographical Research in Crisis: Digital Methods and Online Engagement During COVID-19.

This paper explores the methodological challenges and opportunities of conducting biographical research during the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing on two distinct qualitative studies. The first examines Polish post-2004 migrants in the UK, where an originally in-person research design had to be rapidly adapted to an online format due to pandemic-related restrictions. The second focuses on working mothers in Italy, where online ethnography and digital interviews were intentionally designed as a core methodological approach to examine experiences of work-life balance and care during lockdowns. While both studies employed digital methodologies, their trajectories diverged: in the first case, the shift to online interviewing raised concerns about trust-building, the depth of biographical narratives, and the limitations of non-verbal communication. In contrast, the Italian case found that digital spaces facilitated the emergence of "communities of care," where participants co-constructed a shared space of emotional support with the Researcher. By comparing these methodological experiences, we critically assess how online qualitative research both constrains and enables new forms of engagement, particularly in times of crisis. Situating these reflections within broader debates on crisis-driven methodological innovation, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions about the evolving role of digital ethnography in migration and gender research.

SYLWIA MĘCFAL, BEATA BIELSKA, ADRIANNA SURMIAK. How researchers narrate their work during different stages of the pandemic crisis – cases of qualitative researchers in Poland

This paper is based on research conducted with qualitative researchers in Poland during the pandemic (42 in-depth interviews with a biographical component). We concentrate on temporal analysis of narrations on research work during the pandemic. Four cases of researchers' accounts are presented, in which we can observe the way the researchers narrate the tempo of work and how it changed during different stages of the pandemic. The cases are selected based on a qualitative analysis we conducted (Męcfal et al. 2025 in review) where we applied Hartmut Rosa's concept of social acceleration to identify seven types of trajectories (paths) of pandemic research experience: 1) Constant acceleration, 2) Short-term deceleration, 3) Long-term deceleration, 4) Deceleration reoccurrence, 5) Constant deceleration, 6) Post-pandemic deceleration, 7) Alienation in acceleration/deceleration.

The chosen cases illustrate how the duration of deceleration affected researchers (particularly women). Furthermore, we can observe in the narrations that pandemic conditions highlighted a significant accumulation and diversity of alienation experiences, but in the last stage of the pandemic processes of normalisation of the crisis occurred. The third stage of the pandemic revealed a change in the narrations after the war in Ukraine started (polycrisis circumstances).

Session 3: Panel: Euroborderwalks

MAGGIE O'NEILL, AGNIESZKA GOLCZYŃSKA-GRONDAS, KREŠIMIR ŽAŽAR, ALEKSANDRA SOBAŃSKA. EuroBorderWalks. Walking Borders, Risk and Belonging: advances in ethno-mimetic research in the making and re-making of three European borders

The panel starts with a brief overview of the project that seeks to produce a biography of three borders at the edges of the European union through walking biographical interviews, narrative interviews and artmaking. Three papers are focusing to the fieldwork site each researcher is working on (Agnieszka GOLCZYŃSKA-GRONDAS and Aleksandra SOBAŃSKA - Polish Border; Krešimir ŽAŽAR - Croatian and Bosnia-Herzegovina Border; Maggie O'NEILL - Irish Border). Each presentation will include: a critical recovery of historical experiences, the importance of the reception of historical knowledge and collective memory of the past in sociological research, related to the three borders in the present. We seek to explore the intricate connections between biography, memory and temporality, societal processes, and crises, as well as visions of the future.

Special Session 4: 30th Anniversary RN03

Speakers: Robert Miller, Robin Humphrey, Maggie O'Neill, Lyudmila Nurse, Baiba Bela in conversation with Lyudmila Nurse and Micol Pizzolati

The session will start from demonstration of excerpts from the video-audio recorded memories of the network by the former chairs of the network. The RN03 network former and current chairs will then share their most treasured memories and reflections on the network history in conversation with Lyudmila Nurse.

In conversation with Micol Pizzolati the panel speakers will be asked to talk about their vision on the future of the network and its priorities.

The presentations will be followed by Questions and Answers and general discussion and an invitation to participate in zine creation activity after the session, which will be led by Micol Pizzolati. During the conclusion of the Session, audience members will be invited to take part in a creative activity that may gently flow into the start of the dinner buffet, creating small zines -simple booklets folded from sheets of paper- around a theme at the heart of discussions and conversations.

