

Slide 3 (continued)

In short: traditional institutions and social categorisation (church, family, school, class, gender) are believed to exert less power of determining what to value (which state of affairs to prefer over others) and which path thru life to follow; the individual consequently has increased autonomy to determine his/her own values and his/her own future. **Mind you:** the value of having that autonomy, of having self-control, is what gained stronger popularity (with strong consequences, as I aim to show later). Of course, this is not a process equally found in all societies. It can be shown that **cultural diversity is strong**, especially on the individualism-collectivism, between countries, between European and other countries, but also within Europe. [E.g. Germany and Japan are both influenced by demographic change, economic advancement, globalisation of ICT and media, etc.; still, cultural differences between the two countries are impressive, no doubt leading to a distinct perception of global change and thus to different strategies of individuals and institutions of dealing with it. A hypothesis: the more convergence on economic and other indicators, the more important culture becomes as the key indicator of diversity.]

Still, we might argue that sociologists do seem to agree on a few things: that the life course today is de-standardized, although sociologists disagree on what this exactly means, and that a de-standardized life course is caused by many societal trends, and again sociologists disagree on which ones in particular. **Conclusion:** I would **disagree with KU Mayer** that we at this moment have a well-described history of the developments of the life course. We are, in my view, just starting to get some grip on what is going on and how to interpret this.

What does seem prominent is that **de-standardisation** brings the issue of 'individual choice', of **self-directedness**, to the fore on the one hand and on the other hand boosts the focus on **the self and self-fulfilment in the life course**. In other words, there is an increasingly **emphasis on the 'self'**. It seems, first, that the **self-directedness of the life course**, the individual in control of its life course, is one of the pillars of life-course sociology. The belief in the rise of what the Dutch/German sociologist Manuela Du Bois-Reymond has coined the 'choice biography' gained impetus. What is striking to note is that, after a period of alleged consensus on this issue and thus the relative silence in the 1990s on it, the issue of self-control is again fiercely debated. Life course, education, youth, and socialization sociologists not simply argue in favor of the more important role of the productive individual in socialization and the life course, but **systematically downplay the relevance of outside interference**. (It builds on Luhman's notion of categorical independence of the person and the social environment.) The life course is **fundamentally self-directed**, controlled and realized by the individual. Especially the outside world of **formal** educators – in schools, at work, in public life – has retreated in favor of the self. **Mind you:** the impact of intimate circles (peers, parents, partners) and of the media is believed to have gained impact, particularly so as these circles and the media do not dwell on hierarchical, formal relationships and the like. I'll get back to this.

First more on the focus on the self in the life course. Already with Fuchs in 1983 it can be read that people in their individualized biography are pre-occupied with their own development. The life course is not only self-directed, the **aim** of the life course, of socialization itself, is increasingly focused at realizing one's self, at reaching **self-fulfilment**, to attain self-enhancement. A key competence, now, for the individual is **reflexivity**. The aim of socialization shifted from developing individuality by taking part in society (the key individuation-integration debate in socialization and life course sociology) to **developing individual competence that allows one to project and plan personal choices from the wide range of options to participate in society**. As a consequence, it is claimed that the life course undergoes a certain '**reflexive biographization**'. The ability to project one's own life course, to plan one's future, to evaluate different options, to think about the consequences of choices, has become a central theme in the life course, more so than realizing the different transitions in the life course itself.

As argued the life course and the reflexivity competence is self-directed, but is not build in a complete **social void**. The self today is **co-figurative**: embedded especially in intimate social circles and a media-related world. With age contemporaries (if not generation members), real or virtual, people, over the life course, **develop a common consciousness of a shared history and destiny**, a history and destiny in which autonomously, but with the help of close relatives, directing one's biography is central. This might result in the rise of a '**reflexive generation**', not only having formative experiences regarding their relationship with their life course that are fundamentally different from the experiences of the previous generations, but also – and necessarily so, given the rise of the reflexive biographization of their life course – **being aware of the distinctiveness of their formative experiences**.

Slide 4 (continued)

A rewarding job in such a life course model is a **challenging job**, with a daily dosis of new experiences, lots of changes and variation, not a guaranteed well-paid or self-growth gratifying job.

