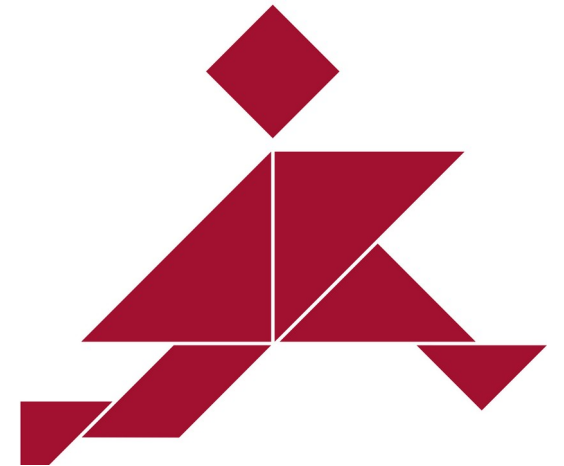

WELCOME TO NCCR LIVES FINAL CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 16-17, 2022, CAMPUS BIOTECH, GENEVA

OVERCOMING VULNERABILITY : LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVES



TAKING STOCK OF NCCR LIVES RESEARCH VULNERABILITY AND THE LIFE COURSE

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This open access interdisciplinary book integrates the major findings and theoretical advances of a 12-year research program run by the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research LIVES research program hosted by the universities of Lausanne and Geneva, within a single comprehensive and coherent publication on vulnerability across adulthood. The book is based on the idea that vulnerability is an essential component of the life course that can inform how we use our resources, reserves and cope with stressors across the life course. It provides a unique interdisciplinary research framework based on the idea that vulnerability is a complex and dynamic process that can only be approached through a multidimensional, multilevel, and multidirectional perspective.

This is an invaluable new resource for students and researchers in life course studies, and those from other disciplines willing to include life course factors in their research on vulnerability issues.

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Withstanding Vulnerability throughout Adult Life
Edited by Dario Spini · Eric Widmer

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Dynamics of Stressors, Resources, and Reserves

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WHY VULNERABILITY?

- The number of dependent persons in CH is about **1,8 million (21% of the population)**, OFSP 2017). Amongst them, 29% can be considered as severely handicapped
- **17% of the Swiss population suffers from one or more psychic issue** (eating disorders, anxiety disorders, depression or other severe symptom; OFSP 2015)
- In CH, **2,2 millions of individuals suffer from a chronic disease and about 20% of the population of more than 50 y.o. suffer from multiple chronic diseases (multimorbidity)** (Observatoire de la santé, 2015).
- 2,8 billion hours of children and adult care; 2.1 billion for children
 - If one counts the salary for family care (family of 2 adults and 2 children), this would correspond to an extra-salary of 4223 CHF francs for mothers and 685 CHF for fathers (Gerfin, 2009)

TWO VISIONS OF VULNERABILITY

The **first approach** refers to a rather static view of vulnerability as a syndrome, as a lasting state of dependence or lack of autonomy related to a need for others' care to adapt (Misztal, 2012).

Vulnerability is defined as a state of **weakness, inability, dependency (upon others and institutions)** and the need to avoid harm and to achieve adequate satisfaction of legitimate claims (Tavaglione et al., 2015).

Typical social categories that are labelled vulnerable in this perspective include homeless people, sex workers, asylum seekers, refugees, children and the very old, the poor and those who are chronically ill, and, more generally, all groups that are frequently stereotyped as the least competent in society (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002).

TWO VISIONS OF VULNERABILITY

Interestingly, critical warnings in the social sciences (Brown, 2011, p. 316) that this “needy” approach risks instrumentalising vulnerability as

- (1) a paternalistic and oppressive idea
- (2) a mechanism of widening control, and
- (3) a reason to exclude or stigmatize groups or individuals

TWO VISIONS OF VULNERABILITY

- **Second perspective.** The empirical research presented in this book considers vulnerability as a central phenomenon and experience of an individual's life and proposes a definition of vulnerability that can be shared and studied in a life course perspective. In this regard, all human beings have a latent vulnerability, which professionals or institutions may in specific situations objectify through diagnostics and other evaluative tools (Spini, 2011).
- LIVES research has contributed to developing **an interdisciplinary space in which vulnerability processes can be studied empirically**, proposing the creation of an approach bridging psychosocioeconomic vulnerability policy traditions and the life course perspective.

