Work Package 2

Framework for the Analyses of Learning Outcomes in Europe

Deliverable D2.1

Research Strategy Paper and Glossary

University of Münster

Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, Jozef Zelinka

University of Porto

Tiago Neves

University of Genoa

Sebastiano Benasso

Executive summary

The European funded research project *Constructing Learning Outcomes in Europe. A Multi-Level Analysis of (Under-)Achievement in the Life Course* (CLEAR) is focusing the factors that affect the quality of learning outcomes across European regions and intents to spark innovative policy approaches to tackle underachievement and increase social upward mobility for young people. CLEAR is inquiring into the construction of learning outcomes and perceives the latter as resulting from manifold intersecting institutional arrangements, spatial and socio-economic determinants, discursive and socio-cultural influences, as well as individual experiences, dispositions, cognitive and psycho-emotional abilities. It is the combination of these multiple factors that CLEAR seeks to examine and understand. In order to research this complex issue, CLEAR is designed as a mixed-method, multi-level study based on empirical and comparative analyses, as well as innovative participatory strategies.

In this vein, the goal of the *Research Strategy Paper and Glossary* (Report) is to establish an analytical and conceptual framework, which will inform and guide the subsequent empirical, analytical, and participatory work. The Report is an integral and constitutive part of all subsequent analyses, as it reduces the complexity of diverse approaches to a coherent and applicable framework without, however, limiting their potential to enrich the study. The strategic importance of the Report is further underlined by the necessity to incorporate various disciplinary and expert backgrounds of the members of Consortium. For the international and interdisciplinary team to function and cooperate smoothly, it is inevitable to find a common conceptual ground and to share the same understandings of core concepts and definitions. Thus, the Report has the function to integrate the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological points of departure to one single and coherent strategy. It also functions as a unifier of the expert team, helping to unearth each members' potential, while avoiding misunderstandings and redundancies. Finally, it functions as a ground for shared terminological understanding, while giving space for sharpening and deepening the initial interpretations of key terms and concepts.

The Report is structured alongside several thematic sections, which present step by step the project's theoretical and methodological foundations, the choice and definition of key terms and concepts of the study, the application of participatory elements and the development of impact strategy, the integration of Open Science approach and the application of rules for quality assurance, as well as the assessment of ethical concerns and possible risks. The Report also includes a concise description of our time and research management. The largest part of the Report is the project's Glossary, which entails 26 entries with research definitions and exemplifications on how the terms will be used in the study.

The core result of the Report concerns the integration of multiple perspectives, methodological approaches and analytical dimensions in one single research strategy. We have successfully integrated both well-established theoretical approaches (Life Course Research) and newly developed critical theories (Intersectionality, Spatial Justice) with analytical dimensions that focus on the individual, institutional, structural, spatial, and relational aspects of the construction of learning outcomes. The role of this strategic procedure was not to exhaustively and meticulously define each research step, but instead to offer a sound and coherent approach to the complex examination of learning outcomes, which offers multiple entry points for the analysis, comparison, and interpretation of the issues at stake.

Another result of the Report is the precise application of our methodological bases in each Work Package. As the research work is divided in several Work Packages, each of which is concerned with one particular methodological approach more than with others, the Report has established a common dialogical approach to the use of the methods and results provided, enabling each Work Package to use its methodology, while carefully interpreting and integrating the preliminary results from other Work Packages. Split into empirical, analytical, and participatory methodologies, the Report has succeeded in installing a common ground for fruitful inspiration and collaboration.

In addition, the Report has thoroughly described the working procedures in terms of the management and coordination of research work. Since the study includes diverse teams and research cultures, the joint coordination helps to structure, visualise and monitor the research progress, signalling the important steps to be done and assessing the most possible and predictable risks to avoid. In this line, the Report contains a risk mitigation and contingency plan that takes into account the most probable risks, which might occur during the research work. The plan is a living part of the Report, which is constantly actualised according to internal and external changes and challenges.

The Report has further delineated the rules for ethical conduct and self-assessment, which apply both to the internal issues related to the Consortium partners, as well as to the research work itself. Since the *Working Paper on Ethical Issues* is a distinct document following this Report, the Report has outlined the core ethical standards to be acknowledged and integrated.

Moreover, the Report contains a thorough description of the application of our *Transversal Participatory Approach*, which is an innovative part of the study. The application of participatory activities is done both form a theoretical viewpoint, considering the existing knowledge on this matter, as well as in terms of practical application to be completed in each Work Package. The result is an ambitious plan to integrate participatory elements whenever possible and relevant. Also, the Report has presented a strategy to brief the Consortium members on all relevant issues regarding the application of participatory strategies, including research ethics and misleading theoretical assumptions.

The Report has further explicated how the Consortium intends to disseminate the results and reach the various addressees. The Impact Pathway Strategy describes the means of communication and dissemination to various groups – young people, policy experts, practitioners from education, training, or labour market, as well as the expected benefits for each of the groups.

An important and integrative result of this Report is the development of the Glossary entries, which have been drafted by several authors from different partner institutions. During the drafting of the entries, the partners entered into vital dialogue on epistemological, linguistic, and theoretical nuances of each term. The goal was not to offer a compromise on each term, but a working definition, which enables further sharpening and critique.

Acknowledgements

The Consortium members of the CLEAR research project have contributed to this Report as authors of the Glossary entries. We thank the authors for their contribution, which serves as the basis for shared understanding of the core concepts and categories used throughout the project:

Natália Alves, Eduardo Barberis, Sebastiano Benasso, Cristina Cavallo, Ruggero Cefalo, Paula Guimarães, Darena Hristozova, Alexandra Ioannidou, Tero Järvinen, Siyka Kovacheva, Joseph König, Tiago Neves, Valeria Pandolfini, Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, Isabella Quadrelli, Luca Raffini, Xavier Rambla, Anna Siri, Aina Tarabini, Jenni Tikkanen, Georgios K. Zarifis, Francesca Zamboni.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

1. Introduction

The project *Constructing Learning Outcomes in Europe. A Multi-Level Analysis of (Under-)Achievement in the Life Course* (CLEAR) is committed to better understanding the factors that affect the quality of learning outcomes across European regions and intents to spark innovative policy approaches to tackle underachievement and increase social upward mobility for young people. It focuses the processes of constructing learning outcomes as the result of manifold intersecting institutional arrangements, spatial and socio-economic determinants, discursive and socio-cultural influences, as well as individual experiences, dispositions, cognitive and psycho-emotional abilities. The overall aim is to examine the combination of multiple factors shaping learning outcomes and thus affecting their quality. Based on a better understanding of the processes of constructing learning outcomes, CLEAR inquiries into the impact of policies to boost achievement and tackle underachievement, and designs participative activities at local level to spark innovative policy solutions. It conducts comparative, multi-level analyses in 8 EU countries – Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain – by means of quantitative and institutional analyses, expert surveys at national and regional levels, qualitative analyses and innovative participatory strategies at local level. Special attention is given to groups that are multi-disadvantaged and/or in vulnerable situations. Dynamic and relational concepts – Life Course, Intersectionality, Spatial Justice – help explore the several mutually intersecting dimensions of the issue – individual, institutional, structural, relational, and spatial. In line with Open Science, the project adopts an innovative transversal participatory approach, enabling young people and other stakeholders to proactively shape educational policymaking and contribute with their views, ideas, and experience-based knowledge, thus enhancing the impact of the project.

A key document that structures and prescribes the research procedures in CLEAR is the *Research Strategy Paper and Glossary* (Report). Understanding the complex issue of constructing learning outcomes in diverse national and policy settings requires a careful planning of the use and integration of theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches and conceptual definitions. Moreover, as the Consortium encompasses a wide range of disciplines, traditions, and research cultures, a shared understanding is the key to successfully reaching the objectives set. The following Report, therefore, has a threefold function:

- *First*, with regard to the research design, the Report gives a detailed account on the theories, methods and conceptual understandings applied in the project. More precisely, it explains, why this particular combination helps us to explore the construction of learning outcomes better than other approaches, and shows, how we intend to apply it in our research.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

- *Second*, with regard to the coordination and management of the research project, the Report informs about the exact working strategy, including the organisation of the research teams, the monitoring of the research progress, and the evaluation of possible risks and ethical concerns.
- *Third,* with regard to the participatory approach and the dissemination of results, the Report carefully outlines the application of the Transversal Participatory Approach, informs about the theoretical and practical issues related to participatory methodology, and gives a brief, yet thorough definition of our impact pathway strategy.

The Report is divided in eight thematic sections:

The section devoted to the *Conceptualisation of theoretical perspectives* explains the core theoretical approaches applied during the study. Examining the construction of learning outcomes requires a proper definition of the theoretical lenses, as different theories shed light on different aspects of the issue. The deliberate choice of both renowned and innovative theoretical perspectives – Life Course Research, Intersectionality, Spatial Justice – enables the Consortium to proceed confidently, while probing to integrate new visions and open the issue to new interpretations and policy solutions.

The section focusing on the *Conceptualisation of terminology* introduces the largest part of the Report, which is the project's Glossary. For diverse and interdisciplinary teams, it is inevitable to establish a common ground for discussions and a shared understanding of key terms, concepts, and approaches applied. It also helps to avoid misunderstandings among the partners and sharpens our view on the issues at stake. The Glossary (see Annex) is a compositum of 26 entries, which help to communicate clearly both within the Consortium, as well as towards the public.

The section describing the *Contextualisation of the research object* integrates the project's theoretical perspectives and analytical dimensions. It does so by deriving exact questions that lead the research inquiry in the subsequent Work Packages and by visualising, how the integration of multiple analytical dimensions and theoretical perspectives creates a living and dynamic approach to inquire into the construction of learning outcomes at various stages and levels of analysis.

The section on the *Methodological bases* defines the benefits and challenges related to mixed-method studies, both in terms of theory and practice. It particularly shows, how the methodological toolset of qualitative and quantitative studies, field work and web-based research, participatory approaches and comparative analyses is applied in each Work Package and how the preliminary results enter into a dialogue to enrich each other and open new ways for sharpening the tools and avoiding methodological *-isms* (nationalism, statism, educationism, etc.).

The section devoted to *Participation* exemplifies, how we conceptualise and understand participatory research, what meanings and definitions dominate the current research

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

stand, and how we intend to proceed by applying the Transversal Participatory Approach. The section explains in detail the theoretical underpinnings of participatory research, defines its integration in the CLEAR research project, and the exact procedures concerning the application of participatory elements at each research step and in each Work Package. It closes with a discussion of core ethical concerns related to participatory activities.

The section focusing *Ethics and Risk Assessment* informs about the procedures ensuring that high ethical standards will be followed and applied throughout the whole research project. As ethics is inbuilt in the design of the study, particularly by adopting the Open Science research or integrating participatory elements, the self-assessment of ethically relevant issues is a constantly provided and updated. Similarly, the possible risks and/or harms which might affect the course of the study or the research participants, are assessed at regular basis. The section informs about the most possible risks, presenting mitigation strategies and contingency plans, if the former actions fail to apply at an early stage.

The section devoted to *Impact* presents the project's ambition to disseminate the results as widely and effectively as possible, while reaching out to various audiences and groups. The developed Impact Pathway Strategy explicates how we intend to communicate and share our results, what specific groups can benefit from our research and what are the most efficient ways to spread the information, while reducing redundancies and mismatches.

Finally, the section focusing on *Research Strategy* informs the reader about the exact application of research procedures, including the time and working plan, and the definition of milestones, which frame the completion of vital parts of the project. This section also focuses on the application of the practices of Open Science and the Quality Assurance related to the gathering, processing, storage, and use of the data.

