



Biennial Report of the Research Network 03 “Biographical Perspectives on European Societies” 2017-2019

The Research Network ‘Biographical perspectives on European Societies’ aims to promote scholarly exchange and creative collaboration between sociologists using biographical perspectives to understand the social reality. Our scope of interests is mainly organized around the following themes: identity, migration, ethnicity, memory, processes of social transformation and other processes structured within and structuring the social reality. Methodologically the network is developing along the qualitative, mainly biographical methods combining it with visual and performative methods.

Outgoing Coordinators and board members (2017-2019)

Kaja Kazmierska (Poland) - Coordinator
Lyudmila Nurse (UK) – Co-coordinator
Ina Alber–Armenat (Germany)
Jane Arnfield (UK)
Baiba Bela (Latvia)
Thea Boldt (Germany)
Anna Dolińska (Poland)
Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas (Poland)
Maggie O’Neill (UK)
Wojciech Połec (Poland)
Elena Rozhdestvenskaya (Russia)
Katarzyna Waniek (Poland)

Incoming Coordinators and board members (2019-2021)

Coordinator: Lyudmila Nurse (UK)
Co-coordinator: Katarzyna Waniek, (Poland)
Executive Board:
Ina Alber-Armenat (Germany)
Jane Arnfield (UK)
Baiba Bela (Latvia)
Ana Caetano (Portugal)
André Epp (Germany)
Agnieszka Golczynska-Grondas (Poland)
Maggie O’Neill (Republic of Ireland)
Elena Rozhdestvenskaya (Russia)
Kateřina Sidiropulu-Janků (Czech Republic and Austria)
Piotr Szenajch (Poland)

Network Activities

The last mid-term conference in 2018 was co-organised by ESA RN03 and University of Lodz, Poland (Kaja Kazmierska and Lyudmila Nurse were the Conference Programme organisers). The conference was hosted by the University of Lodz (Department of Sociology of Culture) in the historic Polish city

of Lodz on 17-18 September 2018. The theme of the mid-term conference: “Theoretical and empirical reflections on social disorganisation and “otherness” in modern European societies: Following biographical and discursive approach of Thomas and Znaniecki's legacy of “Polish Peasant in Europe and America” was dedicated to the centenary since publication of W. Thomas and F. Znaniecki's work in 2018 which created a foundation for the biographical research in Europe.

The conference addressed recent theoretical developments on cultural and social diversity, migration, poverty and cultural nationalisms in the modern European societies. Its participants discussed the new empirical evidence on the relationship between the cultural and social diversity of European societies in public and private spaces in cities and rural areas and the ways it is portrayed in biographical experiences of individuals. The new methodological advances in biographical and qualitative mixed methods of research and data analysis were integral part of the discussion. Through using examples from narrative, biographical, ethnographical research from various perspectives: professional, social, cultural, political, religious, artistic, it reflected on social disorganization and “otherness” in modern European societies. The conference Keynote lectures were by Catherine Delcroix, University of Strasbourg, “Dynamiques Européennes” (DynamE), France “How Biographical Studies and social experience of migration are still inspired by “The Polish Peasant in Europe and America” and Maggie O’Neill, University of York, UK: “Theorizing, experiencing and imagining biographical research one hundred years after ‘The Polish Peasant’: the walking biographical interview method”.

Two special panels were part of the conference programme:

A special discussion panel dedicated to the legacy of Thomas and Znaniecki which featured speakers: Fritz Schütze, Marek Czyżewski, Andrzej Piotrowski, and Robert Miller and was chaired by Kaja Kaźmierska.

A second panel discussed the application of biographical method in the study of mothers from disadvantaged groups a study of the EC H2020 project ISOTIS: “The Mothers’ story of inequality” was presented and moderated by Lyudmila Nurse, University of Oxford UK. Presenters: Kateřina Sidiropulu Janku and Jana Obrowska, Masaryk University Brno, Czech Republic; Ayca Alayli, Utrecht University, The Netherlands; Alessandra Mussi, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy, Katarzyna Gajek, University of Łódz and Paulina Marchlik and Elżbieta Czerska-Szczepaniak, University of Warsaw, Poland.