Special Session 5: Reconstructions of Biographical Research in German-speaking countries: Histories and Futures

This panel session critically reflects on the histories and futures of German-speaking biographical research through the perspectives of scholars across disciplinary backgrounds. Panelists will draw on their own biographical and institutional trajectories to discuss the field's methodological innovations and responses to societal crises. The session will also open a dialogue about challenges and opportunities for biographical research in an era of digitalisation and social transformation.

Session 6a: Memory and Generations

ANA GONÇALVES. In search of fragile matters: Memory traces and horizons of possibilities

The question of heritage, mainly intangible cultural heritage, is intertwined with the tropes of crisis, risk and threat. Hence, the concern with preservation and safeguarding seeks to halt, slow or mitigate potential processes of change and loss. Recognising that families play a crucial role in cultural transmission, their first-hand accounts can serve as an intersubjective repository of past events (memory) and future developments (imagination). This type of narrative, which, in short, flows seamlessly from family origins to individual destinies, cumulatively gives family members senses of identity and belonging and horizons of possibilities.

All these issues will be discussed and illustrated through empirical cases taken from a recent research project conducted in Lisbon, Portugal, based on Fado musicians' life and family (hi)stories. That research was enriched not only by documentation originating in the field (interviews, genealogies) but also by materials from the past (documentary films, vinyl and digital recordings), including the memorabilia safeguarded for generations (family photographs, historical recordings, collections of lyrics and music scores). Such personal belongings (considered here as life materials) will be explored as intrinsic documentary and diegetic devices.

GHEORGHE-CALIN GOINA. How a research grounded on life-accounts can empirically explore the relevance of the concept of generation as understood by Mannheim?

My study attempts to find out how a research grounded on life-accounts can empirically explore the relevance of the concept of generation as understood by Mannheim? My project is mainly informed by the interplay between archive data and a set of 103 life-history interviews, consisting in the life account narratives of three biological generations of villagers from a rural settlement in Western Romania from the 1920s to 2020 I uncover what I call the generational effects of social generations. By contrasting successive biological generations, I locate specific frames shared by large categories of people who had faced historical processes or events, frames of perception that are at the same time distinct from those who preceded and those who succeeded them.

BENJAMIN NEUMANN, MARLIESE WEIßMANN. The Challenges of Legacy in Wealthy Families: Memories, Wealth Transfer, Inter- and Intragenerational Relationships

Wealthy families have become a significant topic in recent years, particularly regarding the creation and transfer of wealth. Central to this are memories, the temporalities of transfer, and future perspectives. The family legacy should be preserved for future generations, while different family members relate to the inheritance in various ways: whether it concerns e.g. their relationship with (grand-)parents, partners and their own biographical aspirations, or the wealth itself.

In our presentation, we focus on wealth transfer within families and the generational and biographical challenges arising from (potential) conflicts with parental (or, respectively, their own) expectations. Methodologically, we employ biographical-narrative interviews with members of wealthy families as part of an ongoing collaborative project between TU Dortmund University and SOFI Göttingen, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, which investigates the (re)production of wealth in wealthy families.

Results indicate that shared memories can create bonds; e.g., inheriting a family property often carries strong emotional and biographical significance („Herzhaus“). Siblings may find common ground despite differing life paths. However, wealth transfer can also lead to conflict and biographical crises, if certain siblings are favoured or individual ideas of wealth transfer clash with varying familial expectations and wishes.

Session 6b: Solidarity and Society

NATALIA GRIMM, ANDREA HENSE, INA KAUFHOLD. How biographical experiences and crises shape ideas of social cohesion

Social cohesion is discussed in many different ways in relation to overcoming social crises and transformations, for example in the debate on right-wing populist movements or social and economic inequality. As a concept of crisis, it has recently been directly associated with the concept of polarisation in media, political and academic discussions. However, social cohesion is understood differently by different members of society.

The aim of the lecture is to empirically explore these subjective concepts by reconstructing different understandings of social cohesion based on the biographical experiences of different status groups. The following questions are guiding: How is cohesion thematized or not thematized? Who means what by cohesion? What kind of biographical, work-related, familial, or institutional experiences shape notions of cohesion?

