

## News

Information on press releases and publications of the department "Life Course, Life Course Policy, and Social Integration".

- 11 News

12.11.2024

### **Nils C. Kumkar wird Thomas Mann Fellow 2025**



Foto: Falk Weiss

Der Soziologe untersucht die Rolle von Verschwörungstheorien in der politischen Öffentlichkeit

2025 werden 14 herausragende Persönlichkeiten aus Wissenschaft und Kultur am Thomas Mann House in Los Angeles zum Thema „Across Boundaries“ arbeiten. Nils C. Kumkar wird in diesem Rahmen von Januar bis März zu Verschwörungstheorien und ihrer Rolle in der gesellschaftlichen Verarbeitung der aktuellen Präsidentschaftswahl forschen.

Als das Auswärtige Amt 2016 das ehemalige Wohnhaus von Thomas Mann in Kalifornien erwarb, sollte daraus ein „Ort des Nachdenkens und der Diskussion über gemeinsame Herausforderungen unserer Zeit“ werden. Um diesen Anspruch mit Leben zu erfüllen, schreibt

das Thomas Mann House unter anderem ein Residenzprogramm aus, dessen Ziel es ist, sowohl amerikanische wie auch deutsche Gesprächspartnerinnen und Gesprächspartner unterschiedlichster Fachrichtungen, Traditionen und Ansichten miteinander ins Gespräch zu bringen. Das Programm wird unter anderem von der Berthold Leibinger-, der Krupp- sowie der Bosch-Stiftung und dem Auswärtigen Amt gefördert.

Nils C. Kumkar studierte Soziologie und Volkswirtschaftslehre in Göttingen und an der University of California at Los Angeles. Er promovierte 2016 in Leipzig mit einer Arbeit zu den Krisenprotesten in den USA und Deutschland. Seit 2016 ist er wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter am SOCIUM. Seine Forschungsschwerpunkte sind soziale Ungleichheit, neue Medien, Protest und Kritik, sowie insbesondere Rechtspopulismus und Verschwörungstheorien. Die Ergebnisse seiner Forschung vermittelt er immer wieder auch jenseits des Fachpublikums einer breiten Öffentlichkeit in Presse und Rundfunk. 2022 veröffentlichte er im Berliner Suhrkamp Verlag ein vieldiskutiertes Buch zu „Alternativen Fakten: Zur Praxis der kommunikativen Erkenntnisverweigerung“.

**Link:**

<https://www.vatmh.org/de/tm-fellows-details/grant/612-kumkar.html>

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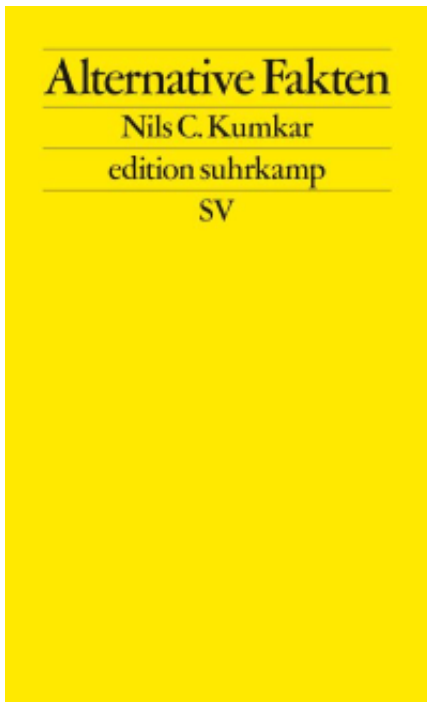
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05.10.2022

**Discursive Smoke Grenades**



### A sociological perspective on “alternative facts”

The popularity of terms like “post-truth” or “alternative facts” seems to indicate conflict about the reality of reality. Consequently, the debate on “alternative facts” is dominated by psychological and epistemological inquiries. These perspectives however do not suffice to understand why “alternative facts” have such unsettling effects on public discourse. Nils Kumkar’s new book therefore investigates alternative facts from a sociological, communication theory perspective: What is fought about and what is agreed upon when alternative facts are shaping the debates? What is their communicative function?