If one would follow Trommsdorff's theories on future orientations and apply **rational choice** to life course perceptions one would **expect people to be willing to imagine, plan and act upon these plan as concerns life course transitions**; transition **within** key life domains and **between** key life domains, such as the domains of education, of work, care, leisure, but also 'public life', the life of the citizen contributing to society in terms of building and maintaining community life, participating in civil society, and dealing with issues of the public cause. Acting on the envisioned transitions and committing one's self to full, long-lived strong-tie engagement, might have become, however, less likely. The **rational choice chain is reframed**, people do formulate targets, plan and form decisions, act purposively, i.e. act based on these mental pre-programmings, but they are more likely to amend targets, keep an open eye to other possible plans, and aim for action towards these, possible plans contradicting earlier plans and routes of action. The much-heard **option pitfall**, the notion that there are so many options, too many options to choose from, that people withdraw from making choices, and become nervous about their future, could well be related to this. The same goes for the under-researched phenomenon of the '**quarter life crisis**': younger people, in their late 20s, experiencing a midlife crisis: they have all these options, eagerly map out engagement in every domain of life (and want to do this to the maximum, live the perfect life), but are anxious to live up to the overwhelming expectations of maximal engagement in every domain. Without having lived for three decades, without having experienced life in key domains for some duration, they retreat and enter sickness and disability provision programs. (A hypothesis is that this causes young women in particular to enter these provisions in the Netherlands.)

Culture sociologists among my audience will no doubt have had the association with the somewhat high-pitched analysis by Schülze of present German society as an **Experience Society** (Erlebnisgesellschaft). In such a society people are hedonists, frantically pursuing the joyful moment, looking for excitement, only willing to engage in something they haven't experienced yet. In a cross-cultural analysis on different generations in many European countries with the famous **European Values Studies**, aimed at empirically addressing the impact of associational life on social trust and political engagement for different generations in different European countries, we found that the **West-German young generation in particular is a striking ideo-typical generation in Europe**. The participation rate in organized cultural associational life among German Baby Busters is lowest and has not risen in the late twentieth century in contrast to other nations. Schülze also detects a **decollectivization** of classic *Feierabendvergnügen* activities in favor of activities that boost excitement and action, have the allure of eccentricity and *Genuss* and are found in the domains of informal leisure and consumption. Perhaps West-German Baby Busters are the **prototypical young generation parting from classicly organized culture** and indulging in new forms of entertainment that can be individually enjoyed and that satisfy the pursuit for the *joyeux* experience outside formal settings. What it indicates is that some groups of people in some countries probably search for engagement outside formally organized, hierarchical settings; settings or institutions that need more than short-lived commitments, something else than strong-tie relationship and a long breath if one wants to impact decisions made in these settings. Institutions are my next theme.

Slide 5 (continued)

The balance between choice and compulsion is the key issue in life course sociology. Speaking of a choice biography, some even speak of a 'free-choice' biography is misleading. It suggests that people no longer make traditional life course choices, no longer follow structured paths thru life, take their own route to their own liking. I believe we should **focus on the biographization of the life course**, meaning that increasing numbers of people are engaged in the projection, planning, and evaluation of their life course. This, of course, still allows people to make traditional choices; choices social scientists might not place in the much-applauded modern choice biography but in a pre-modern standard biography model.

That people make traditional choices (want to have a good education, want to get married, to have children, etc.) is only a paradox if one believes that institutional and contextual impacts have completely subsided. I would, by contrast, argue that institutions have a strong impact on people's choices. Today there are **many signals that institutions**, at least in some countries than in others, **are responding to the ideal of an individual who is competent to secure his/her own future and who will be unique in his/her choice**. They respond slowly, and the response is still more part of debate than of reality, but still, the response in some countries already is and in others most probably will be pervasive. Some examples:

- The **transitional labor market** (a term coined by Schmidt at the WZB, and elaborated further in collaboration with a Tilburg University colleague): Labor market policies in European countries, and especially so in the Netherlands are targeting at flexibilization and open borders with other life domains, building also on the belief that not only employers but also workers want to develop and maintain transferable competences, multi-employability, flexible hours, and, importantly, spend their energy not only on work, but also on care-giving, further education, leisure-time, and other issues outside work
- In **educational policies** the trend is towards student-oriented, problem-oriented, self-directed forms of education at the earliest levels (portfolio's in Kindergarten) to the highest levels (solely individual problem-oriented ways of teaching at university); this is believed to truly connect to the needs and values of a new generation of pupils and students
- **Society's 'political homes' and civil society** are considering the idea that especially younger generations withdraw from normal biographies of engagement (crumbling memberships, voting turn-outs, etc.) and develop strategies to accommodate (young) people by connecting with popular culture and life style issues (politicians at a rave party) presenting engagement as something that is fun, a good time, exciting, self-enhancing

Institutions in other words are responding to the ideal of **self-directedness of the life course**. The competent individual seems the basis of transformation. The question is of course if these institutions refer to the same type of competences of individuals in control of their life course and aimed at gaining new and exciting experiences instead of material and immaterial growth. The question is whether the required competences from an institutional and individual biography perspective are matching. Moreover, some authors have warned us for an overestimation of the competent individual in formulating new policies. Sharp criticism is provided by the Brussels' sociologist Elchardus. He is the criticaster of what he calls a **'self-ideology'** leading to an underestimation of social inequalities determining people's life chances as well as to the **transfer of responsibilities for overcoming life's difficulties to the individual**, which, in turn, relieves pedagogic and other institutions from their obligation to help those less capable to deal with their life course. Similar warnings are sketched in our own studies which clearly shows **people's call for more and not less investments** of representatives in schools, governments, and corporate business to help them cope with life course difficulties.

