

Call for Papers

Exile – Flight – Persecution

International conference combined with the
Annual Conference of the Section “Biographical Research” of the
German Sociological Association

University of Göttingen, 28-30 November 2019

Organizing Team:

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Flight and migration movements within the context of processes of collective violence such as wars, civil wars or revolutions, ethnic, religious and political persecution, deportations or forced resettlements, as well as natural and environmental disasters, are by no means new social phenomena, as some current public discourses may suggest. We only need to go back one hundred years to find a long list of major collective events, both in Europe and in other continents, which forced large groupings of people to leave their home region or country of origin. While some made up their minds to live their life in exile, others simply sought safety in some other region, with no plans for the future. It does not require extensive sociological research to see that this still applies to today's societies. It is therefore all the more astonishing how little it is thematized – at least in the European countries – as a component of collective memory practice. Collective discourses of remembrance tend to focus on the migration of certain groups, while others are omitted, depending on the historical and current social position of the migrants in the host countries. In sociological research, too, a narrow or selective focus on certain groupings and current migration movements can be observed. It is also astonishing that so little attention is paid in the social sciences to widely differing migration processes in the past and present – for example, the flight of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe in connection with the two world wars, the flight or exile of Jewish people, or forced migration from the war zones in former Yugoslavia – with regard to their structural similarities and differences.

The current public discussions on migration which are being carried on in Europe but also in North America, are also characterized by a very striking homogenization of refugees and illegalized migrants. Thus, their individual or collective experiences of persecution or other forms of violence and courses of migration are not taken into account; instead, migration is often classified, labelled and discussed as being exclusively economically motivated.

Furthermore, it is noticeable that at present there is no longer any talk of exile as an experiential context between forced migration, political emigration, flight, expulsion, persecution or deportation. Even in sociological research, exile is treated as a marginal

phenomenon, in clear contrast, for example, to historical and literary research on exile that focuses on Nazi victims.

With this conference we want to draw attention to the above-described phenomena, which have been incompletely studied in sociology and related sciences, and examine them from the perspective of sociological biographical research and in dialogue with colleagues from other research traditions and other nations (the plenary talks will be given by colleagues from Brazil, Ghana and Austria). It is biographical research, in particular, that can reveal the heterogeneity and complexity of migration processes and their historical contextualization; but here, too, there is a lack of comparative empirical studies at the case level of large groupings and we-groups. A further aim is to discuss the topic of exile in connection with current research on migration processes and causes from a comparative historical perspective, and to look at continuities in respect of historical and contemporary power relations, as well as socio-historical differences and, last but not least, different discourses and ways of speaking about such processes and events (in the present and the past) as social facts.

The conference will be combined with the annual meeting of the Section "Biographical Research" of the German Sociological Association (*DGS*), and will be organized in cooperation with the Research Committee 38 "Biography and Society" of the International Sociological Association. The main language at the conference will be German, but papers in English are welcome.

We are planning to apply to the German Research Foundation for funding for this international conference. Therefore we kindly ask you to submit an abstract as soon as possible, and at the latest by **January 15, 2019**.

Submission of proposed papers

Papers can be submitted in German or English. Please send your abstract by email to maria.pohn-lauggas@uni-goettingen.de.