The Report is a strategic document that frames the work in subsequent Work Packages. It is developed concisely, yet informatively enough to present the overall research strategy and the interoperability of methods, concepts, and theories applied. Other documents following (see *Data Management Plan*, *Working Paper on Ethical Issues*, *State-of-the-Art Report*) give an even detailed description of particular issues, they are, however, informed and framed by this strategic document.

2. Conceptualisation of theoretical perspectives

The CLEAR research project applies diverse theoretical perspectives, which help to enlighten the interactions between the manifold factors and actors involved in the construction of learning outcomes. Each perspective has a specific scope, looking either at the construction of individual life courses and biographies, at the intersecting factors that facilitate social inequality, or at the spatial dimension that affects the choices and

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

opportunity structures of young people. In following, we provide brief definitions of the theoretical frameworks:

Life Course Research (LCR) regards individuals' life courses as developing across several articulated, interacting dimensions that are part and parcel of given institutional and socio-historical contexts (Mayer, 2004; Heinz et al., 2009; Tikkanen, 2020). It considers how social inequalities emerge – and are perceived as emerging – from that interplay. Generally, LCR conceives of individual lives as consisting of trajectories and transitions that are constructed in a reciprocal process of political, social, economic and spatial conditions, welfare state regulations and provisions, and biographical decisions and investments. In this regard, high-quality learning outcomes are those which enhance the ability of young people to develop personally meaningful life projects and make successful school-to-school/school-to-work transitions. According to the core principles of LCR, the process of learning and its outcomes are explored as embedded in a particular social context (interplay of time and space) in which the individual life unfolds (Elder et al., 2003; Mayer, 2009). These contexts are aggravated by the structures of opportunities and constraints at national, regional, and local level, which form a complex mix of socio-economic conditions (Cefalo et al., 2020; Scandurra et al., 2020), institutionalised policies creating distinct youth transition regimes (Walther, 2017; Chevalier, 2016), and diverse practices of various actors including educators, policy professionals, and employers (Rambla & Kovacheva, 2021; Roberts, 2018). When it comes to opportunity structures, they have a strong historical path dependency influenced by external factors, including economic, energy, or health crises like COVID-19 pandemics.

In its turn, *Intersectionality* refers to the modes through which social and political identities (e.g., gender, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability) combine to produce specific positions in terms of privilege and discrimination, empowerment and oppression, acceptance or relegation (Cho et al., 2013; Järvinen & Silvennoinen, 2022). These unequal positions can be analysed at the individual or the group level. Well-established within the post-structuralist feminist debate (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 1990) and critical and political movements, such as black feminism and Movimiento Chicano, intersectionality was used to analysing the way in which social and cultural categories intertwine and create peculiar kinds of discrimination. According to the author of the term, Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality pointed to the subjection Afro-American women to being black and being a woman. It was the intertwining, or inter-section, of these *vulnerabilities* that created a qualitatively different form of discrimination which was hidden, rather than amplified, by the same intersection. This approach helped to understand and unveil the discriminating processes acting between the categories of race and gender. However, as intersectional approach entered the sociological debate and developed its own methodological instruments (Angelucci,

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

2017), other categories such as class, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability and, more recently, space were included into the intersectional analysis.

Finally, the notion of *Spatial Justice* refers to the geographical embodiment of power. Space both produces and is produced by social and political power relations (Soja, 2013; Williams, 2013). As such, spatial justice is strongly articulated with the notion of segregation, thus reflecting a given spatial order, i.e., the spatial distribution of socially valued resources and opportunities. This perspective is crucial when conducting in-depth comparative analyses in various spatial contexts. The spaces we live in can have both negative and positive consequences to our biographies via their endemic inequalities. In the field of education, spatial justice may be referred to the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities among regions, cities, neighbourhoods, and schools, along different divides (rural-urban, class and minority concentration areas), and related to different factors (e.g., housing and labour market, educational policy priorities concerning zoning and free-choice, etc.) (Oberti & Préteceille, 2016; Beach et al., 2018). Moreover, the frame of local spaces or *children geographies* helps to understand the learning ecology of formal, non-formal, and informal education that affects learner's opportunities, priorities and success (Jones et al., 2016; Walther et al., 2016) and massively shape their learning outcomes. Significantly, the learning outcomes of any person are particular outcomes of a life course in which they navigated through different life domains, including one (or several) education system(s). Spatial justice affects these programmes insofar as access (e.g., to ECEC, adult education, higher education), urban and school segregation and the links between VET and innovation systems are disparate across regions and localities.

A fine-grained, in-depth description of each theoretical perspective will be included in the State-of-the-Art Report (Deliverable D2.2), which provides the overall lens on the research object and outlines how the framework is implemented in each Working Package. The State-of-the-Art Report will describe the approach of using the overarching theoretical perspectives, explaining how the perspectives contribute to the project's objectives and discussing the resulting implications for the empirical research and comparative analyses. Thus, the theoretical conceptualisation informs the sampling of research units for the empirical work and provides the theoretical guided research hypotheses.

At the current stage, the theoretical perspectives were used to frame the choice of Glossary entries, the development of participatory strategies, and the decision on data sets and specific variables to be used for the sites' selection, e.g., gender, education level, labour market conditions, etc.

3. Conceptualisation of terminology

In CLEAR, we developed our shared conceptual understanding by starting with the terminological conceptualisation. The creation of the projects' Glossary (see Annex) with

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

relevant entries on the key concepts and terms used throughout the project takes into account both the interdisciplinarity of the research object as well as the research team (in terms of specialisation, but also gender and career stage). Thereby, it not only provides the key concepts used in the project, but also fosters a shared understanding among the partners, by considering the research objects' different aspects and dimensions and the different disciplinary traditions and conceptions of CLEAR's interdisciplinary research team. It fulfils the function of creating a collective understanding of the perspectives that are thoroughly communicated within the project and effectively disseminated to the public at large.

4. Contextualisation of the research object

CLEAR seeks to better understand the factors that affect the quality of learning outcomes. Those factors are manifold intersecting institutional arrangements, spatial and socio-economic determinants, discursive and socio-cultural influences, as well as individual experiences, dispositions, cognitive and psycho-emotional abilities. As will be explored in the next section, the collection and analysis of those factors requires the implementation of a multilevel, mixed-methods approach. This section establishes a foundational grid for the identification and collection of contextual information and data.

CLEAR addresses five mutually intersecting dimensions of the research object: the individual, institutional, structural, relational, and spatial dimensions. This section offers the foundations for the articulation between the three theoretical frameworks (Life Course Research, Intersectionality, Spatial Justice) and the five intersecting dimensions. It does so by formulating such articulation in the form of research questions that will guide the research progress (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Theories and Levels of Analysis

Theory / Level	Life Course	Intersectionality	Spatial Justice
Individual	• How do young people construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history, and social circumstance? • What role do young people ascribe to their peers regarding the definition of their	• How do young people frame their learning outcomes as part of their own positionality? • How do young learners experience, interpret and manage the obstacles they face?	• What is the relationship between individual learning outcomes and spatial segregation? • How do spatial settings affect the choices and decisions of young people?

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Theory / Level	Life Course	Intersectionality	Spatial Justice
	learning outcomes and life goals?		
Institutional	• Which preferred visions of individual development do policies bring about? • How do various policies interact with individual life courses of young people and what are their points of possible change? • How is youth engaged in policies' decision making, design, implementation and evaluation?	• Which dimensions of young peoples' lives are defined in policies as central for enhancing their situation? Which of them are neglected or relegated? • How do the policy-makers define their target groups for each specific policy? • How do education policies frame young peoples' previous, situated knowledge in the definition of learning outcomes?	• Which spatial levels do policies consider (local, regional, nationwide, supranational)? • What impacts are policies supposed to have at the national, regional and local levels?
Structural	• How do different institutions cooperate over or get into conflict about diverse understandings of what is a good learner and (under)achiever? • What has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the elaboration of life goals of young people?	• What kind of data sources about young people are available? What are the gaps or missing data? • What has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the dimensions most associated with discrimination and oppression?	• How do institutions operating at different levels share and protect the data among themselves? • What has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on opportunities of access to learning in different regions?

Regarding the dimensions of the research object – and even though some of them may appear rather self-explanatory – the following observations are made to clarify them:

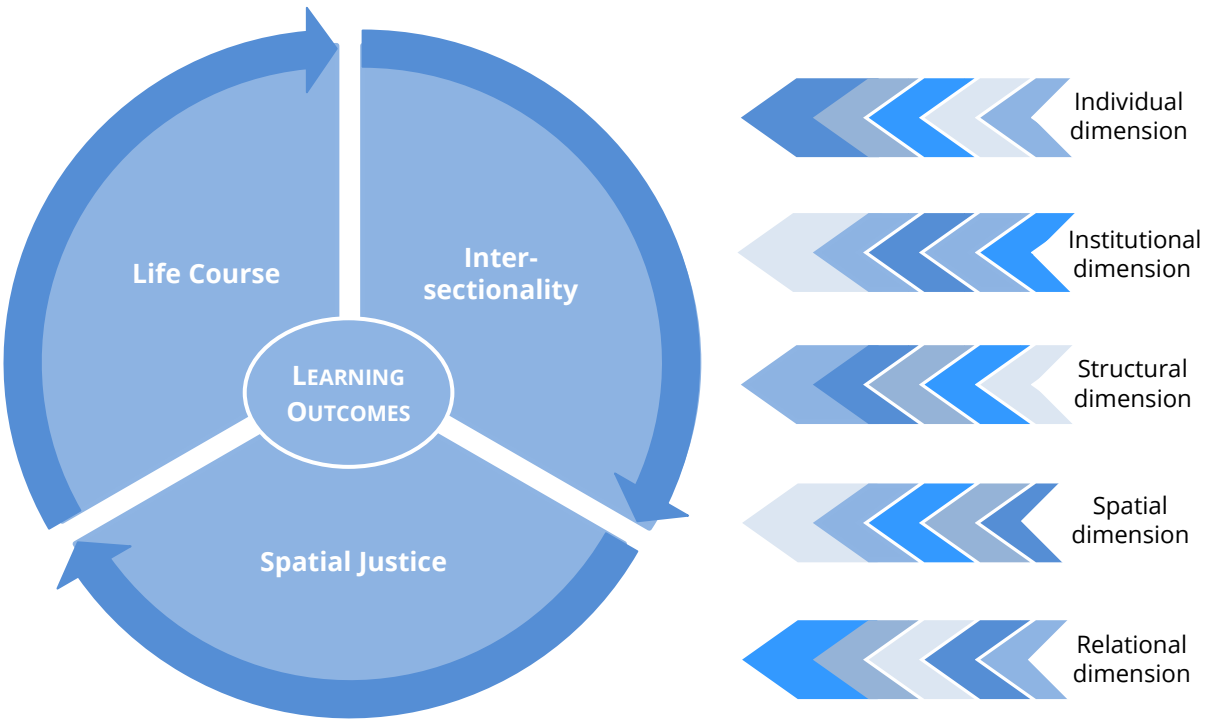
- *Individual* refers both to identifying and describing what happens to an individual from an external, analytical standpoint (including statistical categorizations), and to grasping, from a social constructionist approach, how a given individual perceives him/herself and narrates his/her own story.
- *Institutional* points to a systems' arrangements of infrastructures, settings, organizations and policies that embody its formal organization as a particular social and political (in a broad sense) entity.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

- The *structural* dimension, while sharing ties with the institutional, goes above and beyond it to include cultural, economic, and historical features that enable making sense of systems within broader contexts and geographical settings.
- Finally, the *relational* and the *spatial* dimensions cut across the previous three dimensions, materializing them dynamically across space, time, and multilateral relationships. Since the relational and spatial dimensions are transversal, they are not displayed autonomously, but rather embedded in the other categories.