VULNERABILITY PROCESS

Vulnerability is defined as a process of resource loss in one or more life domains that threatens individuals, within given contexts, in three major steps:

1. an inability to avoid individual, social or environmental stressors
2. an inability to cope effectively with these stressors,
3. an inability to recover from stressors or to take advantage of opportunities by a given deadline

(Spini, Bernardi, & Oris, 2017; Spini & Widmer, 2022)

VULNERABILITY PROCESSES

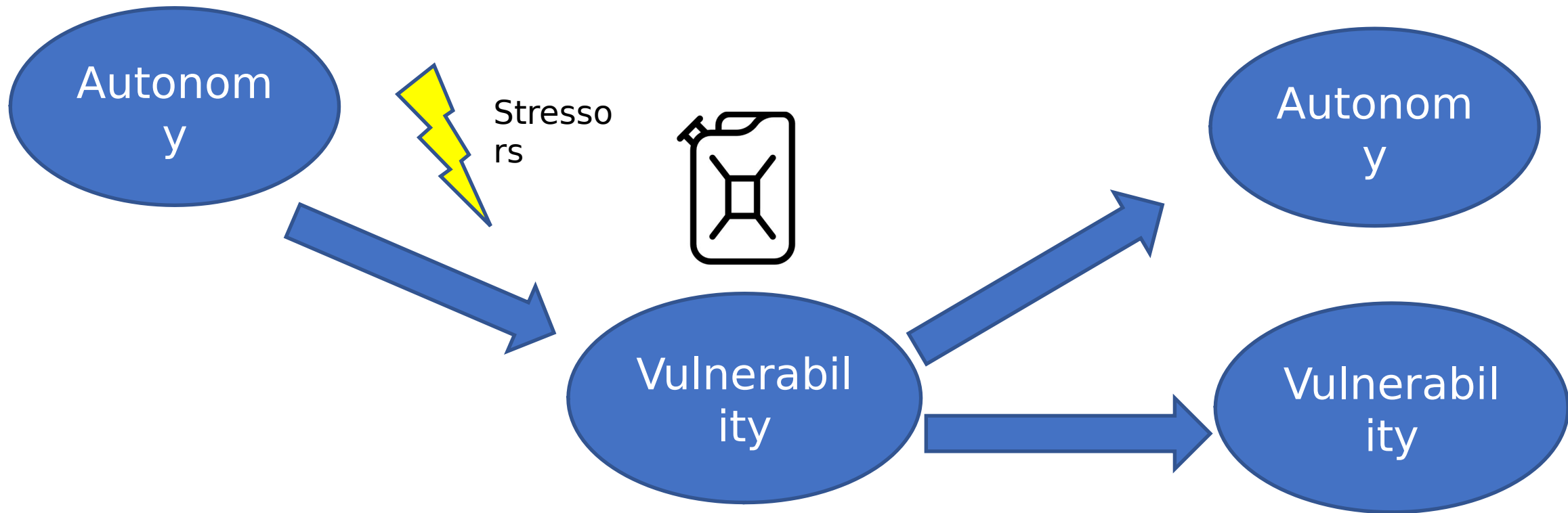
- First, the basic components of vulnerability processes are related to **dynamics of resources/reserves and stressors**
- Resources relate to whatever increases the likelihood of individuals meeting social expectations (including their own) or to elements that enhance individuals' physical, mental or social functioning and health.
- Stress is not only an individual subjective appraisal issue. Following Pearlin and his associates (Pearlin & Skaff, 1996), stressors are unequally distributed across the social spectrum. People in disadvantaged positions encounter more risks in experiencing stressors, notably chronic or strains precisely because they lack resources.

VULNERABILITY PROCESSES

- The concept of resources does not suggest some precise time-related process by which vulnerability can unfold or be buffered. In that respect, **reserves**, as first developed in the neurosciences, is more relevant for the study of vulnerability processes.
- Reserves are dormant resources that are not needed for immediate use but that, when accumulated to a sufficient extent, are available for recovering from life shocks and adversity, social or economic stressors, or non-normative transitory periods across the life course (Cullati et al., 2018).
- The notion of reserves implies that, below a certain threshold, individuals lose their capacity to adapt to stressors.

