

How to Study Policies in a Life Course Perspective

May 30th, 2022

UNIL, Geopolis 5799

Zoom, <https://unige.zoom.us/j/65233039464> (Password: 690831)

Objectives and content

The life course perspective (Elder et al., 2003) studies individuals' outcome by focusing on their work, family, migration and health trajectories over their lifespan and the way these trajectories interact with each other. Contrary to a social class or social reproduction framework, this individual-based approach considers that numerous factors acting throughout the life course affect the way people eventually fare. Concept such as *linked lives*; *age, cohort and period effects*; *trigger-events* and *agency* are used to account for the variety of individuals' situations throughout their life. The life course perspective is also a *multi-level* framework in the sense that it takes into account the macro (institutional, cultural), the micro (individual), and also the meso (social groups, organizations) level (Bernardi et al., 2019).

Typically emerging from the meso-level of polity, policies and the way they are designed, implemented and experienced are intimately related to the life course of individuals (Leisering, 2003). During this one-day workshop, we will explore the relationship between policies and the life course. More specifically, we will reflect on the methods than can be used to study such relation with contributions from LIVES researchers, who are all, to various degree, familiar with the life course perspective:

- **Berkay Ozcan** is an Associate professor at the department of Social Policy of the London School of Economics (LSE). He is a social demographer working at the intersection between family processes (divorce, marriage, and fertility) and children and economic outcomes (savings, labour supply and type) to understand social stratification. He will give a lecture and practical tips on how to study policies with a life course perspective using the case of recent work on “Age at Marriage and Marital Stability: Evidence from Chinese Marriage Age Reform”, in which he used census data to assess the causal effect of marrying younger on the probability of divorce.

- **Nathalie Vigna** is a PhD student at the University of Lausanne. She is currently researching on the impact of subjective social status on inequalities. She will present a mixed-method evaluation she conducted of the impact of a school guidance project on social inequality among teenagers in Turin, Italy. The quantitative part of the mixed-method evaluation was based on a combination of propensity-score-matching and difference-in-difference techniques, while the qualitative part was based on non-participatory observation. She will discuss how the combination of these two methods allows assessing not only *if*, but also *why*, the programme influenced social inequality.
- **Anna Baranowska-Rataj** is an associate professor at the Department of Sociology, and a member of the Centre for Demographic and Ageing Research (CEDAR) at Umea University. She was a visiting professor at UNIL/LIVES in 2021-22. She will moderate an interdisciplinary session on the use in research of the concept of the *life course cube* (Bernardi et al., 2019). Discussions will be based on the case of the recently completed HORIZON 2020 project “Social Exclusion of Youth in Europe: Cumulative Disadvantage, Coping Strategies, Effective Policies and Transfer” (EXCEPT). The project applied both qualitative and quantitative methods, during the session, students will be separated in two groups, QUALI and QUANTI, to further discuss the specificities of both approaches. Students will wrap up the session by discussing altogether how the two methods complement each other in social policy research.
- **Emilie Rosenstein** is a professor at the School of Social Work and Health of Lausanne (HETSL), University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO). She is specialized in social policies, notably related to disability. Based on a recent publication (Bonvin & Rosenstein, 2020), she will give a lecture on the *evidence-based* approach of policy evaluation and its shortcomings. She will then show how the use of qualitative methods and approaches – notably Sen’s (1999) capability approach – can help gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of social policies on the life course.

Workshop programme

09:00 – 12:00 Morning session

09:00 – 09:30 *Welcome: coffee & croissant*

09:30 – 10:30 Studying Policies in a Life Course Perspective: Example Cases from Marriage and Divorce Laws and Practical Tips – prof. **Berkay Ozcan** (LSE)
+ Questions and debate

10:30 – 11:00 *Coffee break*

11:00 – 12:00 Impact evaluation and implementation analysis: studying the effect of a guidance programme on social inequalities in track choices – **Nathalie Vigna** (UNIL)
+ Questions and debate

12:00 – 13:30 *Lunch*

13:30 – 16:15 Afternoon session

13:30 – 14:30 Labour market insecurity and wellbeing among young people – how can social policies help? – prof. **Anna Baranowska-Rataj** (Umeå University).
+ Questions and debates

14:30 – 15:30 *Coffee break*

15:30 – 16:30 The shortcomings of evidence-based policies: a call for qualitative methods – prof. **Emilie Rosenstein** (HETSL)
+ Questions and debates

16:30 - ... Apéro by the lake!

References

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