The combination of theoretical perspectives and analytical levels mounts to a powerful conceptual framework for a comparative mixed-method research design (see Figure 1). As the figure shows, targeting the learning outcomes from three different perspectives requires a dialogical approach, by which each perspective opens new questions that other perspectives work with and which cannot be completely covered from one single viewpoint. The five analytical levels traverse the study of learning outcomes by placing the focus on individuals, institutions, structures, spaces, and relations involved, and by asking how the single dimensions interact in specific contexts and settings of the countries studied. The overall research strategy, thus, is constructed as a living and dynamic process which enables the study to zoom into the micro-processes of the construction of learning outcomes, while at the same time overview the complexity of the issue and the multitude of actors and processes involved.

Figure 1 – Overall Research Framework



Source: WP1 Team

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

5. Methodological bases

In order to account for the factors that affect the quality of learning outcomes, CLEAR addresses their construction from three mutually interrelated perspectives:

a) as a dynamic, relational, and contingent process;
b) as resulting from asymmetric discursive and power relations;
c) as something that problematises the dominant view on (under)achievement as an individual, outcome-oriented and statistically accessible feature.

These three perspectives cut through the three theoretical frameworks mentioned above. The Life Course Research approach focuses on the individual and subjective dimensions involved in the construction of learning outcomes and (under)achievement, namely on the experiences, expectations, visions and perceptions of young Europeans as dynamic, relational processes rooted in power asymmetric contexts in which meaning-making occurs and processes of subjectivation unfold. In its turn, the approach of Intersectionality broadens the analysis and assessment of educational inequalities by articulating individual and collective features – including those that are hardly captured by statistical instruments – thereby enabling a sharper understanding of the educational policies targeting low-achievement, and ultimately assisting in the development of intersectional solutions to intersectional problems. Lastly, the Spatial Justice approach points to the ways in which power is spatially inscribed, in particular to the spatial distribution of resources and opportunities for different stakeholders and their impact on the quality of learning outcomes. This brings to the fore the notion that learning outcomes are most often designed at higher, broader levels than the ones that come into action: the consequences this produces on their target group can only be duly assessed through an approach that identifies connections and articulations between those different levels.

Therefore, to tackle the challenge of making sense of this vast complexity of factors involved in the construction of learning outcomes, and to adequately focus on variable configurations of socio-economic, ethnic and gender divides among young people in the EU member states and regions (Parreira do Amaral et al., 2019), CLEAR combines stratification and comparative methods in a mixed-method, multi-level research design. This design includes quantitative and institutional analyses, expert surveys at the national (NUTS-1) and regional (NUTS-2) levels, qualitative analyses and innovative participatory strategies at the local level (NUTS-3). These participatory strategies, a central feature of CLEAR's methodological approach, serve not only the purpose of data collection but also, importantly, the goal of stimulating informed decision-making to support policy by enabling young people and other relevant stakeholders to contribute their views, ideas, and experiences. The ultimate goal of this process is to enable the development of innovative solutions that fit the needs and conditions of young people. Another relevant methodological contribution of CLEAR consists in identifying sparse or

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

missing data at various governance levels and enhancing the data quality of relevant regional and national bodies.

In a mixed-methods study, data is collected and analysed through both qualitative and quantitative methods and the findings are integrated into a single, integrated narrative (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). Furthermore, in addition to the mixed-methods approach, and given the large scope of its research objectives, CLEAR necessarily integrates interdisciplinary thinking and analysis. This is visible in every research focused Work Package (WP). Thus, as will be detailed below, CLEAR encompasses quantitative studies that draw on data sets from multiple interdisciplinary sources, interviews with key policy actors and participants, young adults and experts on policy coordination, and a participatory approach that feeds on and is fed by experience-based knowledge from relevant stakeholders. The development of a Participatory Tool Kit generated from the combination of multiple inter-disciplinary and inter-group perspectives will be a central outcome of the project.

CLEAR is organized in nine Work Packages and three phases: the phase of launching and sites selection, the phase of empirical analyses, expert surveys and participatory strategies, and the phase of comparisons and reporting. The three phases progress both linearly (that is, in chronological, sequential order) and cyclically (that is, through sharing and generative feedback).

WP1, *Management*, while it is a building block of the entire project, necessary to ensure a successful implementation of the project's infrastructure, logistics and administration, will be left out of methodological research considerations given its specific nature.

WP2, *Framework for the Analyses of Learning Outcomes in Europe*, sets the core conceptual, methodological, theoretical, and analytical framework for the subsequent empirical and comparative analyses. Operating in a cascade model, it is here that a common glossary of core definitions and terms used by all WPs is defined, so as to enable the intersection and dialogue of theoretical perspectives and overarching hypotheses. It is also here that the methodological procedures of the mixed-method, multi-level approach are taken one step further in terms of their clarification. Finally, this WP also offers a grid for the identification, collection, and systematisation of contextual information on selected sites. In this sense, this WP requires developing a prospective, holistic outlook over the entire project, but also one that is specific enough to address the plurality of analytical methods and levels, helping partners prepare for what is to come, already with a view on the final integration of the knowledge produced.

WP3, *Quantitative Analyses of Learning Outcomes*, provides a broad, quantitative description of the connection between learning outcomes, the labour market and socio-economic conditions at the national and regional levels, and also explores correlations between those elements. This requires the identification of clear and relevant sources of comparable data at different levels in different territories (spaces) and encompassing

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

different dimensions to account for the intersectional approach that characterizes CLEAR. The database to be elaborated within WP3 is to be seen as an instrument that materializes clearly the Spatial Justice and the Intersectionality frameworks; as regards the Life Course Research framework, the very nature of the anonymous data collected precludes the development of a more substantial analysis of individual trajectories. As such, the life course framework will be further elaborated in other WPs.

WP4, *Institutional Analysis, Policy Review and Assessment*, articulates documental (policy) analysis with the collection of qualitative data through interviews with key policy actors and participants on the topics of skills formation and skills utilisation, aimed at the elaboration of an International Policy Review Report (Deliverable D4.1) that integrates both national and regional reviews. This WP, then, is in itself a clear instance of the use of the mixed-methods and multi-level approaches. The fact that it articulates closely with WP6 in seeking to gather insights from policy practitioners' points to the aforementioned cyclical development of the project. This WP, then, is anchored in a review of the policies addressing low achievement in basic and digital skills of recent graduates and the adult population. From there, it proceeds to map out the processes of skills formation and skills utilisation in the participating countries, revealing how they articulate with governmental bodies and other policies at national and regional levels.

WP5, *Qualitative Research with Young People*, by addressing young people as experts on their own life courses – namely through the use of narrative biographical interviews –, is a privileged arena for the exploration of the Life Course Research framework. To be sure, biographical data is to be regarded as a gateway to understand how policies and local opportunity structures open and/or close young people's life opportunities, as well as to gain insights into how young people exercise their agency in interpreting and dealing with educational failure and success along their life courses. In this manner, the data gathered in this WP also point to the theoretical frameworks of Intersectionality and Spatial Justice, both of them wrapped in a multi-level analysis.

WP6, *Expert Survey on Policy Coordination*, seeks to identify present and forecast future scenarios of educational disadvantages. It does so through an online survey addressing experts located at different levels of governance and coordinating different policy strands dealing with (under)achievement. The survey shall inquire about scenarios on three timeframes: persisting challenges, present challenges, and future challenges, both short-term and long-term. It will also reflect upon crisis scenarios, i.e., situations where sudden, unexpected changes occur. Thus, in this WP, multi-level analysis is accompanied by a consideration of multiple timeframes, adding density to the research object. It is expected that CLEAR's three theoretical frameworks are mobilized to elaborate the survey and interpret the resulting data.

WP7, *Comparative Analyses and Reporting*, while relatively short in its duration, plays a pivotal role in the project. Indeed, fed by both empirical data and participatory results,

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

taking them into consideration in addressing the overall research questions, this WP is designed to offer cross-case and cross-national comparisons of the cases analysed. As such, it is the WP in which the mixed-methods approach is more fully and visibly implemented, as it is required to integrate previously collected data. Similarly, the three theoretical lenses used in CLEAR are necessarily used make sense of the data. WP7, then, is a sort of an interface between the more empirical WPs and the Innovation Forums to be implemented later in the project. It addresses CLEAR's research questions and seeks to provide main results and findings, which are then used to feed the Innovation Forums, as they are presented to policy-makers, researchers, young people, educational stakeholders, and the wider public at local, national, and EU level. Finally, it is also this WP's task to prepare the findings for secondary analyses and interpretations.

WP8, *Framing and Implementing the Transversal Participatory Approach*, which extends throughout almost the entire duration of the project, marks one of its most (if not the most) distinctive traits: the development of a participatory approach. This means that a more conventionally academic notion of mixed-methods is expanded to include participation and participatory elements in the very design of the project from an early stage. Here, the development of a Participatory Tool Kits for the practical application of participatory methods, as well as capacity-building actions, will play a central role in guiding partners in the implementation of participatory strategies through the project's life span. Innovation Forums will be set up, involving professionals active in the formal and non-formal education system, stakeholders of the public and third sector at the local level, and youths in and out of the education system; these will be key in mainstreaming the outcomes into general debates about the policy agenda.

Finally, both WP9 – *Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation* – and WP10 – *Ethics Requirements* – run throughout the entire project and, while central to ensure either a broad diffusion and relevant impact (WP9) or compliance with the most up to date ethical demands for research endeavours (WP10), they do not contain strict methodological procedures, but rather strategies for dissemination and publication of the results or for ethical conduct.

6. Participation

Given the project's overall goal to overcome the academic boundaries in producing and disseminating scientific knowledge to concretely contribute to public debate, the possibility to recognize and *hear* voices which come from different levels and positioning in terms of power levels in the field of education is crucial. In this regard, the application of a *Transversal Participatory Approach* (TPA) in the CLEAR research project is meant to create opportunities for the active involvement of different target groups at different stages of the research and dissemination activities. It provides settings where different actors in the (formal/non-formal) educational arena, as well as young people, can actively contribute to the project's research stream and identify the most relevant issues

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

to be addressed by policy-makers. The goal is to involve different actors in the research as *critical fellows* and not merely as *information bearers* to be triggered by research. The following subsections will describe the rationale and the application and management of TPA throughout the research project.

6.1 Rationale of the Transversal Participatory Approach

Through the integration of TPA along its lifecycle, CLEAR seeks to provide knowledge to reach different audiences, foster awareness in the involved target groups, and promote innovative methodological solutions in the field of Social Sciences and Humanities. The overall focus of CLEAR finds in the TPA a key dimension for considering and assessing the manifold standpoints, cultural assumptions and expectations of heterogeneous groups of social actors involved in the construction of learning outcomes. Ranging from educational policy-makers to professionals in (formal and non-formal) education, experts, stakeholders and young people, the plethora of profiles who contribute to shaping different meanings of the notion of educational (under)achievement through their interactions, negotiations and practices at different levels is significatively wide. It requires multiple and flexible methods to be explored by research. CLEAR pursues an active engagement of the involved people and integrates its research methods with tailored and context-sensitive participation strategies.