In case studies from the debates on the Corona pandemic, climate change, and the crowd size of Donald Trumps inauguration ceremony, the book shows that “alternative facts” should not be understood as fragments of parallel epistemic universes, to which relevant parts of the population have supposedly relocated. Rather, they function as discursive smoke bombs in polarized debates. Their central function is not to make people believe in the wrong things, but to protract the communication of the agreement on a given situation and thereby delay decision making. They do not contribute to the construction of alternative realities, but rather to situational disorientation, allowing to keep going – against better judgement.

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16.05.2022

## **New book on the German middle classes published with Springer VS**



“Die beharrliche Mitte” (“The persistent middle”) reconstructs images of the “good life” and practices of status work in the German middle classes

Despite the widespread concerns about a “crisis of the middle classes”, we know surprisingly little about what actually is in crisis: What is the normalcy supposedly irritated by this crisis? Nils Kumkar, Stefan Holubek, Karin Gottschall, Betina Hollstein, and Uwe Schimank have taken up this question. They conducted biographic-narrative interviews with members of the middle classes and compared them with biographic accounts of members of the upper middle- and lower classes. They show the conduct of life of the middle classes to be shaped by three distinct, implicit ideals of the good life: an orientation towards community, professional pride, and economic status improvement. Even though all of the interviewees indeed do and had to engage

in practices of status-work throughout their life, their experience of challenges and chances nevertheless differs significantly, depending on which of these ideals they deem “worth living for” – an insight that might prove central for understanding how the middle classes react upon the different crises society is facing today.

[Webpage](#) of the Publisher

[Open Access EBook](#)

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19.03.2021

**Sonja Bastin: Bremer Frau des Jahres 2021**



Die Soziologin Dr. Sonja Bastin vom SOCIUM der Universität Bremen ist als „Bremer Frau des Jahres 2021“ ausgezeichnet worden.

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Dr. Sonja Bastin

05.02.2019

## **More funding for the data service center QUALISERVICE**



German Research Foundation supports establishment of a division for anthropological research data

The grant is part of the Specialised Information Service Social and Cultural Anthropology (FID SKA), managed by the University Library of the Humboldt Universitaet Berlin and QUALISERVICE at Bremen University. One of the aims of FID SKA is to establish QUALISERVICE as a repository also for qualitative ethnographic research data such as audio and video data, field notes and observation protocols offering an adequate solution for the complex archiving requirements of the sometimes highly sensitive research data throughout Germany. Thus, researchers will obtain a reliable source to archive and request ethnological research data for secondary use in research and teaching.

Since 2018 the German Research Foundation (DFG) supports the implementation of QUALISERVICE as a national data service center for social science qualitative research data. Previously QUALISERVICE focused on qualitative interview data. With the new grant the scope will cover the full range of qualitative social science research data.

QUALISERVICE is located at SOCIUM and is headed by Prof. Dr. Betina Hollstein. Archiving is organized together with PANGAEA - Data Publisher for Earth & Environmental Science and the State and University Library Bremen (SuUB). Besides, a coordinated archiving and representation of mixed methods studies will be created together with GESIS – Leibniz Institut für Sozialwissenschaften.

### **More information:**

[Specialised Information Service Social and Cultural Anthropology](#)

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27.11.2018

## **The Election of Donald Trump as the 45th US President Strengthened the Public Support of the European Union Among Europeans**



Result of a Study Coauthored by the Sociologist Lara Minkus of SOCIUM together with to Colleagues from Florence and Magdeburg.

The study asks if and how the public support of the European Union among Europeans has been changed by the election of Donald Trump. The result: The Europeans have a more positive opinion on the EU - and interestingly enough mostly people who consider themselves on the political right. In order to be able to tackle this attitudinal dynamic the authors of the study used the fact that by chance the US presidential elections took place right in the middle of a polling for the Eurobarometer. Eurobarometer is the instrument with which the European Commission regularly polls the public opinion of the EU citizens. This happened also in November 2016. Approximately half of the interviews were conducted prior to the US elections, the other half afterwards. "Because the election of Trump was such a surprise and the date of the interviews prior or after the elections was randomly assigned to the persons and did not correspond to any political opinions of the people interviewed the situation in 2016 approximated a so called natural experiment" says author Lara Minkus. Together with the sociologist Emanuel Deutschmann (European University Institute, Florence) and Jan Delhey, Professor of Macrosociology at the University of Magdeburg Ms Minkus concluded that and change in support for the EU after the US Election must be a "Trump effect".