A good example is the recently debated flexibility-security nexus in the labor market. The call for a policy directed at **'flexicurity'**: a policy strategy in which flexibility and security are integrated and balanced manner. A policy strategy that attempts to synchronically and deliberately aims to enhance flexibility of labor markets, work organizations and relations and aims to enhance security, employment security and social security, notably for weak groups inside and outside of the labor market.

Research and teaching agenda

Research

- close to own expertise: sociology, life course, generations, culture, but open mind other disciplines
- life course ideals and institutional constraints in different nations among distinct generations
- collect quantitative research data (panel projects), make case study publications, this way prepare large-scale internationally/generationally comparative data collection/merger
- international networks (CCGS, EGRIS, RC34)
- scientific (EC, ESF, DFG/NWO etc.), public and corporate funders (Volkswagenstiftung e.g.)

Teaching

- start not my agenda per se, but vision on teaching and achievable competences, then ways to achieve these and to test these (norm accreditation; e.g. student-oriented end product test is wrong, but portfolio as the test)
- then who can we pull in, including students, at early phase of development of course
- case/problem oriented, i.e. basis transdisciplinarity
- basis research: case might / should (?) research itself
- dublin 10 criteria

Questions to the Search Committee

- relationship life long learning and work; and other fields?
- vision on teaching (theme, research-based, student-oriented; ba towards research masters or profession in field)
- offer: full professorship, entry date, duration?
- teaching load ?
- ba/ma transdisciplinary or ba is, ma not, idem PhD ?
- pay, formation and travel budget ?

PP-factors

- IUB-JC: young, ambitious, at core issue of interest unique in Europe
- UvT/IRIC: social sci circle on life course, generation, culture small after strategic repositions uvT

SPs

- always bossing research projects; good fro teaching modern ways; research associate role of students (life long learning: self-direction of students – feel taken seriously if productive and responsible role)
- quantitative multimethod experience with open mind to qualitative research
- productive sci publishing (dual focus – also research project management; publish outside A-journals)
- part of large internat multidiscipl network soc sci
- experience in transdisc work, eager to learn and easily learning from others, bringing people together
- organizing/managing network, research projects (content/timing and budgetting)
- time-quality conscious, fully engaged, decisive, pragmatic, energetic, optimistic (can-do-mentality)
- broad interest in arts & history (reading, researching, interpreting impact big events – WOI/II)
- making contacts easily

WPs

- want to be in control, a boss in a network/project, determining the agenda
- too broad number of interests
- more research than teaching experience
- dynamic model not applied to myself in time: mix safe strategy and low stimulans (home/university)
- very annoyed by low energy, negative, pessimistic, indecisive, slow people
- distrustful, easily convinced others use me, are underachievers
- Dutch informal (counterproductive for some formal hardline bureaucrats)
- harsh against people above (no investments in unuseful contacts)

NB: -check CV publication list, letter of application and delivered publications

-check ba/ma Kaaseclub at IUB, Kalmijn UvT, HP Blossfeld, life course sociology/life long learning (see UoM, AA course)

Conversation with Alexander Lerchl

-zoology/neurophysiology (human and animal)

-check stukje Zinnecker – socialization and biology

-neurobiology: brain development, nerve system, biological processes bases perception, consciousness, memory and thus learning and development: complex tasks stimulate thinking and life long learning (keeps brain development going)

-brain based learning (learning takes place by uitdaging/stimulans): create learning environment in which pupils can merge in a learningexperience; expell fear and insecurity but keep stimulans/alertness; by active dealing with info info is worked through: take interest of pupils and real context as the measure, conect school and non-school learning; make pupil director of its own learning process, feedback helps if deriving from reflection on experience; all brains unique: individual
measurework/maatwerk

questions:

-cross-over to social sciences upto now?

-aimed collaboration with the JC ?

Conversation Juan-Diez Medrano

- ethnic/national conflict and (European) identities
- relate to ZUMA-project
- relate to FP6-project
- check research/teaching program IUB Integrated Social Sciences

questions:

- aimed collaboration with JC ?

Conversation Ute Kunzmann

-lifespan developmental psychology

-berlin aging study

-wisdom (-related knowledge) and the good life

-check lezing staudinger

-check artikel mayer on lifespan psychology & life course sociology

-relate to wishes people on good life and learning

-relate to citizenship and the good life

Conversation Ursula Staudinger

- general life span psychology
- check opening address
- see Kunzmann