Our analysis is based on the qualitative panel study of the RISC. The first wave consists of 90 biographical-narrative interviews with different status groups. Since the interviewees narrate their life stories as well as their experiences with social cohesion according to their own relevance structures, it is possible to reconstruct different understandings and to embed them in the underlying experiences. By contrasting different previous experiences, the question will be explored to what extent they can explain the different understandings of cohesion or to what extent social position affect these orientations.

BAIBA BELA. Social Networks and Community Resilience: Personal Experiences in Strengthening Communities at the Local Level

The aim of this paper is to examine personal experiences of collective action in addressing global issues at the local level. This study has been conducted within the framework of the Latvian Council of Science research project "How can social work make communities more resilient? Social work for community resilience between global issues and local agency." This project aims to comprehensively understand the complex interactions between global issues and local communities. It highlights the need for multi-level governance, participatory approaches, and community-led solutions to address contemporary challenges effectively.

Although global issues are increasingly impacting local communities worldwide, there remains a lack of knowledge regarding how these challenges manifest at the local level and how community resilience can be effectively strengthened. One of the key research questions focuses on how social networks facilitate the conditions that underpin collective efficacy and how these interactions are grounded in local knowledge and traditions. To investigate this, the initial phase of the study involves conducting biographical interviews with social workers and community activists in selected case study locations (the municipalities of Kuldīga, Bauska, Cēsis, and Balvi). These interviews aim to provide a deeper understanding of their personal experiences of collective action, the nature of their social ties, and the

local knowledge and traditions that play a crucial role in collective efforts to address various challenges, including the local manifestations of global issues.

MARGHERITA CUSMANO. A Visual and Narrative Study of “Images of Society”

Existing research on people’s “images of society”—their understanding of the social structure—often relies on large-scale standardized survey data, such as the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). While such data provides generalizable insights into perceptions of society, it offers little understanding of how respondents interpret questions and constrains them to predefined language and framing. To address this gap, this study employs an innovative mixed-methods approach, integrating visual prompts, drawing exercises, and narrative follow-up questions. This methodology allows participants to articulate their perspectives in their own words and images, moving beyond predefined survey categories (e.g., a diamond-shaped or pyramidal representation of society). The findings reveal that participants oscillate between narrating firsthand biographical experiences and constructing abstract interpretations of the social structure. This study makes both an empirical and methodological contribution by demonstrating how biographical experiences matter for “images of society” while showcasing the potential of visual and arts-based methods in sociological inquiry.

Session 7a: Varieties of Work

KSAWERY OLCZYK. Precarious work in the biographical experiences of young adults

The proposed paper focuses on the preliminary findings of research I have carried out as part of my doctoral thesis which delves into biographical meaning of precarious employment among young people. I am especially interested in precarious employment that is experienced as a form of escape from the problems associated with an uncertain reality. My preliminary research suggests that characteristics of precarious work usually considered unambiguously negative (e.g. job instability, lack of social security, etc.) can be perceived as positive by employees, and the work itself, by constantly putting the individual on standby, can be a form of ‘intense’ escape from other problems. In my research, I use the autobiographical narrative interview method as conceptualized by Fritz Schütze in order to focus on problems that may be rooted in the biographical experiences of an individual for whom precarious work (often intuitively associated with youth) can also be a response to the need to grow up and adapt in a dynamically changing, late-capitalist society. The ‘conscious precariousness’ in such a world can be a form of escape from temporal problems, which, however, can have far-reaching consequences for the life and biography of an individual who, deciding to live in constant distraction from other problems, must be careful not to ‘get stuck’ in an unwanted career and thus deepen their woes.

JULIA EDTHOFER. Women’s Perspectives on the Intertwinement of Living and Working in peripheral Council Housing. An intergenerational Case Study in Vienna

In my contribution, I discuss biographical narratives regarding the balancing of care-work and paid work in a peripheral and industrial council housing area of Vienna (Siedlung “Siemensstraße”) from a gender-specific and intergenerational perspective. I interview women from two different generations (70 years+, and 35 years+), who define themselves as “female workers”, on their balancing of paid and care-work during their respective life-span.

