

## VULNERABILITY IN CONTEXT: A MULTILEVEL PERSPECTIVE (CCI2)

12-13 September 2018

**Place:** Hôtel villa du lac, Divonne Les Bains (<https://www.lavilladulac.com/>)

**Organizers :** Prof. Dario Spini, Dr. Grégoire Bollmann

### Abstract:

CCI2 analyses vulnerability processes as a dynamic interplay between stressors and resources at (and across) different levels of analyses (i.e., interpersonal/dyadic; micro-, meso-, macro-entities). Broadly speaking, the CCI 2 examine questions such as, 1) how and to what extent do interpersonal relationships and entities to which people belong affect their vulnerability processes and those of their close ones? (topic “interdependent individuals”); 2) how do institutions, policies, and/or collective events (e.g., plant closure, war experiences) generate resources and stressors in the individuals’ lives, and how do people differentially respond to them (topic “institutions and welfare policies”); 3) how do prevailing convergent (e.g., norms, practices) and/or divergent (e.g., conflict, diversity) forces within and between contextual layers, as well as specific arrangements between individuals and various layers impact individuals’ stressors, and resources (topic “normative climates”); 4) how do conformity and deviance to normative beliefs affect individuals’ vulnerability and/or resilience processes when facing stressful events or transitions; and how do certain critical events interact with norms/normative beliefs to impact well-being of individuals? (topic “misleading norms; norms across the life course”).

The objective of this workshop is to delve more deeply into two to three issues related to these questions, namely a) the conceptualization, operationalization, and analyses of multilevel constructs with methodological inputs and concrete illustrations; b) an introduction to different models, to pave the way for a unified multilevel theory of vulnerability; c) a reflection on misleading norms, and more particularly three aspects relating to the issue.

**Please register by sending an email to Delphine Fagot as soon as possible.**

### EXTERNAL SPEAKERS

- Prof. Dr. Martin Tomasik (University of Witten/Herdecke)  
<http://www.ibe.uzh.ch/de/aboutus/team/tomasik.html>
- Prof. Dr. Martin Obschonka (Queensland University of Technology)  
<http://staff.qut.edu.au/staff/obschonk/>

## PROPOSED PROGRAM

### WEDNESDAY, 12<sup>TH</sup> OF SEPTEMBER

- 09h00 – 09h30** Welcome by Dario Spini; round table to introduce participants
- 09h30 – 10h30** **Opportunities, challenges, and pitfalls in conducting multilevel research on context**  
**Grégoire Bollmann**
- 10h30 – 11h00** *Coffee break*
- 11h00 – 12h00** **Income inequality affects the psychological health only of the people facing scarcity**  
**Nicolas Sommet**
- 12h00 – 13h30** *Lunch*  
**The relevance of a geography of personality for entrepreneurship and innovation**  
**Martin Obschonka (Queensland University of Technology)**
- 15h15 – 15h45** *Coffee break*
- 15h45 – 16h30** **Participants' presentations "How do I approach context in my research?"**
- 19h30. Dinner**

### THURSDAY, 13<sup>TH</sup> OF SEPTEMBER

- 09h00 – 10h45** **Negotiating social change: Concept and results from the Jena Study**  
**Martin J. Tomasik (University of Witten/Herdecke)**
- 10h45 – 11h00** *Coffee Break*
- 11h00 – 12h00** **Using life-history calendars for building contextual indicators and beyond**  
**Davide Morselli**
- 12h00 – 13h30** *Lunch*
- 13h30 – 15h00** **Synthesis by Dario Spini**
- (15h30 – 16h00** *Coffee Break***)**

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## PREPARATION WORK FOR PARTICIPANTS

In preparing for the workshop, we'd like to ask participants two tasks:

- Based on the suggested readings provided by the speakers, participants should prepare **one question for each speaker** ahead of the workshop.
- A slot for participants' presentations is schedule in the program. We'd like to ask participants to **present in 5 to 10 minutes (max.) their research question and how they work with context** within their dissertation, research projects they are working on, or any project they are planning to work on, or would like to work on in the future.