### **More support for the EU on the political right**

After the election of Trump the EU gets more support from its citizens. But this increase in support shows an unequal distribution if one correlates it with political orientation. It becomes obvious that

this Trump effect is especially measurable on the right side of the political spectrum. The political support for the EU also increase in the center and the left side of the political spectrum. But this increase is still in the margin of statistical error. The question of what motivates especially people on the political right to increase their support is open to speculation. The most plausible answer might be the idea that the US elections arouse the hopes that the EU could finally be transferred into some kind of "Europe of the Nations" which would isolate itself against the outside and follow a more protectionist power perspective, says Lara Minkus. "Whether this 'Trump effect' on the right wing was only a short term issue or leads to long term change will be seen after the elections of the European Parliament in May of next year."

**More information:**

Minkus, Lara; Deutschmann, Emanuel; Delhey, Jan, 2019: [A Trump Effect on the EU's Popularity? The U.S. Presidential Election as a Natural Experiment](#), in: Perspectives on Politics, online-first, S. 1 - 18, [doi:10.1017/S1537592718003262](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592718003262)

**Contact:**

Lara Minkus

25.04.2018

**QUALISERVICE - Data service center for qualitative research data**

DFG supports infrastructure project with 1 Mio. Euro.

The German Research Foundation (DFG) approves the implementation of QUALISERVICE as data service center for social science qualitative interview data. Thus, social researchers will obtain a reliable source to archive and request interview data for secondary use in research and teaching. QUALISERVICE is located at SOCIUM and is headed by Prof. Dr. Betina Hollstein.

Archiving will be organized together with PANGAEA - Data Publisher for Earth & Environmental Science and the State and University Library Bremen (SuUB). Besides, a coordinated archiving and representation of mixed methods studies will be created together with GESIS – Leibniz

Institut für Sozialwissenschaften. In order to guarantee the sustainability of QUALISERVICE IT related components for the internal data will be managed together with PANGAEA.

Roots of this project go back to the first Bremen social science special collaborative centre (SFB) 186 "Status Passages and Risk in Life Course" (1989-2001). Hundreds of interviews collected in the SFB were initially archived in "Archive for Life Course Research" to save them for future use. In 2011 the "Archive for Life Course Research" became QUALISERVICE which has been supported by DFG between 2011 and 2014 to develop central components of the data service centre. Objective of the current interdisciplinary project is to establish QUALISERVICE as a nationwide data service centre.

The project includes the implementation of a safe center for the confidential research data management and the implementation of long-term archiving, further development of the anonymization tool, the implementation of a service center with online portal, data delivery service and help desk, the implementation of the overall organization as well as measures of quality assurance and dissemination and exchange with the scientific community.

**More Information** about [QUALISERVICE](#)

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Susanne Kretzer

25.01.2018

**More funding for national study on the development of families and relationships**



Prof. Sonja Drobnič

The University of Bremen will be receiving 1.8 million Euros by the German Research Foundation for the next two years.

Since 2008 the German Family Panel (pairfam) has been collecting information on the formation, development and stability of partnerships. These data are an essential basis for a number of important and interesting social scientific analysis. In December 2017 the German Research Foundation has not only approved two further survey waves, but moreover, also the increase in sample size by 6000 new people.

Research topics are the decision on the birth of children, the IF and WHEN, parenting and children's development, the relationship between generations, the exchange of material resources and intangible services, as well as the social embedding of partnerships and family development processes.

This worldwide unique multidisciplinary study is only possible because thousands of individuals and families have regularly been giving information for the last ten years about their situation in various areas of life. Therefore, development and changes can be documented over a longer period of time. And different perspectives can be taken into account, not only because data are collected about individual respondents, but also on other family members and their relations amongst each other.

Pairfam is a cooperation project of several universities, a structure which has proved highly successful as regards content and organization. The University of Bremen has been part since the beginning with Prof. Dr. Johannes Huinink as co-initiator of the survey. In the following round pairfam will be carried out by the University of Bremen (Prof. Sonja Drobnič, PhD), Jena (Prof. Dr. Franz Neyer), Cologne (Prof. Dr. Karsten Hank) and Munich (Prof. Dr. Josef Brüderl, Prof. Dr. Sabine Walper).

Pairfam data are available for the global scientific community and can be obtained from the

GESIS-Institute.