Ten thematic sessions featured 48 presentations by participants from 11 countries. These were: Biographies in Various Contexts; The Polish Peasant – present perspectives; Political and National Constructions of Otherness; Biographical Experiences of Homelessness; Identities stemmed from the Past; Biographies of cultural and political elites; Communities and Institutions: Different Aspects of Otherness; Image of the Other in educational, social and community environments; Work, and Identity Work and Professional Biographies; Application of qualitative and biographical research methods to contemporary society

The call for papers was widely spread beyond the membership of the ESA RN03. The dissemination outreached to several national associations, EC-funded research projects, and professional social media. There was the website dedicated to the conference <http://esamidterm2018.uni.lodz.pl/>

Before the conference on the 15th of September three workshops were organized, which were attended by 35 participants. The workshops were organized by RN03 Board members Jane Arnfield (UK) Drama and Biography - (Out of) Living Memory and Maggie O’Neill (UK): Methods on the Move: walking biographies. And by the distinguished guest of the mid-term conference Fritz Schütze (Germany) on Biographical analysis of written texts

The network activities at the ESA Conference of 2019

RN03 had organized five sessions in total. Four thematic sessions and one joint session in collaboration with RN02 Sociology of the Arts with a total of 24 papers were presented orally. One

session had a film demonstration and discussion. The sessions were chaired by Kaja Kazmierska, Maggie O'Neill, Katarzyna Waniek and Lyudmila Nurse.

Biographical Methods in the Qualitative Research session featured two oral presentations by João Baía, Ana Caetano and Magda Nico, ISCTE, Portugal: Connecting The Dots: Mapping The Field Of Biographical Research In Europe and by André Epp, University of Education Karlsruhe, Germany: Considerations on Triangulation of Biographical Narrative Interviews and Expert Interviews - Methodological Modifications and Extensions to Identify Relations Between Biography and Practical Theory.

Hermílio Santos, PUCRS, Brazil - President of the ISA RC 38 "Biography and society" presented his documentary film: Lifeworld - The Sociology of Alfred Schutz, followed by discussion.

Methods of Analysis of Biographical Data session featured five oral presentations: by Hazel Rosemary Wright, Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom: Hearing, Heading and Holistically Analysing to 'See' That 'Unsaid' in Biographic Interviews; Katarzyna Waniek, University of Lodz, Poland: Biographical Experiences of Transformation in the Cohort Born 1980-1990. A Case Analysis; by Michela Franceschelli, UCL, United Kingdom: Global Migration And Local Communities: Social Solidarity And Collective Grievance With The Absent State In The Italian Island Of Lampedusa: Elena Rozhdestvenskaya, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Russian Federation: Biographical Research in the Era of Big Data: CV Analysis of the Management Business Elite in Russia; Ana Vidu, University of Deusto, Spain, Juanita Candamil, University of Barcelona, Adriana Aubert, University of Barcelona, Spain: Second Order Sexual Harassment And Solidarity Networks In Universities.

Biography and Memory session featured four oral presentations by Andrzej Czyżewski, University of Lodz, Poland: 1968 in Poland – Biography and Memory; Edmunds Šūpulis, University of Latvia, Latvia: Narrative Construction of Generational Experience in Latvian Life Stories; Kaja Kazmierska, University of Lodz, Poland: Winners and Losers of the Process of Transformation from the Biographical Perspective. Paolo Contini, Facoltà Teologica Pugliese, Italy; Angela Mongelli, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro: Reception and Integration: The Narrative of the Riace Case.

Biography and Identities session featured four presentations: by Katerina Sidiropulu Janku, Jana Obrovská, Masaryk University, Czech Republic: "I Get Along Better with Whites than with Blacks." Discursive Imprisonment and Ways out for Third Generation of „Others“ in European Space. Czech-Slovak Roma Mothers Narrating their Way to Upbring the Early School Children; Abdul Rauf, Bielefeld University, Germany: Boundaries Un/Making By Young Refugees In Urban Spaces and Hana Maříková, Institute of Sociology, Czech Republic: To Become or Not to Become a Parent? How Childless/Childfree Men Experience Their Life Trajectories and Bolaji Balogun, University of Leeds, United Kingdom: The Racialised - not being Polish, not being White, not being European.