I interrelate the analysis of gender and biography with urban studies in order to explore the “spatiality” of individual experiences and intergenerational narratives. Methodologically, I triangulate biographical approaches with ethnographic and socio-spatial analyses: I conduct interviews with two generations of “female workers” within the same community and a “Social Area Analysis” (SAA) of relevant social infrastructure.

My core research question within the realm of SAA regards the potential contribution of council housing—understood as social urban infrastructure—to women’s chances to combine their jobs and

care-work. With regard to the biographical accounts, my core focus lies on this question and on the changing meaning of care-work during the interviewees' life-span: from child-care, and later on caring for parents, to a focus on self-care and/or caring for the own partner while part-time caring for grandchildren following retirement.

ALEKSANDRA DRAŻCZYK. Sharing biographical experiences on social media – influencers and platform work

The proposed paper is based on several autobiographical narrative interviews with influencers from Poland who built relationship with an audience via publishing content on social media platforms. This specific environment of activity has a huge impact on how influencers perform their work. Organisation of platform leads to obscuring the production process and labour that involves being an influencer. What is more, making one's image public in a platform environment can have unpleasant consequences. Being public creates a risk of fragility and vulnerability. Influencers are 'autopreneurs' – autobiographical entrepreneurs (Ashman, Patterson and Brown 2018) who create marketized personae by, among other things, sharing their biographical experiences. As they function on social media, they are exposed to various types of violence from other users without being adequately protected by the platforms, even though they profit from content published by influencers.

AGATA KRASOWSKA. Work and Mental Health Crisis: An Analysis of Biographical, Reproductive and Paid Work

This proposal aims to explore the complexities inherent in the experience of mental health crises, particularly those associated with conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and severe depression. Grounded in biographical research (Schütze 1983), the study examines how individuals facing these crises navigate challenges within the labour market. A central inquiry driving this investigation is the potential therapeutic impact of employment on those experiencing mental health challenges. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether paid work acts as a healing mechanism, as revealed through the narratives of the individuals involved. Additionally, this research addresses the experiences of individuals following a psychiatric diagnosis and their coping strategies within the open labour market. The analysis is informed by three categories that describe the types of work undertaken by the informants: paid work, biographical work, and reproductive work. These three types of work are interdependent and interact with coping mechanisms. The findings suggest that the relationships among these forms of work significantly influence the recovery process. This proposal presents the results of analyses derived from 22 selected biographical interviews conducted across two research projects (COV-WORK and IDUB).

Session 7b: Migration, Displacement and Memory I

GIANLUCA GATTA. Crisis, Sociability, and Mnemonic Solidarity between Afghan and Somali Diasporas in Italy: Creative Biographical Perspectives

Over the past decades, Afghanistan and Somalia have experienced significant migration to Europe due to political violence and state collapse. Currently, Afghanistan faces a theocratic regime and instability, while Somalia shows signs of stabilization.

Drawing on a larger ongoing research project examining how Afghan and Somali diasporas in the United States and Italy interpret their transnational cultural memories and engage in memory-sharing practices (Project Horizon-MSCA 2021 MEMODIAS), this paper explores how these new situations, within the context of global crises and geopolitical shifts, influence the diasporas' memory processes in Italy. It also investigates how sociability regimes and opportunities affect convivial encounters and memory sharing, potentially leading to mnemonic solidarity or conflict, which articulate the effects of the past in the present, aiming to create something valuable for the future.

Methodologically, the paper draws on biographical interviews and creative interdiasporic workshops recently conducted in Italy with members of both diasporas.

Findings reveal that interdiasporic sociability and mnemonic solidarity are influenced by migration regimes, internal diasporic differentiation (generation, ethnic and religious identification, class, and gender), and the entanglement of the current geopolitical crisis with past traumatic memories. However, creative biographical practices show that research can foster original encounters and generate unexpected solidarity.

KAMIL ŁUCZAJ. Experiencing Academic Migration, Remembering Technology: How Does Technological Advancement Shape the Biographies of Expatriate Professors?

This paper examines how technological advancements are remembered and narrated in the context of international migration. Drawing on a project focused on the biographies of Polish expatriate professors, I explore how new technologies are experienced and represented in various personal documents, including memoirs, correspondence, and diaries—both published and retrieved from private and public archives. Covering the period from 1970 to 2020, this analysis captures major shifts in information and communication technologies (ICT), particularly the rise of mobile phones and electronic communication, and their impact on international migrants. Another significant transformation during this period was the popularization of low-fare airlines, which enabled long-distance academic commuting. This study addresses key questions: How do migrants reflect on the role of new ICT in maintaining relationships with people and institutions abroad? Which technological breakthroughs become part of individual biographical experience? And can they influence migration decision-making or its alterations?