For the purpose of integrating participatory elements, the WP8 Team has developed an overall TPA scheme (see Table 2), which covers the whole project's duration, crossing its workflow in different moments and with different methodological solutions. Through its transversality, the TPA scheme impacts three main dimensions of CLEAR: the integration of participation in the empirical WPs; the design of different products of dissemination; and the Consortium's growth in terms of skills and competences, i.e., capacity-building actions. The TPA scheme is divided into three main stages:

- The first stage aims at laying the basis for a shared understanding of what we mean by participation. Afterwards, it proceeds with designing the integration of participatory methods in the empirical WPs, seeking solutions to combine their different methodological approaches (e.g., from quantitative analysis of secondary data to qualitative in-depth interviews). The WP8 Team supports other WPs' Teams in finding sustainable ways for matching participation with the specificity of their WP in terms of goals and methods. The first stage concludes with the final selection of the participatory methods to be integrated into the different empirical WPs. The instruments applied by the WP8 Team to support the partners include the *Participation Design Board*, online meetings with the different WPs' Teams, and the production of different *Participatory Tool-Kits* designed according to the specific participatory methods chosen by each WP Team;
- The second stage envisages the implementation of the participatory actions within the stream work of the empirical WPs, consistent with the choices done in the

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

previous stage. The partners are required to report on the process of managing participatory actions by means of a *Travelogue of the application of TPA Template*, devoting special attention to problems, strengths and potentialities dealt with in the experience of the application. This latter task progressively feeds the production of one of the main dissemination products in CLEAR, the *Guidelines for the Application of Participatory Methods* (see Deliverable D9.2), which contributes to Open Science practices by sharing methodological reflections and solutions drawing from concrete experiences from the projects' empirical fieldworks;

- The third stage includes the conduct of Innovation Forums, which are organised at a local level by gathering different actors involved in the construction of learning outcomes to discuss the project's main findings and major issues. The overall aim at this stage is to co-create awareness about educational (under)achievement and to exchange insights and experience-based knowledge from and between the participants. A particular attention is devoted to providing methodological knowledge in relation to the tools selected for the Innovation Forums (e.g., World Café, Future Labs).

During the application of the TPA, the WP8 team will provide ongoing *capacity-building actions* at every stage of the TPA, which will include presentations, trainings, and targeted workshops focused on different aspects of participatory methods on the occasion of the Consortium meetings in presence and, whenever necessary, using online tools.

Table 2 – Transversal Participatory Approach Scheme

TPA stage	Aims	Actions run by the WP8 Team	Contribution from the Consortium
1	• Laying the basis for a shared understanding of participation	• Presentation and debate of the overall theoretical and methodological framework for participatory strategies • Production of glossary entries related to participation • Production of contents illustrating TPA for the project's website	• Discussion and feedback
	• Co-designing the integration of participatory methods in the empirical WPs • Seeking solutions to combine their different	• Management and production of the online *Participation Design Board* • Organisation of online meetings with the empirical WP Teams • Production of *Participatory Tool-Kits*	• The empirical WP Teams brainstorm ideas for the integration of participation and compile the online board; • The empirical WP Teams choose participatory elements to be

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

TPA stage	Aims	Actions run by the WP8 Team	Contribution from the Consortium
	methodological approaches		integrated with the support of WP8 team • Discussion and feedback
2	• Implementation of participatory methods	• Organization of online meetings • Production of *Template for the Travelogue of the Application of TPA*	• Implementation of participatory methods • Reporting on the experiences of implementation
3	• Drawing conclusions and impacting dissemination	• Supporting partners in organising and managing Innovation Forums at a local level • Providing suggestions concerning the design of different dissemination outcomes targeting different audiences • Producing the *Guidelines for the Application of Participatory Methods* (Deliverable D9.2) • Producing materials applicable for feeding discussions such as Policy Roundtables, public and academic seminars and symposiums	• Managing the Innovation Forums • Discussion and feedback

6.2 Managing and supporting the application of the Transversal Participatory Approach

The first capacity-building action provided by the WP8 Team is the introduction of the main theoretical framework. The framework is informed by various theoretical schools, starting from the legacy of sociological intervention in the 1970s (see Touraine et al., 1978; Touraine, 2000; MacDonald, 2002), to more contemporary applications ranging from Acton Research, Community-Based Participatory Research, and Art-Based and Creative Methods (von Benzon et al., 2021; Giorgi et al., 2021). We have presented and discussed the relevant theoretical contributions with the aim of finding common threats and problems to be considered during their implementation, as well as considering the ethical issues and potential risks implied by the application of participation, with particular regard to the ones related to the involvement of young people in vulnerable and/or multi-disadvantaged positions. The Consortium was informed about and agreed upon the risks of involuntarily reproducing an *extractivist* approach[1] (Serafini, 2022) to

1 Namely, the *colonisation* and exploitation of symbolic resources of parts of society by the scientific community.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

the planned participatory actions, as well as adhering to *methodological populism*[2] as the main potential threats to be monitored and prevented by applying *methodological sensitivity* (Greenway et al., 2021). More specifically, the set of possible risks discussed during the Consortium meeting includes:

- ethical issues pertaining to partnership, collaboration, trust and sharing of power. The partners have been advised to pay attention to how partnerships are established, power is distributed, and control exerted in applicating participation;
- potential difficulties deriving from the blurring boundaries between researcher and participants, as this hazy distinction may entail problems in juggling different roles for the participants, who are prompted to manage their profile of *natives* of the social environment explored by research and contemporarily act as co-researchers;
- issues regarding anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality, especially in respect to the close relationships developed in participatory processes, which makes the issues of anonymity and confidentiality not completely resolvable at the starting phase of the research when formal agreements are signed, as they stay potentially open throughout the whole research process.

During the introduction of the overall TPA scheme, the WP8 Team has invited the empirical WPs' Teams to trigger a reflection about how to implement participation in their research streams and stimulated Consortium Partners to discuss strategies for the management of participatory actions at their local level. As a conclusion, the WP8 Team presented the *Participation Design Board* to support the Consortium in designing the TPA, helping the different empirical WPs Team to allocate participation in their research.

The figure (see Figure 2) is constructed by adapting the *continuum of participation* illustrated by Brown (2022, p. 22) on the y-axis, to allow the partners to consider different degrees of participation entailed for the engaged people. The x-axis is organised on the different *moments*[3], during which the participatory actions can be integrated into the WPs.

At the first stage of the process of compilation of the *Participation Design Board*, the WP Teams are asked to brainstorm among themselves and indicate an area on the board, where allocate participatory activities in their WPs. The WP Teams are prompted to discuss the integration of participation on the basis of sustainability and feasibility. The assessment of sustainability results from a combination of the available resources and competencies in the research teams, the main methodological orientation of the WP,

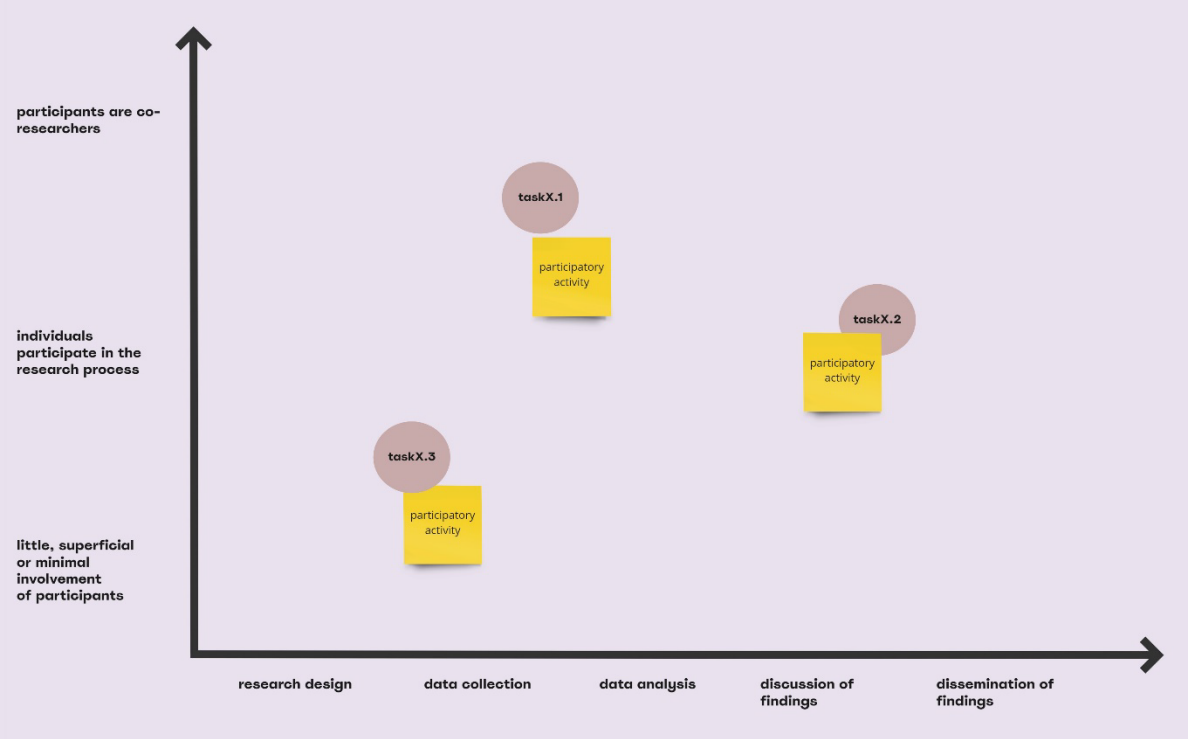
2 By *methodological populism* we mean the rhetorical reference to participation in social sciences applied to conceal the hierarchical praxis of research, where people's engagement is aimed to gather *induced consent* for the research results.

3 The list includes: research design, data collection, data analysis, discussion of findings, dissemination of findings.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

the possibility to access local networks and target groups at the local level, and the estimation of the degree of engagement required for the desired participatory methods. The justification of the choices in terms of selected task(s) and desired moments and methods for the integration of participatory activities, as well as the reasons for non-integration of participatory methods on some of their tasks, is captured in a short online questionnaire[4]. Following the internal brainstorming and online board compilation, the preliminary choices are discussed with the WP8 Team, which iteratively decides on the final selection of specific participatory methods to be implemented in the WP.

Figure 2 – The Participation Design Board



Source: WP8 Team

7. Ethics and Risk Assessment

The CLEAR research project pursues ethical research practices that safeguard the engaged social actors, with particular reference to the youths in vulnerable and/or multi-disadvantaged conditions. The ethics strategy is thoroughly described in the Working Paper on Ethical Issues (Deliverable D1.3). In general, the ethical standards in the CLEAR research project could be distinguished according to four levels:

- *First*, each Consortium Partner is devoted to fulfil the highest national and international standards in conducting ethically sensitive research at site.

4 Specifically, the items are: Why did you choose to place the task in that specific location? What kind of method could be implemented? Who is going to be involved (refer to target groups and their characteristics)? Who is going to be involved (refer to researchers and other actors)? Which strategies could be used to find and engage target groups?

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

- *Second*, the Consortium regularly updates and implements ethical norms relevant to the upcoming research steps and relevant for the intern project coordination.
- *Third*, the CLEAR research project has appointed an Ethical Advisor to monitor the research activities for the whole Consortium (Deliverable OEI – Requirement No. 1). Similarly, National Teams communicate every ethically relevant research activity with their National Ethics Advisors or Committees.
- *Fourth*, in the CLEAR research project we conduct an ongoing assessment of ethical standards applied in the EU-funded research projects to account for the coherence with and recommendations from the European Commission and its respective bodies.

