

## Call for Papers

European Sociological Association  
Research Network 3  
*Biographical Perspectives on European Societies*

The 9<sup>th</sup> ESA Conference in Lisbon  
September 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> 2009  
*European Society or European Societies*

to register and send your abstract please visit the website  
[www.esa9thconference.com](http://www.esa9thconference.com)

.....

### List of Sessions:

1. **Social Theory and Social Practice. Towards Theory of European Society based on Qualitative/Biographical Research.**  
Chair: Thea Boldt, University of Goettingen, Germany.
2. **European Biographies, Art, Performance, and Methodology.**  
Chair: Maggie O'Neill, University of Loughborough, UK.
3. **Teaching Visual Methods.**  
Chair: Timothy Shortell, Sociology Department, Brooklyn College, New York, USA.
4. **The Language(s) of Europe: Issues of Meaning and Translation in European Biographical Research.**  
Chair: Robin Humphrey, University of Newcastle, UK
5. **Generations and Social Memory in Context of European Societies.**  
Chair: Edna Lomsky-Feder, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel  
& Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruppin Academic Center, Israel
6. **Methodological Issues in Biographical Research on European Society.**  
Chair: Bogusia Temple, University of Central Lancashire, UK

## Sessions' Outlines:

### **1. Social Theory and Social Practice. Towards Theory of European Society based on Qualitative/Biographical Research.**

Chair: Thea Boldt, University of Goettingen, Germany.

The discourse on European Society that has a power to influence social policies in different countries is not based on singular case studies but on research results, which can be generalized in form of social theories. Therefore biographical research that aims to be a part of that discourse and have an impact on broader discussions about European Societies shall not ignore the fact, that its research results without being skillfully generalized, will not be considered as representative for understanding wide range of problems European citizens are facing in their everyday life practice. The connection between everyday social practice, biographical research analysis and social theory of European Society/Societies are the subject of that session.

Papers are invited to clarify and exemplify systematic ways of theoretical generalization based on qualitative and biographical research results in particular. Questions for discussion are: how Max Weber's concept of *Ideal type* can be used to generate social typologies on European Society/Societies in biographical research context? What other concepts and traditions can be adapted by working on social theories based on biographical research? What are the main differences between different biographical paradigmes on the level of creating social theories?

### **2. European Biographies, Art, Performance, and Methodology.**

Chair: Maggie O'Neill, University of Loughborough, UK.

At the recent RN3 conference in Cracow Dec 12-14th 2008 participants explored biographical research through narrativity, performance, photography, digital media and arts practice at the intersections of European biographies, performance and art. Papers are invited that both reinforce and develop the inter-disciplinary work presented in Cracow.

Questions to explore in our session include: What are the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of these inter-disciplinary undertakings? Given the performative turn as well as the turns to art, the senses and visual methodologies in Social Science research what remains distinctive about Social Science research? To what extent does biographical research that uses performative, digital and arts based methods re-invigorate biographical methods and/or help us to better understand broader social, cultural and historical structures and processes [formations]? What can working in the hyphen between biographical research and the performative/ arts practice tell us about European Societies?

### **3. Teaching Visual Methods.**

Chair: Timothy Shortell, Sociology Department, Brooklyn College, NY, USA

Papers are invited that elaborate on the sociological pedagogy of the visual, with special attention to how visual and narrative data relate. The main question here is: how do visual methods help us to understand the connection between biography and society? In what ways do visual data and narrative communicate our sense of self, sense of biographical belonging? With globalization, the migration of peoples -- both within European states and globally -- makes it ever more likely that we will live among cultural 'strangers'. As a result, we regularly encounter visual markers of identities different from our own. How do we make sense of our own or others' movement from 'there' to 'here' -- as migrants, or as members of majorities learning to live with minorities? And how do we teach a sociologically oriented spatial semiotics?

### **4. The Language(s) of Europe: Issues of Meaning and Translation in European Biographical Research.**

Chair: Robin Humphrey, University of Newcastle, UK

JP Roos, in an essay on 'Which (or Whose) Language should I use', laments the need to disseminate life story research beyond his native Finland in English, even though the life stories have been told in Finnish or Swedish, and in contexts which 'may be totally misunderstood in other countries'. Does the rich range of European languages aid or hinder the prospects of European integration? And how problematic are the issues inherent in translation for European biographical research? Roos's essay was on our website:

<http://www.dur.ac.uk/writingacrossboundaries/writingonwriting/jproos/>

### **5. Generations and Social Memory in Context of European Societies.**

Chair: Edna Lomsky-Feder, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel  
& Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruppin Academic Center, Israel

Sociological literature suggests that a generation is a social category that mediates between personal, group, national and global memory. The relationship between these categories takes on new meanings in the context of Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Despite the sociological importance of a generation, its demarcation is not clear. The concept is characterized by multiple meanings: a generation can be a cohort, it can embody a form of consciousness, it can represent a stage in life and it can incorporate kinship descent transfer. Each of these definitions raises a different set of questions.

Our first set of questions takes us back to Mannheim's discussion of a generational consciousness. Generations are often associated with historical events and as an outcome, their members identify with, and are identified by them (be they local, national, European, global). These events may be

considered heroic (such as the foundation of a state or a social movement), or traumatic (such as genocide and exile). What is the place of these foundational events in individuals' biographies? How does the "proximity" (or distance) to these foundational events affect power relations within generations and between them?

A second set of questions pertains to the transmission of memories from one generation to the other. What are the practices of transmission? What are the arenas and settings for transmission? How does the context, and specifically political developments, feed into processes of transmission? The study of the Holocaust brings to the forefront these questions.

Finally, the third and last set of questions that we would like to address touches on life-stages within a generation. There is a bond between the life cycle and social/political/economic changes. How does the self awareness and the memories of a single generation change through time? For instance, what happens to a generation that evolves within a specific national context and finds itself later in a completely new political setting (such as the states that emerged following the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc)? In addition, and at times complementary, how do aging processes affect the memory and perception of a generation?

## **6. Methodological Issues in Biographical Research on European Society.**

Chair: Bogusia Temple, University of Central Lancashire, UK

Researchers within Europe use a variety of approaches to their work, each with its strengths and weaknesses. One of the strengths of biographical research is its ability to focus on the individual within society but this presents many challenges when different cultures, languages and borders are involved. This session aims to pull together different sociological approaches to investigating being European and belonging to Europe society in a way that reflects on the benefits of approaches as well as possible pitfalls. The focus is not on the results of such research.

Questions of interest include:

What are the contributions of different approaches in examining European society?

How can we examine multiple allegiances?

What is the influence of the researcher's own background on the way research is carried out and analysed?

What influence do community researchers and bilingual researchers have on the research process and findings?

What are the ethical implications of particular approaches to working with people from different cultural and language backgrounds?

These questions are a guide to possible topics but suggestions for innovative methodological papers are welcome.