MAIJA KRUMINA. Post-Exile as Crisis: Biographical Narratives of Return, Belonging, and Identity

For Latvians who fled as refugees during the Second World War and built exile communities in the West, nostalgia for Latvia became a defining element of their exile identity. However, Latvia's regained independence in 1991 introduced a profound crisis: the legal end of exile forced individuals to make a decision—return or stay.

The prospect of return was not merely a logistical choice but an existential rupture. Exiles who repatriated confronted a homeland that had changed, as had they. Their exile identity, once shaped by political displacement, was now challenged both by personal expectations and by those in Latvia, for whom they were no longer seen as fully belonging. Those who chose to stay abroad faced another transformation: no longer political exiles, they had to redefine themselves as immigrants in their host countries. In both cases, exile ended, but the psychological and emotional dislocation persisted, demanding a renegotiation of identity.

This paper examines these post-exile identity transformations through life story interviews with Latvian exiles, drawing from the Latvian National Oral History Archive. It explores how individuals are narrating their return—or decision not to return—revealing the complexities of belonging, adaptation, and the evolving meaning of home.

BENITA KAWALLA. Between mitigating the critical present and praying for a better future - Acts of citizenship of Jordanian mother's in mixed-status families

The Jordanian citizenship law only allows men to transmit their citizenship leading to mixed-status families in which the Jordanian mother is not able to naturalize her spouse and her children (Frost 2022). Because non-naturalization comes along with several daily challenges (with authorities), in my research I take a look at these mothers with special account to their relationship with the Jordanian state.

The empirical basis of my research are biographical-narrative (family) interviews conducted in English and Arabic in Jordan in 2024 and analyzed with the documentary method.

I argue that mothers in mixed-status families perform (affective) acts of citizenship (Isin/ Nielsen 2008; Fortier 2016) aiming to mitigate the challenges for their children. These acts are influenced by an expectation from the families of protection and care from the state which is regularly disappointed. This daily disappointment leads to a relocation of aspirations for the future - from hope for improvement through state actors to trust only in God and his good will.

Session 8a: Crisis and Future

AGNIESZKA GOLCZYŃSKA-GRONDAS. Icons of compassion - the phenomenon and its significance in turbulent times

The paper is the result of my in interest in compassion as a social phenomenon based on my personal experience of poly-crisis. I assume that biographical sociology can follow its humanistic commitment by pointing to processes and phenomena bringing hope for the present and the future. The focus of this contribution is the phenomenon of the iconisation of compassion, a variant of the 'personification of virtues esteemed on the premises of a pro-social orientation' (Kicinski 2016). Stefan Czarnowski (1982), analysing the cult of St Patrick, wrote about "living values" - carriers of the most important ideals proving that they are possible to be achieved. The biographies of 'icons of compassion' (e.g. Mother Teresa of Calcutta or Pietro Bartolo from Lampedusa) become an element of collective memory, fulfilling important community-forming functions. I will recall the examples of icons of compassion, indicating their embeddedness both in Euro-American and national cultures and in local dimensions, describing the strategies of presenting their (auto)biographies.

I will conclude by pointing to an example of popularizing the biographies of modest persons whose lives have been significant in the light of the moral imperative of compassion, as the social role models of transcending the constraints of the amoral perspective of neo-liberalism.

MARTA EICHSTELLER. From Narratives to Freedoms: Reimagining Sen's Capabilities through Biographical Narratives