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## ABSTRACTS AND SUGGESTED READINGS

### Opportunities, challenges, and pitfalls in conducting multilevel research on context

*Grégoire Bollmann, University of Lausanne/University of Zurich*

With the development of multilevel analyses in the past decades and the multiplication of user-friendly statistical packages, more and more scholars are embracing multilevel research in a variety of social sciences disciplines, including demography, economics, gerontology, management, applied, developmental, and social psychology, or sociology. Yet, while adopting multilevel frameworks to account for contextual influences in a research domain undeniably presents opportunities, it also poses several challenges and pitfalls. In this presentation, I will discuss a few of them, particularly with respect to the conceptualization (i.e., how, where, when, and why are higher-level phenomena emerging, and what exactly?), operationalization, and aggregation of higher-level constructs; I will also discuss possible fallacies in interpreting data at the wrong level, and the stakes at hand when considering the multiple levels in which individuals are embedded. These points will be illustrated with examples from the literature on workplace deviance by and within organizational units.

Kozlowski, S. W. J., & Klein, K. J. (2000). A multilevel approach to theory and research in organizations: Contextual, temporal, and emergent processes. In K. J. Klein & S. W. J. Kozlowski (Eds.), *Multilevel theory, research, and methods in organizations*. (pp. 3–90). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. **(pages 3-38 recommended)**

Götz, M., Bollmann, G., & O'Boyle, E. H. (2018). Contextual undertow of workplace deviance by and within units: A systematic review. *Small Group Research*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1046496418790044 **(for illustration)**

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### Income inequality affects the psychological health only of the people facing scarcity

*Nicolas Sommet, University of Lausanne*

Following the “status anxiety hypothesis,” the psychological consequences of income inequality should be particularly severe for economically vulnerable individuals. However, oddly, income inequality is often found to affect vulnerable low-income and advantaged highincome groups equally. We argue that economic vulnerability is better captured by a financial scarcity measure and

hypothesize that income inequality primarily impairs the psychological health of people facing scarcity. First, repeated cross-sectional international data (WVS: 146,034 participants; 105 country-waves) revealed that the within-country effect of national income inequality on feelings of unhappiness was limited to individuals facing scarcity ( $\approx 25\%$  of the WVS population). Second, longitudinal national data (SHP: 14,790 participants; 15,595 municipality-years) revealed that the within-life-course effect of local income inequality on psychological health problems was also limited to these individuals ( $< 10\%$  of the Swiss population). Income inequality by itself may not be a problem for psychological health but rather a catalyst for the consequences of scarcity.

Sommet, N., Morselli, D., & Spini, D. (accepted). Income inequality affects the psychological health only of the people facing scarcity. *Psychological Science*.

## **The relevance of a geography of personality for entrepreneurship and innovation**

*Martin Obschonka, Queensland University of Technology*

Personality characteristics have been linked to entrepreneurial and innovative activities at the individual level. A recent stream of research examined potential links and underlying mechanisms at the regional level, which consider a geographical perspective in both psychological and economic research. Regional differences in entrepreneurship and innovation are well-documented (e.g., startup rates across cities or counties) and economists assume that the regional culture play an important role, not only for the emergence but also persistence of these regional differences in these activities. One way to understand the concept of regional culture is a focus on regional personality differences, their origins and effects, and interplay with other regional factors shaping the economic trajectories of regions. The presentation will present recent findings on the regional distribution of personality and effects on entrepreneurship and innovation. It will also discuss endogeneity issues and potential mechanisms, including migration and contextually-mediated, population-wide effect of certain “psychological climates”. It will also compare different methods of collecting regional personality data, such as Internet-based large-scale surveys (self-reports) and Big Data-based social media studies analyzing language styles and patterns used in a region. Finally, the presentation will discuss implications for research and practice by taking an interdisciplinary perspective.