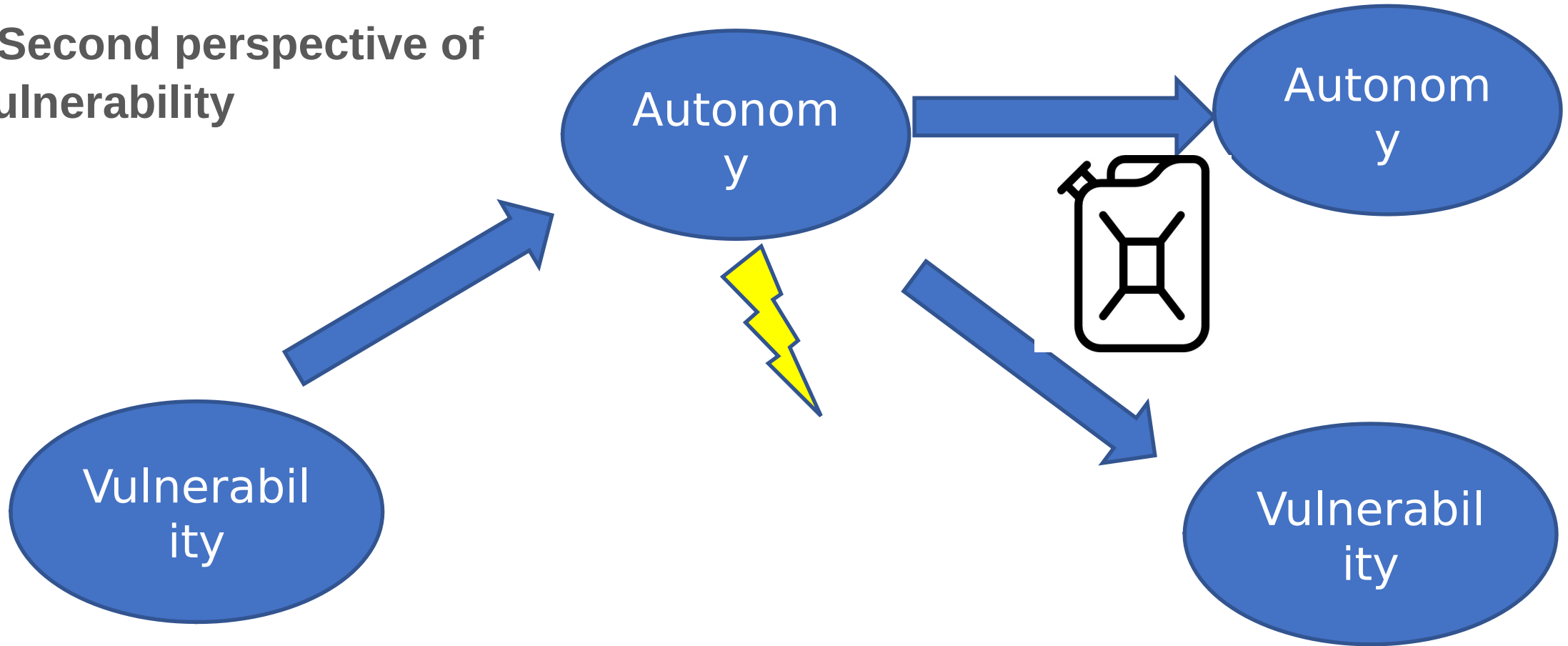
TWO VISIONS OF VULNERABILITY: OVERCOMING

- First perspective of Vulnerability



TWO VISIONS OF VULNERABILITY: WITHSTANDING

- Second perspective of Vulnerability



AUTONOMY

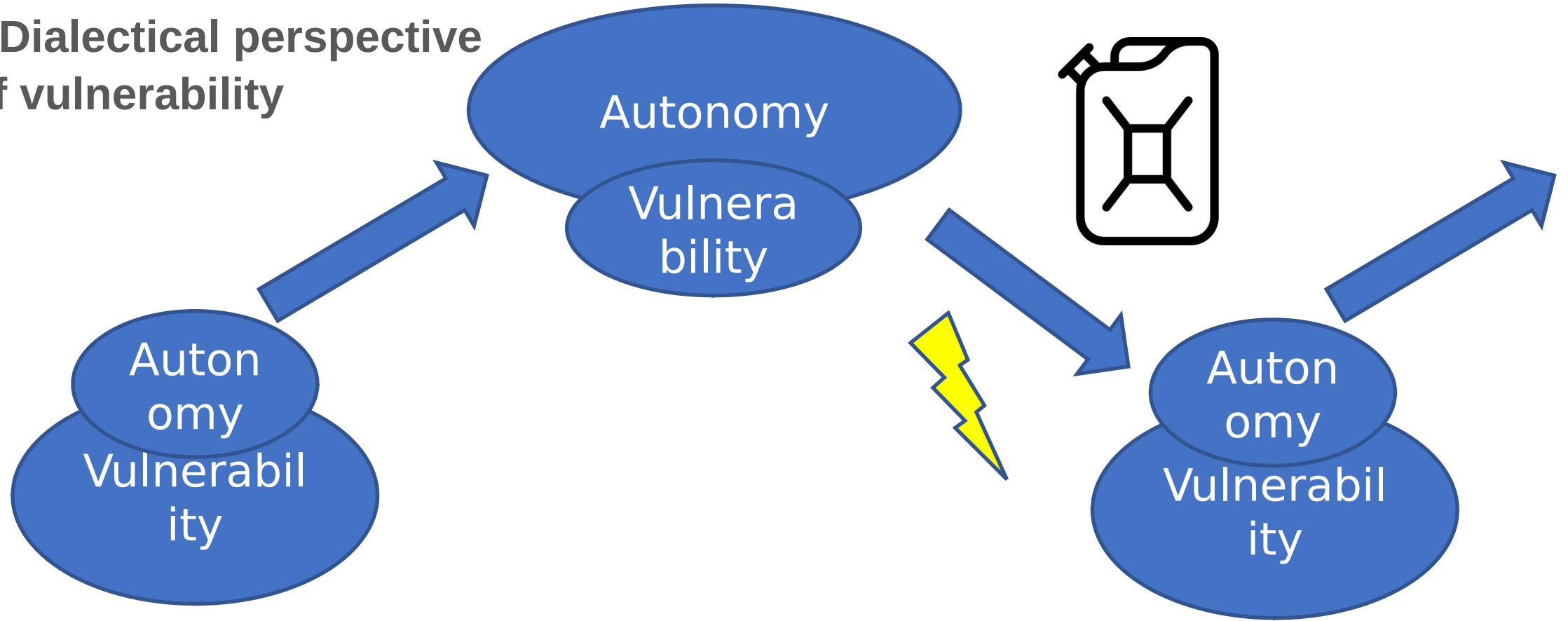
- Individuals that are considered not autonomous and competent, are not in the valued norm and are targets of discrimination (dependent individuals, homeless, refugees, chronic disease, minorities)
- In the second paradigm of vulnerability as the norm, the need of others' care and recognition is normal.

A DIALECTICAL VIEW OF VULNERABILITY (SPINI & WIDMER, 2022)

- Most models of vulnerability have addressed the negative side of vulnerability
- In putting vulnerability in the centre of our attention, we are not interested in the negative consequences of a lack of resources or reserves in addressing stressors. On the contrary, the rebuilding of reserves, the adequate use of resources and resilience are the focus of the “withstanding vulnerability” perspective

TWO VISIONS OF THE LIFE COURSE? A DIALECTICAL FUTURE?