Apart from following the ethical norms and standards, the CLEAR research project is actively trying to foresee and prevent any possible harm and/or leak of sensitive data. For this purpose, we have developed a Risk Mitigation Strategy and Contingency Plan (see Table 3), as well as an updated version of Data Management Plan (Deliverable D1.2) due in Month 6. The table identifies the most possible risks as discussed among the Consortium partners. It then shows which WPs are the most affected ones in terms of severity and likelihood. Based on the continuous assessment, it proposes targeted mitigation measures and, if the measure fails to apply at the first stage, a contingency plan. All partners have expressed their views on the risk assessment and agreed on the measures proposed. An important and integral part of the ethical conduct and risk assessment has been the impact of the COVID-19 pandemics, as well as the current energy and financial crises. In this respect, the Consortium partners have taken all precautionary measures to assure the safety of the personnel and the ability to fluently work on the project' tasks. This includes taking care of the workplace (appropriate temperature, COVID-safe working spaces/times, regular testing), the working hours (using preferably energy-saving working times at daylight, exceptionally use of home-office), and time division (encouraging to balance working and leisure time).

Table 3 – Risk Mitigation Strategy and Contingency Plan

Risk description	WPs	Severity/ Likelihood	Mitigation measure	Contingency plan
Conflicts between partners	All WPs	High/ Low	Coordinator mediates and finds, whenever possible, consensual solutions.	Coordinator will search for an external mediator to clarify mutual responsibilities.
Deviations from the work plan	All WPs	Medium/ Medium	Lead partners agree on a feasible and viable time plan and apply agile, day-to-day management.	Responsible lead partners develop detailed and quality-adjusted strategy to reduce time delay.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Risk description	WPs	Severity/ Likelihood	Mitigation measure	Contingency plan
Occurrence of mosaic effects	WP3	High/ Low	The responsible partner develops Data Management Plan to prevent re-identification of persons or groups.	The Consortium decides on the further use of the data and the adoption of legal protection measures.
COVID-19-related restrictions on fieldwork	WP4, WP5, WP6, WP8	High/ Medium	The responsible partners will care for all protective measures to ensure the safety of all participants.	The partners develop strategies and tools for hybrid and online participation.
Risk behaviour and data handling during empirical fieldwork	WP4, WP5, WP6	High/ Low	The WP Leaders will brief the personnel on the use, processing and storage of data, on the transparent communication with the interviewees, as well as on cautious behaviour during interviews, including constant assurance of comfort of the interview partner.	The WP Leaders will collect all relevant information to accurately estimate the extend of possible distress and take protective measures to avoid any secondary discomfort of the participants and help to handle the stressing events.
Other external risks	All WPs	Medium/ Low	Partners will ensure safe work infrastructure and sufficient material resources.	In case of unforeseen events partners will quickly share the information and meticulously decide on next steps.
Other internal risks	All WPs	Low/ Low	Partners will regularly communicate the course of events and possible risks.	In case of unforeseen internal changes, the Consortium will decide on the re-distribution of tasks.

8. Impact

In the CLEAR research project, we pay a special attention to how the results of empirical and comparative analyses, but also of participatory activities, will further affect the educational inequalities and the policy-making at various governance levels. In this respect, the impact strategy applied in CLEAR is organised according to six interests:

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

- First, our research project will *generate high-quality knowledge* as it studies (under)achievement in those European regions where young people have achieved disparate learning outcomes and cannot avail of the same opportunities due to intersectional and structural disadvantages. We aim at creating a new body of data and applying diverse mixed-method approaches to deliver conclusive results for evidence-based policy advice and further research.
- Second, we will *address EU policy priorities and global challenges.* By means of several policy briefs, we will transform the key findings of the project into recommendations that the EU, the member states, and the regional and local policy-makers can use to develop fine-grained instruments for policy design and implementation. Our particular attention is devoted to the transitions between sectors of education and training, as well as between education and training and employment.
- Third, we will *comply with practices of Open Science*, in particular by making data sets as available as possible (respecting anonymity, confidentiality, and data protection) and guaranteeing that all published articles meet the criteria of green open access.
- Fourth, our research will lead to the *spread of innovative research methodologies*, as it probes combining diverse research approaches (quantitative, qualitative, comparative) with participatory elements at each research step, which seek to widen the inclusion of groups in vulnerable and/or multi-disadvantaged positions.
- Fifth, we will *focus on the effects of structural crises* – as European societies have undergone different crises in the last decades, e.g. economic, humanitarian, or health crises, analysing them as an element of wider societal processes. We will look at the current discourse of crisis in education and training and investigate whether and inasmuch it is part of the *new normal* of educational systems, legitimising and favouring certain policy approaches over others (Nordin, 2014).
- Sixth, we will encourage the *internal professional growth* of the Consortium partners, who are prompted to revise more traditional social research routines, and are stimulated towards the achievement of new skills by training, capacity-building actions, and shared reflections on innovative methodologies.
- Seventh, we will concetrate on *building safe research processes and environments* which prove able to welcome and value actors in the field of education from different social groups and very heterogenous levels of power. Their engagement in participatory research activities can be considered a form of empowerment, especially with regard to those subjects, such as, very frequently, the youths, who struggle to make their voice *heard* in the field of education.

Our Impact Pathway Strategy (see Table 4) summarises the Consortium's efforts to address the specific needs as identified by the Call, to identify the expected results and to provide an outlook on the communication and dissemination strategies that will

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

help us to reach the specific target groups. The research outcomes and long-term impacts underscore the specific scope of the project to research the construction of learning outcomes in its various manifestations and interplays between individual, institutional, structural and socio-cultural factors and actors.

Table 4 – Impact Pathway Strategy

Specific Needs	• Understand the factors that shape the quality and construction of learning outcomes to promote evidence-based policy-making; • Tackle (under)achievement in learning outcomes to support youth in multi-disadvantaged and vulnerable positions; • Develop and probe innovative policy tools.
Expected Results	• Novel and comprehensive knowledge on factors affecting learning outcomes; • Novel and comprehensive knowledge on the impact of educational and social policies on (under)achievement; • Conclusive results both for evidence-based policy advice and further research.
Dissemination & Communication	• *Policy-makers and educational authorities*: Policy briefs and targeted communication to offer advice and recommendations; • *Scientific community*: High impact scientific publications presenting analytical results, participation in high profile national and international conferences; • *Providers of formal and non-formal education and training*: Active involvement in Innovation Forums and direct communication during the fieldwork; • *Young people*: Active involvement through the Transversal Participatory Approach and Innovation Forums; • *Wider public*: website, social networks, press releases and interviews.
Target Groups	• Policy-makers and educational authorities; • Researchers; • Industry and labour market representatives at various levels; • Providers of formal and non-formal education and training; • Young people, particularly those in vulnerable positions; • Other public stakeholders and influential key actors.
Research Outcomes	• Increased attention to quality and construction of learning outcomes in research on education, labour market, and social inclusion; • Increased relevance of learning outcomes in the European and national agenda setting and amongst stakeholders and wider public.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Impacts	• Inspire further research based on the analysis of the construction of learning outcomes; • Spread innovative research methodologies by probing to combine various research and participatory approaches; • Enhance the internal growth of the Consortium members by actively engaging every researcher in designing, implementing, evaluating, and reporting the research results; • Promote policy making to adopt informed, evidence-based measures to effectively improve the quality of learning outcomes and tackle (under)achievement; • Raise the voice of young people, particularly those in multi-disadvantaged and vulnerable positions; • Support the feedback loop between education and labour market and contributing to inclusive growth.

9. Research Strategy

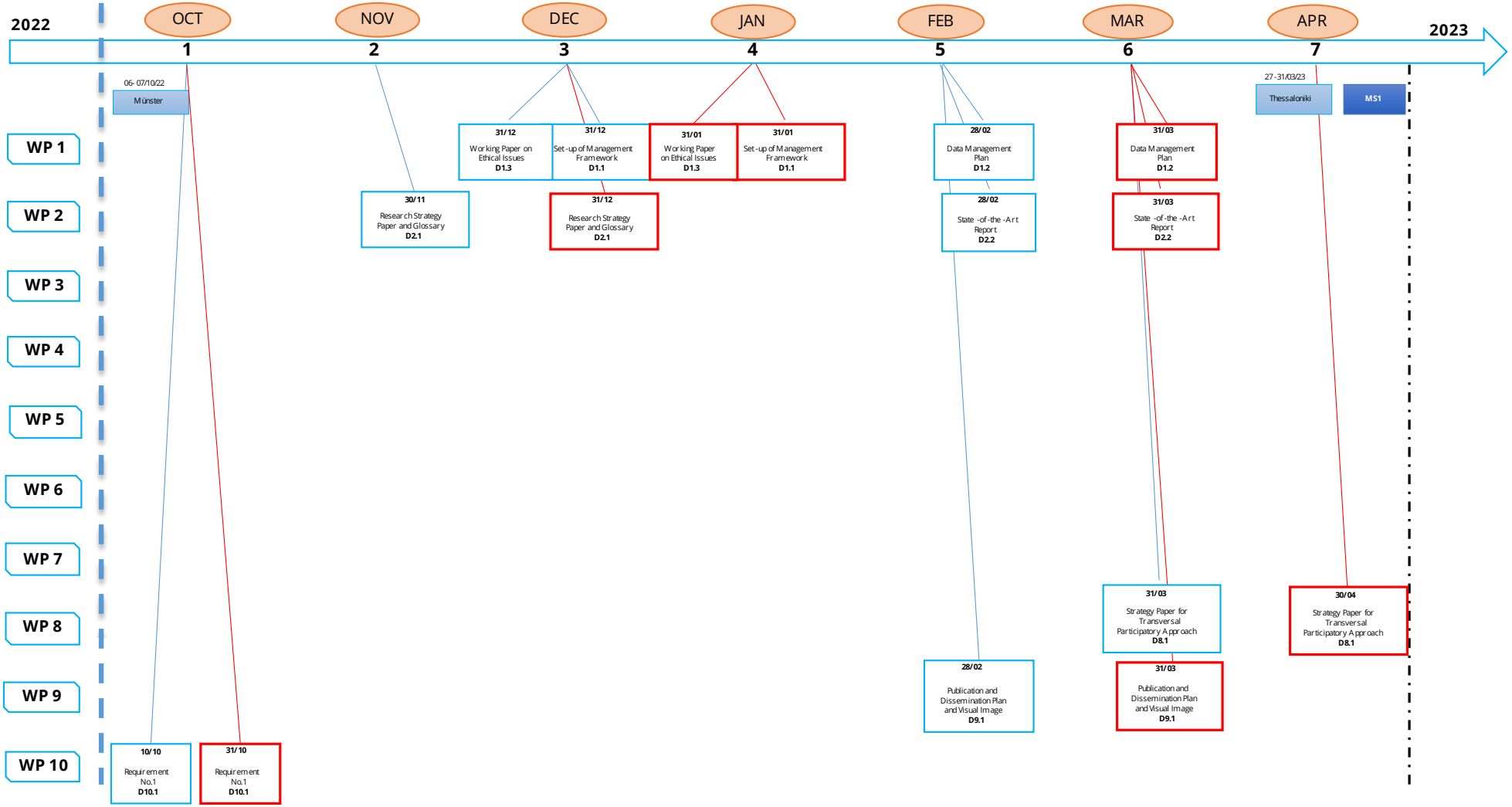
The work in CLEAR is organised both centrally, by the Project Coordination, as well as locally, by each Consortium Partner. The Project Coordination is responsible for monitoring the overall progress, while the Partners organise themselves according to the working tasks as described in the Grant Agreement and discussed in the Consortium meetings. Depending on the specific task, the research work can be either organised within national teams (e.g., empirical field research) or within WP Teams (e.g., the implementation and management of the Transversal Participatory Approach by WP8 Team). Therefore, in order to orchestrate the broad and intersecting activities without creating redundant tasks, an active and regular communication, either during Consortium meetings, Steering Board meetings, WP Team meetings or day-by-day mail and video communication is of utmost importance. Adding to this, to smooth and synchronise the work, the Project Coordination has established an adjustable and regularly updated workflow-timeline and decided on core project's milestones.

