Research Designs for Transnational Movements

Social movement research has relatively recently turned its attention to transnational movements. In sociology it still suffers from methodological localism and nationalism. In my talk I would like to present a few research designs for a study of transnational movements that go beyond ethnographic reports, the analysis of discourse imports & exports, or on-the-spot surveys of participants of the international fora. Newer research designs try to capture the regional or transnational character of a social movement as a process and an act of mobility. They call for multi-sited research attentive to both solidarity and conflicts - catching the dynamics of communication and networking over time, but also of (unequal) exchange stemming from or resulting in the hierarchies of power. Such research calls for moving across countries and regions, between (un)equal exchange and coalition partners as well as for investigating how social movements are affected by, support or contest decision-making bodies comprising governance regimes. I see my talk as a starting point of a discussion about how to conceptualize research designs capable of capturing the most important aspects of transnational social movements.

Helena Flam

Helena Flam is a Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Leipzig. She gained her undergraduate degrees in Lund, Sweden and the degrees leading up to her PhD at Columbia University in New York, USA. She is perhaps best well-known as the initiator of the Scandinavian and continental European Sociology of Emotions. She is now the President of the Thematic Group 08 (TG08) on Society and Emotions affiliated with the International Sociological Association. Among her most important publications one finds co-edited volumes, such as The Shaping of Social Organizations, States and Anti-Nuclear Movements, Emotions and Social Movements, and Methods of Exploring Emotions. Her recent interest in emotions and transnational phenomena is reflected in her articles on the sexual abuse of children by the Catholic Church, transnational financial institutions, and the relative scarcity of social movements directed at these institutions.