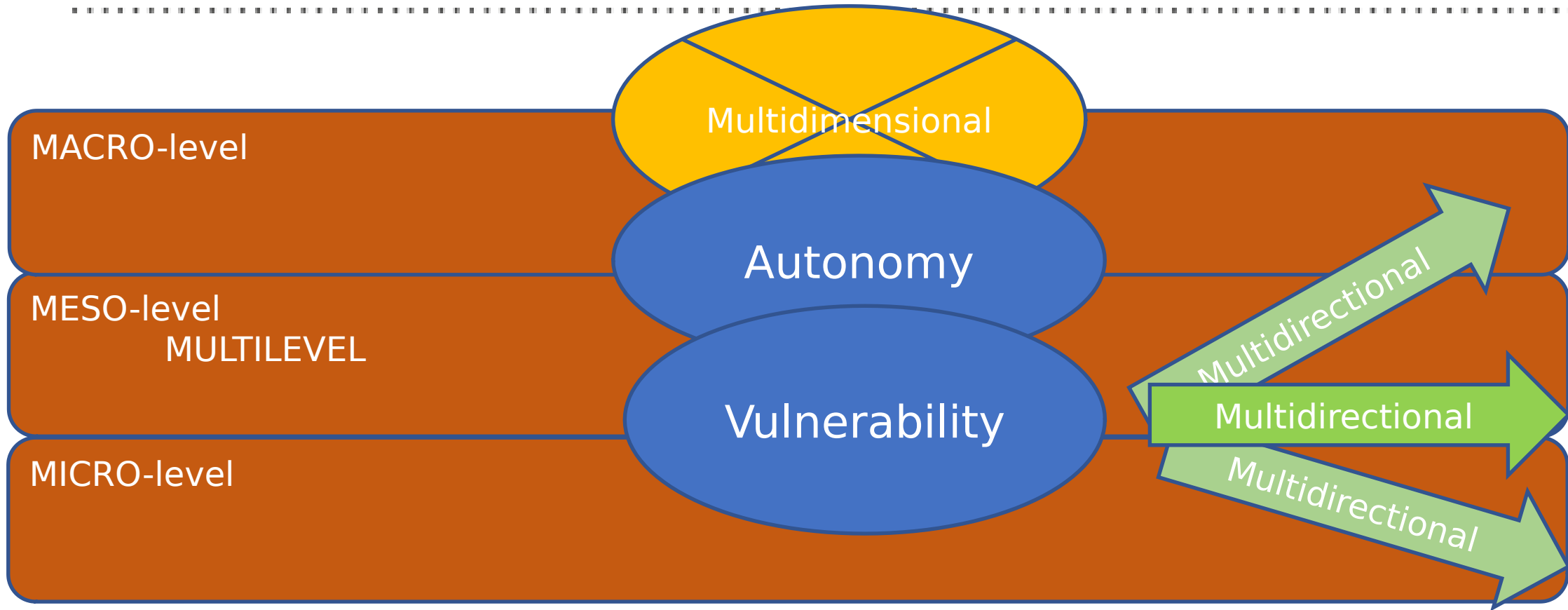
- Dialectical perspective of vulnerability



TOWARD A MORE DIALECTICAL WAY OF DEFINING THE LIFE COURSE (SPINI & WIDMER, 2022)

- Agency within structure paradigm (Elder, 1995; Settersten & Gannon, 2005; Bernardi, Huinnink, & Settersten, 2019; Heckhausen & Buchmann, 2019)
- Vulnerability within meso- within macro-level (Spini, Bernardi, & Oris, 2017)
- Vulnerability/autonomy within meso-level within macro-level (Spini & Widmer, 2022)

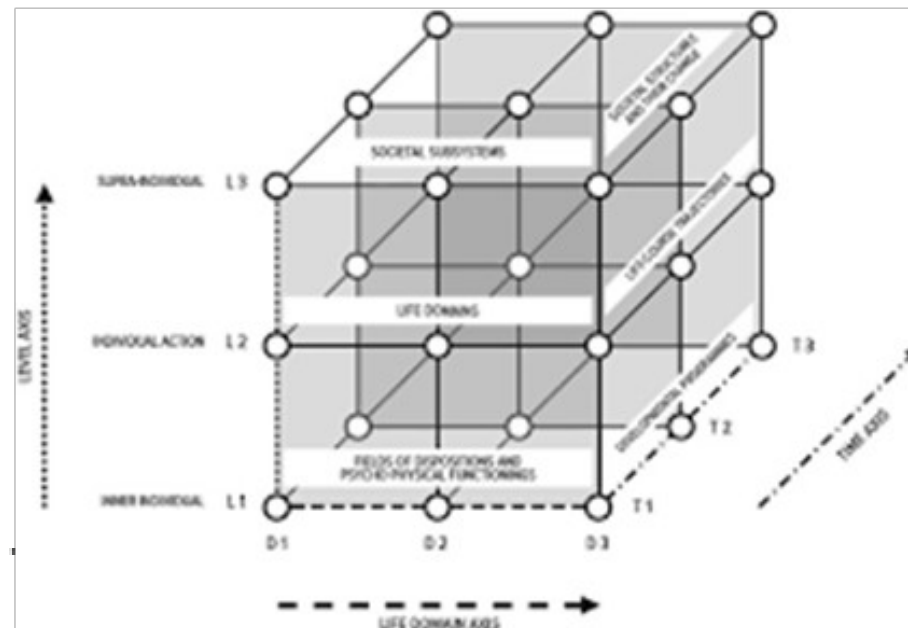
THREE LIFE COURSE PRINCIPLES (SPINI, BERNARDI & ORIS, 2017, SPINI & WIDMER, 2022)





Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Advances in Life Course Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/alcrThe life course cube: A tool for studying lives[☆]Laura Bernardi^{a,*}, Johannes Huinink^b, Richard A. Settersten Jr.^c^a NCCR LIVES, UNIL Geopolis, Quartier Mouline, Lausanne, 1015, Switzerland^b SOCTUM, University of Bremen, Mary-Somerville-Straße 9 28359 Bremen Germany^c College of Public Health and Human Sciences, Oregon State University, 2250 SW Jefferson Way Corvallis, OR 97331, USA

MULTILEVEL PERSPECTIVE ON VULNERABILITY

NETWORKED LIVES

- **Networked lives**: The idea that networks and interpersonal relationships are of utmost importance to understand life course processes (Vacchiano & Spini, 2021). Spini & Vacchiano also advocates the integration of the territory at the meso-level (neighborhoods, groups, household for example) to understand how social inequality and social capital can favour or hinder human development.
- Confirm the important role of social capital in family and health trajectories (Ehsan et al., 2019; Rossier et al., 2022)
- **Girardin et al. (2018)**. “Findings showed that the balance of **conflict and emotional support** in older adults’ family networks varied according to the composition of their family network as well as their age, health, income, and gender.”

THE MESO-LEVEL: POLICIES AND THEIR AGENTS (1)

- **Bonvin et al. (2020, 2022)** considered the role played by street level bureaucrats applying the normative regulations of social policies. They bring a reflection on the normative functioning of many organizations (hospitals, welfare agencies, social services, NGOs) and the (often inadequate) working conditions of those representatives. They recommend to consider all life domains and a longer-term orientation (including the past of potential recipients)
 - **Burton-Jeangros & Fagnoli (2022)** concerning women suffering from AIDS show that their vulnerability is situated within social and relational dimensions with intimate partners, health professionals and relatives through whom HIV-positive women today still suffer from discrimination.
 - **Tabin & Perriard (2017)** also show the contradictions of the implementation of social policies showing that intersections of identities (gender, religion, age) may mitigate the support provided by social policies' agents to beneficiaries
-

THE MESO-LEVEL: MISLEADING NORMS (2)

“Overall, for a social/institutional norm to be considered misleading, it must induce people to develop life paths that do not enable them to accumulate a variety of resources which become critical later on in life, when transitions or non-normative events happen . This vulnerability appears later in life in the context of changing personal circumstances » (for instance in the event of job loss or divorce).

- Widmer, E. D., & Spini, D. (2017). Misleading norms and vulnerability in the life course: Definition and illustrations. *Research in Human Development*, 14(1), 52-67.

VULNERABILITY AND RESERVES IN LIFE TRAJECTORIES (1)

- **The Cumulative advantage/disadvantage (CAD) model**

- Dannefer, D. Cumulative advantage/disadvantage and the life course: Cross-fertilizing age and social science theory. *The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 2003, vol. 58, no 6, p. S327-S337.

- **The reserve perspective on resources :**

« Means needed not for immediate use but rather accumulated in a sufficient manner. Such means help overcome shocks and adversity and delay or modify the processes of decline in well-being, health, wealth and social life during aging. In other words, reserves refer to the various means available to individuals to face distributive events or transitions during life course. With respect to « resources », the notion of reserves highlights the time-oriented dimension of the means available to individuals to avoid or deal with vulnerability by stressing their dynamics of constitution through accumulation, their processes of activation across life course, but also their risk of depletion when facing a critical life event, and possible need for reconstitution after depletion. The thresholds under which reserves cannot be transform into effective resources to face vulnerability are another issue raised by the reserves concept that is important in understanding vulnerability dynamics»

https://glossary.centre-lives.ch/index.php/Main_Page

Cullati, S., Kliegel, M., & Widmer, E. D. (2018). Development of reserves over the life course and onset of vulnerability in later life. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 2, 551–558. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-018-0395-3>

VULNERABILITY AND RESERVES IN LIFE TRAJECTORIES (2)

- **Differential cumulation of reserves in life trajectories**

- Madero-Cabib, I., & Fasang, A. E. (2016). Gendered work–family life courses and financial well-being in retirement. *Advances in Life Course Research*, 27, 43-60.
- Aeby, G., & Gauthier, J. A. (2022). Instrumental support exchanges among kin and non-kin in light of personal configurations. *Journal of Demographic Economics*, 88(2), 217-236.