9.1 Research Workflow and Milestones

The workflow-timeline (see Figure 3) contains information about the current activities due in the upcoming six to seven project months. The time axis is localised in the upper part of the timeline and contains the information about the project's months, counted as numbers, as well as calendar months, which give us the orientation within the academic year. The division of WPs is localised at the left side of the timeline. The main field displays the distribution of important tasks for next research steps or the reports to be submitted. The current timeline for months October 2022 until April 2023 contains Deliverables (in red) and their pre-versions (in blue). Each pre-version or draft of a report helps to avoid incomplete or redundant information, as well as to receive the feedback from all Partners. Each icon contains the name of the Deliverable, its abbreviation, and the last possible date for submission.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Figure 3 – Timeline Oct 2022 – Apr 2023



Source: WP1 Team

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

The icons are connected to the months in the upper part of the timeline in order to highlight the Consortium's responsibilities for each month. The timeline also contains information about the upcoming events (Consortium meetings, Review meetings, Roundtables, Innovation Forums, etc.), which is located beneath the time axis. Finally, reaching each Milestone (MS) is marked by a vertical dotted line, which also serves as an indicator for the next research phase, either empirical, analytical, or reporting.

The workflow-timeline is shared among all Partners, regularly updated and adjusted to the current needs and/or possible shifts in the planning. It helps the Partners to organise in advance the future cooperation, to avoid overlaps and mismatches between the national and/or WP teams, and to reduce the risk of postponing the research tasks or the deliverance of reports. Based on agile management adopted in CLEAR, the workflow-timeline helps to structure, visualise, and regulate the work within the project to achieve properly and timely the objectives set.

A vital part of the research strategy are the project's milestones (see Table 5). The milestones identify reaching five core research phases. The first milestone *MS1 – Project infrastructure established* informs about the set-up of project management and definition of key research strategies that anchor and frame the next research activities. The second milestone *MS2 – Sites selected and validated* informs about the decision on research sites, which will serve as the base for subsequent empirical field work. The third milestone *MS3 – Empirical analyses and expert surveys launched* indicates that the field work has successfully started and that the project has entered the phase of data gathering. The fourth milestone *MS4 – Empirical analyses and expert surveys completed* testifies that the tensest phase of collecting the data during the field work has been successfully completed and that the data are ready for analytical and comparative inquiries. Finally, the fifth milestone MS5 – Comparative analyses and Innovation Forums conducted informs that the analytical phase and the Innovation Forums with multiple stakeholders have been accomplished. The project now enters its most active reporting and disseminating phase.

Table 5 – Project's Milestones

Milestone Name	Due Month	Means of Verification
Project infrastructure established	7	The joint Management Office (WWU & ERS) will set up project's infrastructure (Task 1.1) and develop research framework for subsequent analyses (Task 2.1). UNIGE will develop Participatory Tool Kits (Deliverable D8.1) in order to integrate participative elements into the whole research study. ULISBOA will prepare Publication and Dissemination Strategy (Task 9.1), with precise communication and dissemination procedures.
Sites selected and validated	9	WWU, together with UNIVIE, will collect data and contextual information. WWU focuses on providing a grid for identification of

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Milestone Name	Due Month	Means of Verification
		contextual information (Deliverable D2.3) and UNIVIE on collecting comparable statistical data from relevant data sets (Task 3.2). The sites will be validated according to the accessibility and quality of data and decided by the Consortium.
Empirical analyses and expert surveys launched	15	UAB will start with writing the reviews of national and regional literature (Task 4.1), which will support subsequent policy analysis. UTU will develop a research framework for national data collection (Task 5.1), including the strategy for data analysis. UNIURB will construct the expert surveys and define the experts' profiles (Task 6.1). All tasks mark the start of the empirical phase of the project, where policy documents, qualitative data, and participation of policy experts will generate new information.
Empirical analyses and expert surveys completed	21	UAB will complete the interviews with key policy actors (Task 4.2), the UTU will finalise the interviews with young people (Task 5.2), and UNIURB will summarise the expert surveys (Task 6.2). All surveys will deliver primary data for subsequent analyses and reporting.
Comparative analyses and Innovation Forums conducted	33	WWU will implement comparative cross-case and cross-national analyses using the information provided from previous empirical studies (Task 7.2). UNIGE will support the Consortium in organising Innovation Forums to share the project's findings with various audiences and inviting young people to actively engage in the debate (Task 8.3). The Consortium will decide on the fulfilment of Milestones.

9.2 Open Science and Quality Assurance

While conducting research at various stages – empirical field work, policy reviews, participatory strategies, comparative analyses – the CLEAR research project is committed to promote Open Science principles (see the entry *Open Science* in Glossary) and assure the quality of all its research activities.

In line with the Open Science approach, we will guarantee a safe and transparent handling of the data and information during all stages of the research cycle (hypothesis, data collection, processing, data storage, long-term preservation, publication and dissemination of research results, reuse of data and information) (Open Science and Research Initiative, 2014, p. 8). Regarding the data management, our approach to *FAIR-ification* (**f**indability, **a**ccessibility, **i**nteroperability, and **r**eusability of data) of the project's data follows current best practice and will be part of our *Data Management Plan* (DMP) (Deliverable D1.2). During the project's lifetime, data will be saved locally, with a daily backup on the e-infrastructure server. The responsibility to adhere to the DMP and to backup is part of the Consortium Agreement and is regularly checked. The data collected will be stored on the e-infrastructure for at least five years after the project. Other results

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

will be made available following the same principles, aiming for maximum safety, anonymisation, and compliance with the highest ethical and legal standards and will be made safe for further (re)use, verification, and improvement. We foresee protective measures only to secure freedom to develop our results further.

In practical terms, we will use existing institutional data sets (WP3) and facilitate a public database of regional data on the sites selected. We will further generate new data from qualitative interviews (WP4, WP5), which we will transcribe, prepare a one-page English summary for each interview, and provide detailed procedures on the storage of transcripts. We will carefully anonymise the data and ensure safe storage with no access for third parties. Finally, we will gather qualitative data from participatory research (WP6, WP8), which we will include in policy recommendations and practice-oriented Policy Briefs.

To assure the quality and transparency of our research outputs, we have adhered to the following principles:

- We will publish on the project's website the concept, theoretical foundation, and analytical approach of empirical and participatory studies 6 months prior to starting the respective studies.
- Following the guidance by *OpenAIRE*, we will ensure *Green Open Access* to all project's publications.
- Unless a partner can demonstrate that this would jeopardise their vital interests, we will give free access to our research data and follow the EU guidelines on FAIR data management and the current best practice approach to data shepherding.
- We will probe innovative participatory research strategies and develop appropriate participatory tool kits that help the implementation of participatory elements at every stage of research.
- All information materials will be made accessible under *Creative Commons* (CC) licenses[5] and so will be the content produced by empirical WPs.

10. Conclusion

The Research Strategy Paper and Glossary has outlined the common conceptual, theoretical, methodological and ethical understanding and further deepened the research strategies for each Work Package and for each research phase. It has also contributed to the development of a shared understanding of core concepts and terms used throughout the project. In this way, it has paved the way for framing the subsequent empirical and comparative analyses and strengthened the overarching design of the study. Following the CLEAR's mixed-method, multi-level and multi-scalar approach, the paper has successfully outlined and defined the various interdisciplinary, theoretical and participatory elements that traverse the whole research process. Given the density and

5 https://creativecommons.org

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

intensity of the research work, the paper was limited to the most vital and significant parts of the study and framed the overall research framework. Finally, the Paper serves as a basis for each empirical WP, as it lays the ground for framing the empirical work, data processing, and comparative analyses.

11. References

Angelucci, A. (2017). *From Theory to Practice. The Intersectionality Theory as a Research Strategy.* (Working Paper 02/2017). University of Vienna.

Beach, D., From, T., Johansson, M., & Öhrn, E. (2018). Educational and spatial justice in rural and urban areas in three Nordic countries: a meta-ethnographic analysis. *Education Inquiry*, *9*(1), 4–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2018.1430423

Brown, N. (2022). Scope and continuum of participatory research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *45*(2), 200-211. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2021.1902980

Cefalo, R., Scandurra, R., & Kazepov, Y. (2020). Youth labor market integration in European regions. *Sustainability*, *12*(9), Article 3813. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12093813

Chevalier, T. (2016). Varieties of youth welfare citizenship: Towards a two-dimension typology. *Journal of European Social Policy*, *26*(1), 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928715621710

Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (Eds.) (2013). Intersectionality: Theorizing Power, Empowering Theory [Thematic issue]. *Signs*, *38*(4). https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/669610

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, *1*(8), 139–167.

Elder G. H., Jr., Johnson, M. K., & Crosnoe, R. (2003). The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory. In J. T. Mortimer & M. J. Shanahan (Eds.), *Handbook of the Life Course* (pp. 3–19). Kluwer Academic; Plenum Publishers.

Giorgi, A., Pizzolati, M. & Vacchelli, E. (2021). *Metodi creativi per la ricerca sociale. Contesto, pratiche e strumenti*. Il Mulino.

Greenaway, A., Hohaia, H., Le Heron, E., Le Heron, R., Grant, A., Diprose, G., Kirk, N., & Allen, W. (2021). Methodological sensitivities for coproducing knowledge through enduring trustful partnerships. *Sustainability Science*, *17*, 433–447. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-021-01058-y

Heinz, W. R., Huinink, J., Swader, C. S., & Weymann, A. (2009). General Introduction. In W. R. Heinz, A. Weymann & J. Huinink (Eds.), *The Life Course Reader: Individuals and Societies across Time* (pp. 15–30). Chicago University Press.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Hill Collins, P. (1990). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment.* Unwin Hyman.

Järvinen, T., & Silvennoinen, H. (in press). Educational Policies, Lifelong Learning and Social Diversity. In M. Berends, B. Schneider & S. Lamb (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook on the Sociology of Education*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Jones, S., Thiel, J. J., Dávila, D., Pittard, E., Woglom, J. F., Zhou, X., Brown, T., & Snow, M. (2016). Childhood Geographies and Spatial Justice: Making Sense of Place and Space-Making as Political Acts in Education. *American Educational Research Journal*, *53*(4), 1126–1158. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216655221

MacDonald, K. (2002). L'Intervention Sociologique after Twenty-Five Years: Can it Translate into English? *Qualitative Sociology*, *25*(2), 247–260. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015466617713

Mayer, K. U. (2004). Whose Lives? How History, Societies, and Institutions Define and Shape Life Courses. *Research in Human Development*, *1*(3), 161–187. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15427617rhd0103_3

Mayer, K. U. (2009). New Directions in Life Course Research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *35*, 413–433. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134619

Nordin, A. (2014). Crisis as a discursive legitimation strategy in educational reforms: A critical policy analysis. *Education Inquiry*, *5*(1), 109–126. https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v5.24047

Oberti, M., & Préteceille, E. (2016). *La ségrégation urbaine.* La Découverte.