Drawing upon Sen's capabilities approach, this paper explores the methodological complexities of adopting a biographical narrative framework in international relations and development economics research on inequality, poverty and climate in Africa and South Asia. The capabilities approach, emphasising individuals' capabilities to achieve meaningful functionings, offers a robust lens for assessing the interplay between structural constraints and personal agency. Yet, when integrated with LHI-based qualitative insights, researchers risk encountering "false friends," wherein seemingly shared concepts (e.g., empowerment, resilience and agency) assume divergent meanings across disciplines. Additionally, top-down methodologies may oversimplify or overshadow the local realities that LHIs illuminate, potentially obscuring the nuanced dynamics of inequality. This paper reviews the capabilities approach's theoretical underpinnings and political dimensions, highlighting its strengths—such as foregrounding normative questions of justice—while acknowledging limitations around individualistic biases and the difficulty of measuring latent freedoms. By situating capabilities within a biographical research framework, this paper outlines methodological strategies for reconciling broad evaluative criteria with context-sensitive narratives. Ultimately, the paper argues that sociological reflection on capabilities can deepen our understanding of agency, inequality, and development, informing scholarly discourse and humanitarian interventions in diverse global contexts.

MARIA CARMINA SGAMBATO, ANGELO MARIA DE FORTUNA. Addressing uncertainty: a dialogical educational process for a possible future

In an era of geopolitical crises, economic instability, and social conflict, young people may struggle to define their identities, discover their aspirations, and plan their future. The erosion of traditional social and ideological frameworks, coupled with the proliferation of post-truth narratives, deepens this uncertainty. Drawing from psychoanalytic perspectives (Kaës, 2012), Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach, and educational studies (Biesta, 2007), this study explores the condition of NEET youth. Our focus is on how individuals navigate the collapse of traditional structures and the increasing fragmentation of knowledge in the digital era. The dysfunctions of transitionality (Kaës, 2012), combined with the fetishization of technology and the acceleration of rhythms, elicit significant affective responses, which can sometimes lead to rigid and maladaptive reactions (Venuleo et al., 2020).

In this context, education plays a crucial role in fostering hermeneutic experiences and enabling future-oriented narratives (Poli, 2019; Appadurai, 2013). Identity formation, understood as a narrative process (Bruner, 1990), is now threatened by the loss of stable reference points. Developing Future Literacy—the ability to distinguish between authentic and non-authentic futures (Poli, 2011)—is essential to promoting exploratory alternatives to crisis-driven responses. Education, as a transformative, dialogical, and transitional space (Winnicott, 1971), helps individuals rediscover subjectivity, rebuild trust, and reimagine a collective future.

TONINA LIRIEL AUREL. Children’s Future Conceptions in the Context of Parental Mental Illness

Children of parents with mental illness face distinctive challenges that profoundly shape their development, education, and future perspectives. However, research remains insufficient regarding the role of coping with familial crises in shaping their future conceptions and parent-child relationships. This study explores how these children envision their future and how the quality of the parent-child relationship influences this process. The study is based on biographical-narrative interviews with individuals aged 20 to 35 from Germany and Austria who identify as having grown up with two parents affected by mental illness. The collected data were analysed through fine-structure analysis and system analysis within an interpretative-hermeneutic framework. Findings reveal that despite significant childhood adversities, respondents have undergone diverse educational experiences fostering resilience and autonomy. They maintain an optimistic outlook yet primarily aspire to stability with harmonious relationships and financial security. Simultaneously, the perceived responsibility for their parents’ and siblings’ well-being profoundly influences their choices. The degree of parentification determines whether they seek emotional distance or maintain close familial ties. Crucial to their future conceptions is familial support: the more supported respondents feel, the more independently they shape aspirations. These findings offer valuable insights for interventions that enhance autonomy and long-term perspectives for young adults.

Session 8b: Migration, Displacement and Memory II

OKSANA ŽABKO, ILZE KOROLEVA, HANNA PALII. Dealing with the interrupted life: civic engagement as crisis coping strategy for displaced Ukrainians

Recent literature evidence that involvement in various forms of civic engagement (such as volunteering or NGOs) is one of the ways how Ukrainian refugees cope with the anxiety, distress and uncertainty caused by their displacement. Scholars divide these strategies according to their aim (such as problem- or emotional-focused) and individual motives (such as action stemming from the sense of belonging or faith). The existing studies fails into examination of these coping strategies and respective civic engagement interlinked with the previous experience of activists. This knowledge gap can be mitigated by using biographical methods, which highlights path dependence of individuals’ activities by setting the moment of biographical rupture and following coping strategies in a single life story.

This paper offers further exploration of civic engagement motives of refugees based on biographical interviews conducted in Latvia with displaced Ukrainians who have been involved in NGOs or volunteering in their host country. Tracing the biographies of the interviewees shows that they have transformed personal experience of coping with the crisis into collective action both by involving into already existing forms of activism and founding their own NGOs which are becoming so powerful to engage in negotiations with governmental institutions of the host country.