**More information:** [Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics \(pairfam\)](#)

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Timo Peter

23.09.2016

## **"Moving for the Kids" - a new DFG-Project has been approved**

"Moving for the Kids" and the consequences for the resident segregation. The perceived quality of schools and neighborhoods as the cause of residential mobility of families with and without a migration background.

"Moving for the Kids" – residential mobility of families can be motivated to improve the developmental opportunities for the children. On the basis of regionally comparative standardized surveys the planned project examines, how the perceived quality of schools and neighborhoods - among other reasons - influences relocations and housing decisions of families with and without a migration background. For the first time in Germany, the question of whether – in connection with perceived contextual factors of school and neighborhood – parents' motives for maintaining or improving the educational status of their children as well as for maintaining ethnic-cultural capital trigger small-scale migrations is being systematically investigated. These relocations can

intensify (white flight) or reduce (spatial assimilation) ethnic segregation - and at the same time influence the kind and extent of social segregation. The project contributes to the analysis of the causes of the spatial mobility behaviour of families with and without a migration background in Germany, but extended by the presumably central factor of parental status resp. aspiration. We expect that housing decisions of young couples and families, especially those from the middle class, are also affected by to which extent they view the local school and neighbourhood as being conducive to the education and development of their (future) children. Contextual characteristics such as high poverty rates and high concentration of migrants in the neighbourhood and schools are perceived as "push" factors. For families with a migration background we suspect that there are motives for preserving local ethnic-cultural capital, which could lower the relevance of educationally motivated moves.

In the first step, it will be clarified how strongly motives of children's educational success - also among other motives - influence the assessment of local context conditions, whether families with and without a migration background differ in this respect, and how these motives trigger relocations in interaction with the perceived social and ethnic composition of schools and neighbourhoods. In a second step, it will be investigated how realized moves - aggregated at the macro level - support ethnic and social segregation. Using simulation models in this step also the development of ethnic and social segregation shall be predicted on the basis of empirically found determinants of relocations in a regionally comparative manner.

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13.09.2016

**Research on the lifestyle of the middle classes at SOCIUM**

A new Project has been approved by the German Research Foundation

Loss of income, educational panic or burn-out problems in the middle classes keep making headlines. The question of whether the middle classes are disturbed in their 'comfort zone' and whether the seemingly self-evident security is no longer valid for their own children is the subject of various and controversial public debates. In fact, little is known about the lifestyle of the middle classes in Germany. Sociologists from various departments of the SOCIUM will now investigate in a research project recently approved by the German Research Foundation (DFG) which events and developments lead to insecurity and how middle class people deal with these irritations.

In the three-year study (funding volume approx. 400,000 euros) with the title "Investing in Status as a Mode of Living: Practices, Conditions, Disturbances" members of different subgroups of the middle class, also in comparison to members of lower classes, are intensively interviewed on several areas of life such as work, partnership, investments to find out to what extent irritations in these areas affect the entire lifestyle.

The study is part of a larger research programme prepared by Uwe Schimank, Betina Hollstein and Karin Gottschall in collaboration with other sociologists at the University of Bremen and beyond. In addition to the qualitative study mentioned above, in which the postdoctoral researchers and doctoral students Nils C. Kumkar, Rixta Wundrak and Stefan Holubek will also be involved, further projects will investigate the lifestyle of the middle classes in a representative, longitudinal and international comparative manner.

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01.02.2016

## **Further funding of the German Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (pairfam)**

DFG approves funding for the next two years from May 2016 onwards.

The German Family Panel pairfam ("Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics"), which was largely initiated by sociologists at the University of Bremen, enters the next round: In December 2015, the German Research Foundation (DFG) approved the survey waves 9 and 10 of pairfam. The funding volume for the 24-month period is around five million euros, of which about 20 percent will go to the University of Bremen. The first wave of interviews took place in 2008/2009. The project is scheduled to run for a total of 14 years. The pairfam data are available for scientific analysis and can be obtained from the GESIS Institute. The number of registered users was over 1150 in 2015.

Pairfam is jointly conducted by the Universities of Bremen (Professor Johannes Huinink), Chemnitz (Professor Bernhard Nauck), Jena (Professor Franz Neyer), Cologne (Professor Karsten Hank) and Munich (Professor Josef Brüderl, Professor Sabine Walper).

### **Further Information:**

[Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics \(Pairfam\)](#)

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