- **Non-linear effects of reserves**

- Bernardi, L., Huinink, J., & Settersten Jr, R. A. (2019). The life course cube: A tool for studying lives. *Advances in Life Course Research*, 41, 100258.
- Oesch, D., & von Ow, A. (2017). Social networks and job access for the unemployed: Work ties for the upper-middle class, communal ties for the working class. *European Sociological Review*, 33(2), 275-291
- .Baeriswyl, M., & Oris, M. (2022). Friendship in later life: thirty years of progress and inequalities. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 00914150221092991.
- Sapin, M., Widmer, E. D., & Iglesias, K. (2016). From support to overload: Patterns of positive and negative family relationships of adults with mental illness over time. *Social Networks*, 47, 59-72.
- Girardin, M., Widmer, E. D., Connidis, I. A., Castrén, A. M., Gouveia, R., & Masotti, B. (2018). Ambivalence in later-life family networks: Beyond intergenerational dyads. *Journal of marriage and family*, 80(3), 768-784.

VULNERABILITY AND RESERVES IN LIFE TRAJECTORIES (3)

- **Psychological dimensions as reserves**

- Perrig-Chiello, P., Hutchison, S., & Knöpfli, B. (2016). Vulnerability following a critical life event: Temporary crisis or chronic distress? A psychological controversy, methodological considerations, and empirical evidence. In *Surveying human vulnerabilities across the life course* (pp. 87-111). Springer, Cham.
- Urbanaviciute, I., Udayar, S., Maggiori, C., & Rossier, J. (2020). Precariousness profile and career adaptability as determinants of job insecurity: A three-wave study. *Journal of Career Development*, 47(2), 146-161.

CROSS-DOMAIN INFLUENCES (1)

- **Disciplinary foci on distinct domains and how to overcome these divides**

- Hanappi, D., Bernardi, L., & Spini, D. (2014). Vulnerability as a heuristic concept for interdisciplinary research: assessing the thematic and methodological structure of empirical life course studies. *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, 6(1), 59-87.
- Bernardi, L., Huinink, J., & Settersten Jr, R. A. (2019). The life course cube: A tool for studying lives. *Advances in Life Course Research*, 41, 100258.

- **Cross-domain influences impacting old age**

- Ihle, A., Oris, M., Fagot, D., Baeriswyl, M., Guichard, E., & Kliegel, M. (2015). The association of leisure activities in middle adulthood with cognitive performance in old age: The moderating role of educational level. *Gerontology*, 61(6), 543-550.
- Ihle, A., Oris, M., Fagot, D., Maggiori, C., & Kliegel, M. (2016). The association of educational attainment, cognitive level of job, and leisure activities during the course of adulthood with cognitive performance in old age: The role of openness to experience. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 28(5), 733-740.

- **Cross-domain influences impacting mobile individuals/migrants**

- Cangia, F., Davoine, E., & Tashtish, S. (2021). (Im) mobilities, waiting and professional aspirations: The career lives of highly skilled Syrian refugees in Switzerland. *Geoforum*, 125, 57-65.
-

CROSS-DOMAIN INFLUENCES (2)

- **Cross-domain influences impacting well-being**

- Bernardi, L., Bollmann, G., Potarca, G., & Rossier, J. (2017). Multidimensionality of well-being and spillover effects across life domains: How do parenthood and personality affect changes in domain-specific satisfaction?. *Research in Human Development*, 14(1), 26-51.

- **Issue of boundaries between domains**

- Schüttengruber, V. & Freund, A. M. (2021). Working from home during the coronavirus lockdown: The effects of segmentation and integration of work and private life on well-being [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Department of Psychology, University of Zurich.

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

- Vulnerability as a process rather than a state or a syndrom
- Critical importance of local communities, neighborhoods, personal networks, street level bureaucrats (meso-level)
- Ability to gain reserves in difficult circumstances or to react against stigmatizing thresholds. Psycho-social mechanisms (self-continuity, career adaptability, SOC strategies, commitment to goals, etc.)
- Non linear mechanisms of vulnerabilisation, which complements/challenges the thesis of cumulative dis/advantages
- Complex and non linear spill-over/cross-over effects across domains. Blurring of domains?
- **Acknowledgment of crucial methodological contributions of Bertchold, Ghisletta, Morselli, Perrenoud, Ritschard, Steinmetz, Studer and team members**