Joint session of the RN02 and RN03: Performative and Arts-Based Methods in Biographical Research were jointly chaired Chris Mathieu, Sweden and Lyudmila Nurse, UK.

The session also featured four presentations: by Justyna Kijonka, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland: A Migrant's Biography as Art. Ana Gonçalves Universidade de Lisboa, Instituto de Ciências Sociais; Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Centro em Rede de Investigação em Antropologia, Lisboa, Portugal; ,Alexandre Bergamo, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina - UFSC, Florianópolis, Brasil: Frames of Live: The Visual-Verbal Interplay in Photo-Biographical Research; by Maggie O'Neill, UCC, Ireland; , Lyudmila Nurse, Oxford University, UK (presented by Maggie O'Neill: Creative Applications Of Biographical Research Methods; thoughts on the inter-disciplinarity, analysis and interpretation of biographical data. Katarzyna Niziołek, University of Białystok, Poland: Assemblage of Memory. A Female Experience of Memory Transmission and Performance.

All sessions were well attended by RN members and other conference participants.

The Network's newsletter and other means of communication with its members

In 2017-2019 the Coordinators continued to publish a network newsletter which was issued twice a year. The newsletter was sent to the researchers from the network and wider research community. From this year the Coordinators intend to use the ESA system for publishing the newsletter for communicating with its members.

RN03 doesn't have a website of its own, as this would be difficult to sustain in case of handovers from one coordination team to another. The network uses the official ESA website and has group **Facebook** page.

There were no special publications organized by the network, however, information about publications by individual members were included in the newsletters and are also published on the Facebook page along with the calls for papers and other relevant information.

RN03 is working on the issues to improve participation of PhD students and early career researchers in the events, organized by the network. Invitations to participate in RN03 events are distributed to: researchers outside the network, through the other ESA networks (RN02/RN07), through research projects' networks and networks of national Sociological Associations (e.g. Polish Sociological Society, German Sociological association). The network maintains close collaboration with the ISA RC38 "Biography and society"; some members of the RN are also members of the RC38. At Manchester conference we had a presentation from the President of the RC38 Biography and Society from the ISA from Brazil Hermílio Santos, PUCRS, and Brazil

Collaboration within ESA with other RNs

The network collaborates with RN02 "Sociology of the arts" and had organized a joint session at the ESA 2019 Manchester conference. It also has collaborated with the RN07 "Sociology of culture" and has started preliminary talks about a possible joint session at the next 2021 ESA Conference and participation of the RN's members in the networks' mid-term events.

After the Manchester conference RN03 has started new collaboration with RN20 "Qualitative methods" and contributed to the topics related to the RN03 main research profile in the call for papers for the RN20 mid-term conference. RN03 members will participate in the RN20 "Qualitative methods" mid-term conference at the University of Kassel, Germany in August 26–28, 2020: 'Seeing and the Other Senses – Making Sense of the Senses Through Language. Opportunities and Challenges in Qualitative Research': <http://www.uni-kassel.de/go/midtermRN20>

Plans for further activities of RN 03 in 2020

The network's mid-term activity will be organized in Cork, Republic of Ireland in late June 2020, 26-27 June (or 16-17 July) - Dates to be confirmed in January 2020. The event will be organised by the ESA RN03 and Department of Sociology University College Cork in collaboration with the Sociological Association of Ireland.

A two-day interactive workshop: "Methodology of biographical work: interview(s), analysis, interpretation". The aim of the workshop is to focus on methodological issues of biographical research, such as: core interview techniques, ethical issues in biographical research, hands-on work on analysis and interpretation. The workshop will be organised as interactive discussion panels, moderated by RN03 Board members; smaller groups to work on data analysis and interpretation, discussion of creative methods (walking biographies session) and a plenary session at the end of the workshop with individual and group presentations. The workshop will also include a session on how to write up biographical analysis for peer-reviewed publications. Participants will prepare end of the course presentations and present them at the final plenary sessions.

The workshop is designed to attract participation of the PhD students and researchers from outside of the network who are using or considering use biographical methods in their research and on the publications of the results.