Open Science and Research Initiative (2014). *The Open Science and Research Handbook*. https://www.fosteropenscience.eu/content/open-science-and-research-handbook

Parreira do Amaral, M., Kovacheva, S., & Rambla, X. (Eds.) (2019). *Lifelong Learning Policies for Young Adults in Europe. Navigating between Knowledge and Economy.* Policy Press.

Rambla, X., & Kovacheva, S. (2021). Constructing meaningful transitions in a vulnerable situation – The role of lifelong learning policies in European regions. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, *00*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12505

Roberts, K. (2018). Explaining education-to-work transitions: Thinking backwards, Situating Agency and Comparing Countries. *Review of European Studies, 10*(1), 72–83. https://doi.org/10.5539/res. v10n1p72

Scandurra, R., Cefalo, R., & Kazepov, Y. (2020). School to work outcomes during the Great Recession, is the regional scale relevant for young people's life chances? *Journal of Youth Studies*, *24*(4), 441–465. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2020.1742299

Serafini, P. (2022). *Creating Worlds Otherwise: Art, Collective Action, and (Post)Extractivism*. Vanderbilt University Press.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Soja, E. W. (2013). *Seeking Spatial Justice.* University of Minnesota Press.

Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. W. (2007). Editorial: Exploring the Nature of Research Questions in Mixed Methods Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *1*(3), 207–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689807302814

Tikkanen, J. (2020). *Constructing Life Courses in Times of Uncertainty. Individualisation and Social Structures in the Context of Finnish Education*. University of Turku.

Touraine, A., Dubet, F., Hegedus, Z., & Wieviorka, M. (1978). *Lutte étudiante*. Seuil.

Touraine, A. (2000). A method for studying social actors. *Journal of World Systems Research*, *6*, 900–918. https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2000.211

von Benzon, N., Holton, M., & Wilkinson, C. (Eds.) (2021). *Creative Methods for Human Geographers*. Sage Publications Ltd.

Walther, A. (2017). Support across life course regimes. A comparative model of social work as construction of social problems, needs, and rights. *Journal of Social Work*, *17*(3), 277–301. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017316640195

Walther, A., Parreira do Amaral, M., Cuconato, M., & Dale, R. (Eds.) (2016). *Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe: Pathways, Policy and Practice*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Williams, J. (2013, March 28). *Toward a Theory of Spatial Justice*. [Paper Presentation]. Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, CA, United States.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

12. Annex – Glossary with key terms

The Glossary contains key concepts and terms used in the CLEAR research project, which shall enable the Consortium to develop a shared understanding of the issues tackled. The list of entries (see Table 6) is followed by a detailed definition of each term, with a respective application in the project, a list of references, and the authors of the entry.

Table 6 – List of Glossary Entries

No.	Entry
1.	Biography
2.	Comparison
3.	Early School Leaving
4.	Educational Inequality
5.	Gender
6.	Innovation Forums
7.	Intersectionality
8.	Learning Outcomes
9.	Life Course
10.	Life Trajectory
11.	Mixed-Method-Research
12.	Multi-Disadvantaged Youth
13.	NEETs
14.	Open Science
15.	Opportunity Structures
16.	Policy Coordination
17.	Skills Ecosystems
18.	Social Construction
19.	Social Exclusion/Inclusion
20.	Spatial Justice
21.	Transitions (linear/non-linear)
22.	Transversal Participatory Approach
23.	(Under)Achievement
24.	Vulnerability
25.	Youth Participation
26.	Youth Policy

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Biography

In general, biographies are examinations of people's experiences and life course trajectories relating to different social domains, they are stories or narratives that people *tell* about themselves and their past life and the life course transitions and events that make it up (Brannen, 2020) (see also the entries *Life Course*, *Life Trajectory* and *Transitions* in this Glossary). Kohli (1981) defines biography as "a story told in the present about events and experiences in a person's life in the past and her/his expectations for the future". A biography is thus not a simple chain of life events, but rather a *told life* shaped by the interplay of structure and agency involving subjective meaning-making regarding the individual life course (Kovacheva, 2016).

Therefore, whereas the life course perspective is institutional with life course pointing to an institutionalised construction of culturally defined patterns of *normal* lives, the biographical perspective refers to subjective constructions (Stauber & Ule, 2015). In a biography, the objective world gains its meaning in and through the individual's interpretation; the life story an individual tells expresses those meaningful parts they select as the content of their own narrative (Antikainen & Komonen, 2003). A central analytical link between the perspectives of biography and the life course is the general *biographisation* of the life course (Stauber & Ule, 2015) or the b*iographical turn* (Chamberlayne et al., 2000), which results from the de-standardisation of life course and, more broadly, from the cultural turn in late modern societies. Life course trajectories and transitions become highly individualised and *biographical* and, consequently, the personal meanings that individuals attribute to their actions and to the interconnectedness between them become increasingly significant (Antikainen & Komonen, 2003). At the same time – relating to the significant changes that societies have undergone over the last decades – environments of learning have changed in important ways as traditional lifeworlds are eroding, class-based contexts breaking down, and *normal* scripts for life course disappearing (Alheit, 1996; 1999).

Application in the CLEAR project

The aim to give voice to the silenced and marginalized groups occupies a central place in biographical research (Antikanen & Komonen, 2003; Denzin, 1989), which highlights the relevance of the concept for the CLEAR project. We pay a particular attention to the groups of young people in vulnerable and multi-disadvantaged positions, and aim to provoke an active transformation of learning outcomes to support and strengthen their participation; CLEAR seeks to give voice to their desires, needs, wishes, expectations, and anxieties. We will conduct narrative biographical interviews with young people in different social contexts to attain in-depth information on how young people themselves exercise their agency in interpreting and dealing with educational failure and success along their life courses, and to detect respective connections between structural, institutional, and individual aspects shaping the construction of learning outcomes. With this holistic understanding of young people's own perspectives – combined with other

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

levels and dimensions of analysis included in the project – CLEAR aspires to pave the way for implementing and accelerating innovative policy approaches fine-tuned to the actual conditions, visions, needs, and expectations of young people. Previous research (Kovacheva et al., 2020) has shown that young people, even in most vulnerable situations, avail of learning opportunities and attribute to them diverse subjective meanings. We emphasise that, for understanding the educational trajectories of young people, it is of utmost importance to consider how structural and institutional changes intermingle with the life courses of young people and shape their individual biographies.

References

Alheit, P. (1996). Changing Basic Rules of Biographical Construction: Modern Biographies at the end of the 20th Century. In A. Weymann & W. R. Heinz (Eds.), *Society and Biography. Interrelationships Between Social Structure, Institutions and the Life Course* (pp. 111–128) Weinheim.

Alheit, P. (1999). On a Contradictory Way to the 'Learning Society': A Critical Approach. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 31*(1), 66–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.1999.11661402

Antikainen, A., & Komonen, K. (2003). Biography, Life Course, and the Sociology of Education. In C. A. Torres & A. Antikainen (Eds.), *The International Handbook on the Sociology of Education* (pp. 143–159). Rowman & Littlefield.

Brannen, J. (2020). Life Story and Narrative Approaches in the Study of Family Lives. In J. Parsons & A. Chappell (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Auto/Biography* (pp. 97–118). Palgrave Macmillan.

Chamberlayne, P., Bornat, J., & Wengraf, T. (2000). Introduction: the biographical turn. In P. Chamberlayne, J. Bornat & T. Wengraf (Eds.), *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science. Comparative issues and examples* (pp. 1–30). Routledge.

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive Biography*. SAGE.

Kohli, M. (1981). Biography: account, text, method. In D. Bertaux (Ed.), *Biography and society* (pp. 61–75). SAGE.

Kovacheva, S., Jacovkis, J., Startari, S., & Siri, A. (2020). Are lifelong learning policies working for youth? Young people's voices. In M. Parreira do Amaral, S. Kovacheva & X. Rambla (Eds.), *Lifelong Learning Policies for Young Adults in Europe. Navigating between Knowledge and Economy* (pp. 149–170). Policy Press.

Kovacheva, S., Verlage, T., & Walther, A. (2016). *Life Course*. Young_Adulllt Glossary. Retrieved from https://www.young-adulllt.eu/glossary/detail.php?we_objectID=201

Stauber, B., & Ule, M. (2015). *Life course – biography*. GOETE Glossary. Retrieved from http://www.goete.eu/glossary

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Authors

Jenni Tikkanen, Sebastiano Benasso, Siyka Kovacheva

Comparison, Comparative Analysis

In Social Sciences and Humanities, comparison is a widely accepted scientific approach to knowledge generation that assumes that differences in phenomena exist – across space and time – in relation to systems, structures, policies, experiences and outcomes, but that in a regional and global context similarities will also be significant.

As a research method, comparative analysis aims to yield new knowledge through a deliberate comparison of chosen phenomena. This can be achieved by structuring the research process along various stages or phases – description, interpretation, juxtaposition and comparison (see Manzon, 2014) – of the data/information collected. This allows us to understand how the compared phenomena work in different contexts. It also raises awareness of how the same things work in different settings and, thus, helping us to generalize about the observed phenomena. Another benefit of comparative analysis is that it relativizes one's own observations and prevents ethnocentric and universalistic conclusions. Finally, it also provides knowledge of alternative solutions to similar problems that can be either supportive or warning of potential policy solutions.

In educational research, the method of comparison has several purposes, most of which revolve around either *interpretation* or *causal analysis* of the observed phenomena: "Interpretive studies seek to understand educational phenomena, while causal-analytic studies seek to elucidate causation and causal complexity and to identify configurations of causal conditions that produce similar/different outcomes" (Manzon, 2014, pp. 98f). This substantial difference between interpretation and causal analysis goes back to the choice of research data. In this regard, a *qualitative-oriented approach* focuses primarily on cases and considers the holistic complexity of relations, contexts, and cultural specificities of a chosen case, whereas a *quantitative-oriented approach* has as its main focus the data variables and their comparability, usability, and interpretation (cf. Ragin, 1987, p. xi). Although both approaches vary "on the basis of different concepts of *understanding*: related either to generalizable knowledge of relations among variables (aiming at generalization), or to dense knowledge of cases" (Della Porta, 2012, p. 207), the current trend is to make use of the complementarity of both approaches, which is also applied in the project (see also the entry *Mixed-Method-Research* in this Glossary).

In terms of methodological steps, it is important to establish commonality between the chosen units of analysis right at the start, i.e., "to identify the extent and the reasons for commonalities and differences between the units of comparison, examining the causes at work and the relationships between the causes" (Manzon, 2014, p. 100). For a research study to be valid, only relationally equivalent phenomena can be chosen and compared as units of analysis. Equivalences among education systems may be established as

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

cultural, contextual, structural and functional equivalents. A particular attention needs to be paid to the precise definition of terms, since concepts are often context-dependent and for similar terms there are different semantics transported by the respective national and cultural context (see also the entry *Social Construction* in this Glossary).

