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Haute Ecole Spécialisée
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Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research

LIVES Doctoral Program, Social Policies and the Life Course

**Haute école de travail social et de la santé, EESP, Lausanne,
Switzerland, November 29-30, 2012**

■ ■ General information

Dates:	November 29-30, 2012
Location:	Haute école de travail social et de la santé Chemin des Abeilles 14 CH-1010 Lausanne
Costs:	Participation, lodging and meals are free of charge for speakers and registered participants. Participants will be reimbursed for transportation costs at the rate of the ½ CFF/SBB fare in 2 nd class.

The notion of “life course” defines a field of research and constitutes a heuristic concept making it possible to analyze individuals’ trajectories over time. It recognizes that individual trajectories are shaped by both individual *and* social factors. Thus, researchers of this approach think that social norms, values, social policies and institutions have a direct effect on the unfolding of the life cycle, its formalization into different phases (education, employment, marriage, retirement, etc.) and hence on the collective representation of the life cycle. In such a perspective, social policies are not simply functional devices designed to answer social problems or to smoothen transitions in the life course, they contribute to shape individual life course trajectories and to produce social norms about life course.

In the mainstream analysis of social policies, the connection between the life course and social policy is unidirectional: social policies are envisaged as responses social risks (OECD 2007¹, World Bank 2007², EU 2001³, etc.). This requires the adaptation of social policies to aging, the feminization of work, the increase of unemployment, the changes in family relationships, the decreasing rate of childbirth, etc. i.e. to what is often presented as the destandardization of the life course. In other words, social policies are called to adapt to societal evolutions impacting on the individuals’ life course, with a view to bridging life’s discontinuities and smoothening transitions. A political goal is often pursued in such perspectives, e.g. to maximize the future productive potential in society (e.g. Esping-Andersen, Gallie, Hemerijck, & Myles 2001).

However, social policies themselves are also carriers of specific norms about what a “normal” life course ought to be and they are therefore to be interpreted also as instruments imposing this normality on individuals. In Leisering’s terms (2004), they have a threefold impact on life courses: first they contribute to structuring or differentiating the life course in different phases (structuration/differentiation); second, they strive to integrate these various stages of the life course into a coherent whole (integration); third, they support a specific view of the “normal” life course and promote normative models and expectations related to class, gender, age,

¹ www.oecd.org/document/26/0,3746,en_2649_33933_38613594_1_1_1_1,00.html

² siteresources.worldbank.org/SOCIALPROTECTION/Resources/SP-Discussion-papers/Labor-Market-DP/0719.pdf

³ www.euro.centre.org/data/1182414898_63513.pdf

ethnicity, etc. (normative modelling). For instance, so-called familialist welfare states tend to produce a gendered life course split into a male and a female normal biography, or the social policies promoted by the OECD, the WB or the EU support the double-breadwinner model as the family norm during the working age. In this perspective, social policies do not only respond to (old or new) social problems, they contribute to construct some events (or non-events) into problems.

These two perspectives entail two contrasted ways of conducting empirical analyses of the connection between social policies and the life course. In the first case it is mainly the efficiency of social policies in facilitating the transitions that matters (e.g. to what extent do social policies, esp. activating social policies, help to accelerate the return to the labour market?), whereas in the second one the objective is to unpack the norms of the standard life course underlying social policies and their evolutions and to understand the reasons explaining these changes.

This session of the LIVES Doctoral School aims at analyzing the connection between social policies and the life course and will focus on three topics: a) the various ways in which this interaction is declined in European countries, b) the normativity of social policies in terms of life courses, c) the methodological and empirical challenges conveyed by life course policies. It will also give the opportunity for PhD students to present their work and discuss it with internationally renowned experts. It will take place over two days and will be articulated as follows:

■ ■ **Schedule, November 29, 2012 (Room, B 233)**

9h00-9h10 Welcome and introduction

Social Policies and the Life Course: A European overview

9h10-10h40 Dominique Anxo (Linnaeus University, Sweden)
“Shaping the Life Course: A European Perspective”

10h40-11h00 Coffee Break

11h00-12h30 Andreas Walther (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany)
“European Regimes of Youth Transitions”

12h30-13h30 Lunch

Unveiling the Normativity of Social Policies

13h45-15h15 Eva Nadai (Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz)
“Investing in (In)Equality? A gender perspective on social investment practices in welfare and the unemployment insurance”

15h15-15h45 Coffee Break

15h45-17h15 Jean-Pierre Tabin (Faculty of Social and Policies, Switzerland)
“Decommodification and the welfare state: the case of workplace accident victims”

■ ■ Schedule, November 30, 2012 (Room, A 433)

Investigating Lifecourse Policies: Empirical and methodological challenges

9h00-10h30 Simone Scherger (University of Bremen, Germany)

“Privilege or Burden? Paid work beyond retirement age in Germany and the UK: evidence from a comparative study using mixed methods”

10h30-11h00 Coffee Break

11h00-12h30 Monica Budowski (University of Fribourg)

“Life events. Impact on the economic situation, health and subjective wellbeing. An overview of three studies”

12h30-13h30 Lunch

13h45-17h15 Presentations by PhD students

■ ■ List of speakers

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