

Revisiting Migration with a Special Focus on the Global South

Spring conference of the Developmental Sociology / Social Anthropology Section (ESSA) of the German Sociological Association (DGS)

June 18-19, 2020 at Fulda University of Applied Sciences

The number of people being on the move worldwide continues to rise. While scholarly attention as well as public discourses (at least in the global North) are centred primarily on migration to and immigration in Europe and Northern America, numbers of people migration to various regions belonging to the Global South are much higher. Apart from a few cases, which have received some attention, most migration, dynamics in the Global South thus remain rather invisible. Even less attention is being paid to the complexities of physical movement within and across borders, the geographical patterns and temporalities, the heterogeneity of people moving, as well as their motives, rationalities and strategies. It also remains unclear, especially in the scientific and political debates and discourses, how different kinds of migration and movement can be distinguished from each other and also if drawing clear-cut distinctions actually make sense, given the fact that categorisations might render actual movement patterns invisible. Additionally, positionalities and micro-politics pursued by people being on the move are rarely taken into account. Quite often, migrants (are forced to) dwell in places along migration routes, engaging in economic, cultural and political activities while being compelled to waiting. Others are forced to stay despite their aspiration to move and look for greener pastures away from home. Practices that can be observed in different contexts are quite diverse, ranging from coping strategies to engagement in actual politics and the promotion of counter narratives. There is also a broad variety of possibilities to research migratory movement, ranging from ethnographic encounters to more standardized methods facing the challenge to pay justice to the heterogeneity of migrants. While most methodological strategies continue to focus on either movement or emplacement, there is still scope to bring these together in more comprehensive frameworks.

The Spring Conference of the Development Sociology and Social Anthropology Section seeks to shed light on the complexities of migration by looking beyond the mainstream of migration research through focussing particularly on the Global South. We aim at bringing together both empirical contributions as well as attempts to forward migration scholarship conceptually, by elucidating the complexities of movement. We assume that migration cannot be understood without taking societal as well as geographical complexities into account. Thus, to ground analyses from an intersectional perspective, which allows to understand the different ways in which gender, age, social status, ethnicity and other categories of social differentiation structure migration. Moreover, we aim to overcome the methodological nationalism, which continues to determine the analytical focus of much research. Understanding migration from a translocal perspective, which takes movement of varying reach within and across borders into account and seeks to relate these, constitutes an enduring challenge in migration scholarship, especially in most parts of the Global South, where many borders are more volatile than in Europe. Against this backdrop, we wish to centre this conference on five thematic foci:

- a. **Categories and Labels.** In how far do categories such as migrants and refugees, forced and voluntary migration, internal displacement and exile help us to understand the complexities of movement? How do migrants relate to them, do they reject them or do they employ them for their own advantage?
- b. **Mobility and Immobility** The aspiration to move is part of everyday life and shapes the biographies of many people. While it is often assumed that globalisation forces people to be more mobile, forced immobility is the other side of the coin. How are forced immobility and specific forms of mobility linked to each other? How do mobile people cope with the situation in which common patterns of mobility are not accessible anymore?
- c. **Arrival and accommodation:** While movement of people provokes counter-strategies among those fearing foreigners as being a threat, racism does not just occur in the Global North, but shapes people's perspectives in various parts of the world. Which processes of social change emerge from this? Can we observe new alliances and possibly also social movement activities revolving around the issue of racism? How do policy makers respond? How can we approach this particularly sensitive topic methodologically?
- d. **Social and political transformation.** Migrants remain connected with others who stay back home and oftentimes contribute to social change in the places of origin. How do social, economic and political structures transform due to migration? How do translocal relations and connectivities (re-)shape societal institutions?
- e. **Methodologies.** What are the shortcomings of conventional research strategies? Which methodological innovations help us to further our understanding of migration?

In case you are interested in participating in this conference and present your research, please send an abstract of approx. 200 words until **March 15, 2020** to: Ulrike.schultz@th-friedensau.de and eva.gerharz@sk.hs-fulda.de.