This work is supported by the research “Reception of migrants under conditions of uncertainty: governance and local level inclusion” funded by the Latvian Council of Science (grant number: LZP-2023/1-0227).

LIUDMYLA SKOKOVA, NATALIYA KOSTENKO. Collective memory: peculiarities of civil discourse during the Russian war against Ukraine

The purpose of the study is to identify the dynamics of the vision of the war events among cultural activists, representatives of Ukrainian civil society for whom words are a working resource. They are journalists, cultural managers, editors and translators who performed different actions and tasks: volunteering, counterpropaganda, participation in combat, and documentation of war crimes. Their testimonies present the affective and value atmosphere in the society and support collective memory. First stage of the research of the projects of Ukrainian humanitarian discourse in the first year of Russian-Ukrainian war [«We Can Hear You, Speak» (2022). URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/cdn/cd1/bforum/>] shows that this discourse is based on personal experience of the participants overlapping with the experience of civilian population. The main thing is the narration, empathizing with sufferings felt by compatriots; there are practices of reflecting on overturned time; there is shock from the impossibility to find the necessary words; there are projections of victory which, contrary to everything, will come, promising fair payback for Russia's war crimes and further democratic development of Ukraine. The stage in analyzing of reflections by civil society activists in the subsequent years of the war will enable to trace dynamics of the themization of civil discourse.

MONICA MASSARI. Anatomy of a disaster. Memory practices and oblivion politics around a shipwreck in the Mediterranean

After the shipwreck occurred off the coasts of Lampedusa on October 3, 2013, which resulted in at least 366 migrants dead, the issue of migrant border deaths has acquired growing visibility in the European imagination and public agenda. In the following decade, however, many other tragic shipwrecks have occurred, and their narrative has become repetitive and normalised. On one side, the de facto legitimization of a presumed inevitability of these massacres, where civil society seems powerless and states not responsible, has generated a state of indifference and collective amnesia. On the other, they have made visible subjectivities, practices and relationships that question the status quo and claim recognition through memory practices that challenge the politics of oblivion that shapes media discourse and political action.

Based on a fieldwork research addressing the forms of memorialization through art practices carried out in the area of Cutro (Calabria, Italy), where a major shipwreck occurred on February 26, 2023, when almost 94 migrants died and many other disappeared in the sea, this paper aims at analysing, through a mixed methodology mostly drawing from biographical and ethnographic methods, the role played by different actors – survivors, local citizens and victims' family members – in carrying out counter-memory social practices that while reclaiming recognition and identity for the disappeared, attempt to cure the trauma left on individuals and communities.

ANDREA GLAUSER. The future is unclear, but I'm alive." Biographical narratives and perspectives of displaced artists

In many countries and regions worldwide, artistic freedom is currently severely restricted. In authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, artists frequently find themselves particularly exposed and at risk of persecution due to the (public) nature of their work, which often compels them to seek exile. This paper studies the experiences and future perspectives of displaced artists currently living in Polish, Austrian, and Swiss cities. It draws from a long-term empirical study, based on ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, to shed light on how artists in exile construct and narrate their personal and collective futures. Particular attention is paid to how these actors reflect on and deal with the multifaceted conditions of exile, including the tightening of border controls and mobility regimes of European nation states. This contribution will illuminate how visions of the future are narrated and developed in the light of multiple uncertainties and discontinuities. From a theoretical angle, this research draws on sociological perspectives on exile (Reinprecht 2023; Simmel 1908) and brings them into dialogue with concepts of "biographical self-representations" and narratives of the future (Honegger et al. 2002; Rosenthal 2024).

Session 9: Methodological Changes/Developments

JACEK KUBERA. Memoir-Writing Competitions: The Birth of the Method, Its Developments and Methodological Challenges

In the context of the 30th Anniversary of the ESA RN 03, the paper will present the roots, contexts and development of the method of collecting biographical data initiated by Florian Znaniecki in Poznań in 1921. Since that year, the memoir-writing competitions method has contributed to the production of about one million biographical materials. By tracing through various initiatives and traditions, the paper will address the specificity of this method and its connections with other trends in biographical research, especially those from Europe and the United States. It will then focus on the types of research in which this method proves particularly useful. Firstly, it will analyze the socio-demographic profiles of participants in selected competitions, both from the pioneering period of 1921-1938 and from the last years. Secondly, it will present the competition as an interplay between Researchers, memoirists, and third parties in the light of interaction theory. This will explain the influence of the memoir-writing competitions method on the way authors of inspired autobiographies describe their life experiences and trajectories.