Obschonka, M., Stuetzer, M., Rentfrow, P. J., Shaw-Taylor, L., Satchell, M., Silbereisen, R. K., Potter, J., & Gosling, S. D. (2017). In the shadow of coal: How large-scale industries contributed to present-day regional differences in personality and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1037/pspp0000175

Obschonka, M., Schmitt-Rodermund, E., Silbereisen, R. K., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2013). The regional distribution and correlates of an entrepreneurship-prone personality profile in the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom: A socioecological perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 105, 104-122. doi:10.1037/a0032275

Obschonka, M., Lee, N., Rodríguez-Pose, A., Eichstaedt, J. C., & Ebert, T. (2018). Big data, artificial intelligence and the geography of entrepreneurship in the United States (CEPR Discussion Paper No. 12949). Retrieved from [https://cepr.org/active/publications/discussion\\_papers/dp.php?dpno=12949](https://cepr.org/active/publications/discussion_papers/dp.php?dpno=12949)

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## Negotiating Social Change: Concept and Results from the Jena Study

Martin J. Tomasik, University of Witten/Herdecke

Human development takes place within interdependent contexts that are subject to permanent change. Within these contexts individuals regulate their development by negotiating developmental tasks and pursuing developmental goals or by avoiding developmental tasks and disengaging from goals. The “Jena Study on Individual Development and Social Change” took this theoretical notion seriously by investigating perceived demands of social change (related to changes in the domain of work such as the need for life-long learning; family-related issues such as increased risk of divorce; and changes in leisure and public life such as the increased confrontation with people from foreign cultures due to globalization and migration) in a large sample from Western and Eastern Germany and Poland. I will present the main findings from this study and show who is particularly at risk for a high load of demands; how people deal with such demands in general, and what personal and social resources are particularly useful for a successful negotiation of demands of social change. A special focus will be put on the benefits of a disengagement style of coping with demands that seems to be adaptive when opportunities for engagement are deteriorated. There will be space for discussion about what we have learned from this study and how results can be generalized into other contexts.

Silbereisen, R. K., & Tomasik, M. J. (2015). Social and economic change: Psychological challenges for individuals. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of social and behavioral sciences* (2nd ed., Vol. 22, pp. 147-155). Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

Tomasik, M. J., & Silbereisen, R. K. (2018). Engagement with and disengagement from demands of social change: A comparison of age groups and political regions. In I. Schoon & R. K. Silbereisen (Eds.), *Pathways to adulthood: Educational opportunities, motivation and attainment in times of social change* (pp. 222-239). London: IOE Press.

Tomasik, M. J., & Silbereisen, R. K. (2012). Beneficial effects of disengagement from futile struggles with occupational planning: A contextualist-motivational approach. *Developmental Psychology*, 48, 1785-1796. doi:10.1037/a0026952

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## Using life-history calendars for building contextual indicators and beyond

Davide Morselli, University of Lausanne

In this presentation I will discuss some ideas and examples of using life-history calendars (LHC) data to construct contextual indicators. LHC is a growing methodology to collect life-course data retrospectively, in a fast and cost-effective manner. Research has shown that, although this method is not free from errors, it produces a smaller bias than conventional retrospective questions. For these reasons the LHC has becoming a current practice in surveys and been implemented in number of different projects (e.g., SHARE, ELSA, SHP). However, the method is not totally free from error and the resulting data may still have missing information given by memory biases. To build reliable collective indicators it is therefore worth combining LHC data with other methods that can minimize

bias by missing data. Some examples using geographically weighted methods are discussed, along with some thoughts about what is a context and a contextual effect.

Spini, D, Elcheroth, G. Fasel, R. (2014). Towards a community approach of the aftermath of war in the former Yugoslavia: Collective experiences, social practices, and representations. In D. Spini, G. Elcheroth, D. Corkalo Biruski (Eds.), *War, Community, and Social Change. Collective Experiences in the Former Yugoslavia* (Vol. 17, pp. 3-23). doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-7491-3\_1

Elcheroth, G., Penic, S., Fasel, R., Giudici, F., Glaeser, S., Joye, D., Le Goff, J.-M., Morselli, D., Spini, D. (2013). Spatially weighted context data and their application to collective war experiences. *Sociological Methodology*, 43, 364–411. doi:10.1177/0081175013486757

## MATERIAL

All the material is and will be made available here:

<https://drive.switch.ch/index.php/s/DD93RGMPMOGuRTL>