MICOL PIZZOLATI. Engaging Collectively in Biographical Insights: Students Embodiment in Memory Work Workshops

The presentation delves into how participants engaged in collective memory workshops around care in Italian university environments, designed as spaces for young students to explore personal and shared experiences of navigating desires and practices of connection and recognition through remembering, writing, empathising, and reframing stories.

Drawing on comments shared when I invited them to reflect on how the process had felt, I illustrate how writing personal memories in a shifted voice and by hand was experienced as a task that demanded effort, attention, and at times discomfort, while also opening spaces of creativity, enjoyment, and surprise. This embodied engagement in creating their memories as artifacts enabled participants to approach their experiences from unfamiliar angles, composing narratives that revealed both detail and emotion. Collective memory work was enacted as a dynamic interplay between cognitive labour and affective resonance, between the pleasure of revisiting personal memories and the strain of encountering suffering in the experiences of others.

The multiplicity of engagements – cognitive, affective, embodied – brought the workshops spaces of care and transformation.

PIOTR SZENAJCH. Afro-Poles through the lens. Concerns with visual interviewing as part of biographical research

For more than a decade, a generation of Poles born into families of African immigrants from the communist and early transformation era has been entering adulthood. Polish is their first language, and they are saturated with Polish culture. Yet, in the seemingly still largely mono-ethnic and mono-cultural Eastern European country, the appearance of Afro-Poles remains a stigma of otherness and foreignness.

Despite this, contemporary Poles of African descent not only consider themselves Polish but want to change Polish culture and society. Many of them attempt this through starting NGO's, media campaigns, petitions and street protests, but also staging theatre plays and writing memoirs or autobiographical essays.

The research project referred in the paper aims at creating a multi-layered description of the experience of being a Pole of African descent, including aspects such as social and cultural mobility, activism and cultural production, based on auto-biographical narrative interviews complemented by photographic interviews.

This mid-fieldwork work-in-progress presentation will focus on the methodological and ethical problems surrounding the recruitment of interviewees from a vulnerable minority group, as well as expanding the traditional biographical research approach with visual interviewing and visual data collection techniques.

MAŁGORZATA BOGUNIA-BOROWSKA, JUSTYNA KOPCZYŃSKA. The phenomenon of aeternalization. Expansion of human biography in the digital world

The development of new digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence in a transcendental sense breaks the boundary of time, which has so far been an indisputable, linear dimension of human life. Thanks to the use of advanced solutions using AI technology - the biographical presence of an individual in the social world can be ensured in isolation from the temporality of their physical life, i.e. aeternalized.

We call this phenomenon biographical expansion, which in the era of technological transformation is realized in the form of aeternusopticon - a new approach to the human condition, immersed in the world of digital representations, detached from the categories of time and space.

Thanks to the process of interactive "immortalization" of image - people who have passed away can be brought back to life, participate in posthumous artistic events, and even - continue their artistic career.

The life of a new-old being referred to as aeternus allows not only to oppose the finiteness of human physical existence, but also for biographical intensification and expansion in the postmortem period. Aeternus gains an extraordinary chance to realize plans, dreams, actions that were unavailable to his own biography at an "earlier stage" of development. It is difficult to indicate the direction of development of the biography of aeternus, which can develop expansively and intensively both in the environment of living people and in the growing community of other aeterni.

The aim of the presentation is to present the concept of aeternalization as a form of expansion of human biography in the era of technological transformation and to describe the possibilities – technological, cultural and social – resulting from its broad implementation. This concept will be presented on selected examples from the area of contemporary culture – literature, cinematography and media discourse.

MAP

Conference venue:

Adam-von-Trott-Saal and Taberna, Alte Mensa Tagungszentrum, Wilhelmsplatz 3 - next to the University Aula in the old town



CONFERENCE NOTES