More recently, comparative research has further developed important ways to avoid so-called methodological *isms*, i.e., assumed unchanging and unchanged forms and importance of the objects of inquiry (often national education systems) by reflecting on issues of methodological nationalism, statism, educationism, and spatial fetishism (see Dale & Robertson, 2009; Robertson & Dale, 2017). It has also developed contextualized comparison across various dimensions – horizontal, vertical and transversal – of comparison that help us to move beyond static categories and to favour instead a multi-sited and multi-scalar analysis focusing on "linkages across place, space, and time" that, in addition, pay attention to the "vertical, horizontal, and especially the transversal elements of the study" (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 7).

Application in the CLEAR project

The CLEAR research project is designed as a multi-level, mixed-method comparative study, which seeks to understand the construction of learning outcomes in their multiple variations across different education systems and countries. We apply cross-national comparative research and comparative analyses at national and regional level in order to account for the variety of data (both qualitative and quantitative), approaches (institutional analysis, participatory strategies) and levels (national, regional, local). Having in mind the multiplicity of actors, processes, and structures involved in educational phenomena such as learning outcomes or (under)achievement, the comparative analysis has the power to offer deep and fruitful insights into complex issues, which requires to delicately outbalance the processual (progress), iterative (communication), and relational (interconnectedness) aspects of the compared phenomena. The comparisons help us to establish the common threads and different attitudes in tackling educational inequalities across Europe.

References

Bartlett, L., & Vavrus, F. (2017). Comparative Case Studies: An Innovative Approach. *Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *1*(1), 5-17. https://doi.org/10.7577/njcie.1929

Dale, R., & Robertson, S. (2009). Beyond methodological 'isms' in Comparative Education in an era of globalisation. In R. Cowen & A. M. Kazamias (Eds.), *International Handbook of Comparative Education* (pp. 1113–1127). Springer.

Robertson, S., & Dale, R. (2017). Comparing Policies in a Globalizing World. Methodological reflections. *Educação & Realidade, 42*(3), 859–876. https://doi.org/10.1590/2175-623670056

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Della Porta, D. (2012). Comparative analysis: case-oriented versus variable-oriented research. In D. Della Porta & M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (pp. 198-222). Cambridge University Press.

Manzon, M. (2014). Comparing Places. In M. Bray, B. Adamson & M. Manson (Eds.), *Comparative Education Research. Approaches and Methods* (pp. 97-137). Springer.

Ragin, C. (1987). *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies.* University of California Press.

Authors

Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, Jozef Zelinka, Joseph König, Alexandra Ioannidou

Early School Leaving

The notion of Early School Leaving (ESL) refers to individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 years who leave education and training without acquiring a high school diploma or its equivalent (see also the entry *(Under)Achievement* in this Glossary). The European Commission developed the notion of ESL in response to the Lisbon Strategy. Despite this official definition, ESL is a notion with multiple meanings, based on the educational realities of various transition regimes (see also the entry *Transitions* in this Glossary). One of the difficulties in addressing ESL on a European level is the absence of its unified definition across the continent. Although the challenges connected with ESL are well acknowledged, there is no standard method for addressing it.

EU political discourses highlight the connection between ESL, unemployment, and social exclusion, and have identified Early School Leavers (ESLs) as a target category for education, labor market, social, and youth policy (Rocha et al., 2015). Reducing early school dropout rates is currently a top priority for EU member states and policymakers, as well as a significant obstacle for national and regional education and training systems (see also the entry *Youth Policy* in this Glossary). All available data show that the participation rates in education has increased globally in recent decades, but to varying degrees in nations with distinct educational systems and traditions. Significant changes are occurring in the school-to-work transition, in particular, and in the life course of young people, in general, because of the increasing educational level of young people and the changing labor market (Parreira do Amaral et al., 2015).

Research on ESL has demonstrated that getting at least a high school diploma boosts one's possibilities in lifelong learning and in the labor market. Fragile citizenship and poor health are also associated with dropping out of school (Vanttaja & Jarvinen, 2006). Kennelly & Monrad (2007) refer the dynamic process of ESL. ESL is frequently preceded by a period of doubt and truancy after prolonged periods of difficulty and with early warning indications of dropping out: bad grades in core areas, low attendance, grade retention, and disengagement in the classroom, including behavioral issues. More

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

recently, De Luca et al. (2020) show the role of ESLs in the rate of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) in Italy and Spain, emphasizing the interconnection between these two categories of young people (see also the entries *NEETs* and *Multi-Disadvantaged Youth* in this Glossary).

Application in the CLEAR project

The objective of CLEAR is to shift the focus from national to regional and local policy analysis. Despite the fact that national levels have been instrumental in determining institutional typologies of vocational education and training, adult learning, and education, regional and local differences have not been captured by such research. Members of the Consortium have already reported on the significance of local spaces for understanding the educational outcomes and employment of young people in the EU (Scandurra et al., 2021; Parreira do Amaral et al., 2019), and the new research seeks to broaden their scope of analysis. Moreover, the research investigates the development of intersectional inequalities in education and training. Recent research reveals complex interrelationships between the experiences of female and male youths who have undergone very unequal processes of (early) school leaving, frequently reproducing disadvantages associated with families of low socioeconomic status or with direct experience of migration or ethnical constraints. CLEAR anticipates the difficulties associated with reaching out to these communities. It so challenges the discursive and policy construction of vulnerable or multi-disadvantaged young people based on their position, status, educational accomplishments, or family background.

References

De Luca, G., Mazzocchi, P., Quintano, C., & Rocca, A. (2020). Going Behind the High Rates of NEETs in Italy and Spain: The Role of Early School Leavers. *Social Indicators Research, 151*, 345–363. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02370-3

Kennelly, L., & Monrad, M. (2007). Approaches to dropout prevention: Heeding early warning signs with appropriate interventions. [Report] National High School Center. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED499009.pdf

Parreira do Amaral, M., Dale, R., & Loncle, P. (Eds.). (2015). *Shaping the Futures of Young Europeans: education governance in eight European countries*. Symposium Books.

Parreira do Amaral, M., Kovacheva, S., & Rambla, X. (Eds.) (2019). *Lifelong Learning Policies for Young Adults in Europe. Navigating between Knowledge and Economy*. Policy Press.

Rocha, C., Macedo, M., Araújo, H. C., Clycq, N.,& Timmerman, Ch. (Eds.). (2015). Educational policies and early school leaving in Europe. [Special Issue]. *Educação, Sociedade & Culturas*, *45*.

Scandurra, R., Cefalo, R., & Kazepov, Y. (2021). Drivers of Youth Labour Market Integration Across European Regions. *Social Indicators Research*, *154*, 835–856. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02549-8

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Vanttaja, M., & Järvinen, T. (2006). The young outsiders: the later life-courses of 'drop-out youths'. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *25*(2), 173-184. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370500510850

Authors

Georgios K. Zarifis, Natália Alves

Educational inequality

The notion of *educational inequality* is a derivative of the concept of *inequality*, one of the most central, long-standing topics in the social sciences. Indeed, several of the founding theories of sociology revolved around the topic of inequality, namely issues of social class and stratification, from Marxism to Weber's sociology, through to structural functionalism. This centrality goes hand in hand with the birth of modernity and the emergence of the so-called *social question*, which in the mid-nineteenth century referred to a situation in which accelerated industrialization and urbanization, coupled with the establishment of new social relations of production, generated the widespread pauperization of the working classes (Castel, 2003). Awareness of this pauperization and related living conditions stimulated not only political and social struggles, but also set forth public policies aimed at reducing inequalities (see also the entries *Social Exclusion/Inclusion* and *Spatial Justice* in this Glossary). In its turn, *educational inequality* is very often taken to refer to the well-established correlation between academic performance and several types of inequality (economic, geographical, gender, etc.) (see also the entries *Intersectionality* and *Gender* in this Glossary). Here, it is important to distinguish *equality* – which involves only a quantitative assessment or description of a given situation – from *equity* – which involves both a quantitative assessment and a moral or ethical judgment. That is, equality is

> the state of being equal in terms of quantity, rank, status, value, or degree [whereas] [e]quity considers the social justice ramifications of education in relation to the fairness, justness, and impartiality of its distribution at all levels or educational subsectors (Jacob & Holsinger, 2008, p. 4).

Yet, as stated by Espinoza (2007), educational inequality does not restrict itself to a narrow understanding of academic performance; instead, it can be assessed on different dimensions (access, survival, output, and outcome), and according to different theoretical models (meritocratic, class conflict, conservative, evolutionary liberal and compensatory liberal). In educational policies after the second world war, the objectives of promoting educational equity have been adopted across the industrialized world. The key policy aim has been to reduce the influence of privilege on educational attainment by providing equality of conditions (Lynch & Baker, 2005) for all individuals and to establish an agenda of improving life opportunities of disadvantaged and discriminated groups of a society (Järvinen, 2022) (see also the entry *Opportunity Structures* in this Glossary). However, despite all the equalizing policy initiatives and implementations executed over the past

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

50 years, research shows that the educational attainment gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged both between and within countries has barely narrowed (Erikson, 2020) (see also the entries *Multi-Disadvantaged Youth* and *(Under)Achievement* in this Glossary).

Application in the CLEAR project

The CLEAR research project investigates the discursive, interactional, and spatial barriers that learners face, seeking to reveal how they affect educational inequality and opportunity structures. In this sense, inequalities are regarded as having their own contextual reality, which entails paying close attention to their ontological history and internal logic. Thus, different stakeholders, from young people in vulnerable and multi-disadvantaged positions to experts and decision-makers will be engaged to assist in the identification of the main drivers of the current situation in their own regions.

References

Castel, R. (2003). *Transformation of the Social Question*. Transaction Publishers.

Erikson, R. (2020). Inequality of educational opportunity – the role of performance and choice. *European Review*, *28*(1), 44–55. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798720000897

Espinoza, O. (2007). Solving the equity–equality conceptual dilemma: a new model for analysis of the educational process. *Educational Research*, *49*(4), 343–363. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131880701717198

Holsinger, D. B., & Jacob, W. J. (Eds.) (2008). *Inequality in Education: Comparative and International Perspectives.* Springer.

Järvinen, T. (2022). Thinking about social inequalities and marginalization in education under shifting global conditions. In F. Rizvi, B. Lingard & R. Rinne (Eds.) *Reimagining Globalization and Education* (pp. 92–104). Routledge.

Lynch, K., & Baker, J. (2005). Equality in education: An equality of condition perspective. *Theory and Research in Education*, *3*(2), 131–164. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878505053298

Authors

Tiago Neves, Tero Järvinen, Valeria Pandolfini, Aina Tarabini

Gender

Gender is a very recent concept in social sciences. Until the first half of the 20th century, there was no distinction between sex and gender. They were used as synonymous categories to characterise both male and female attributes. It was considered that biological differences determined the different behaviours, personality traits, and symbolic universes of men and women. Between the late 1960s and early 1970s, a first

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

distinction between sex and gender emerged. At the origin of this approach are the seminal works of Simone de Beauvoir (1990, 1994) and Ann Oakley (1972). Both consider sex as a biological fact and gender as a social construction (see also the entry *Social Construction* in this Glossary). They show how gender roles are historically, socially and culturally constructed, with man being the hegemonic reference model. Belonging to the 2nd feminism wave, these academic works, and others that followed, were decisive for 1) denouncing the invisibility of women in history and the invisibility of their role in society; 2) deconstructing the idea of women's conformation to the private sphere and their formal and legal subordination to male power; and 3) showing the democratic deficit that consists in their withdrawal away from the public space and the political arena (see also the entry *Intersectionality* in this Glossary).

Since the 1990s, the difference between sex and gender has seen new developments. The discussion between what biologically distinguishes male and female has become more complex. Physical or biological characteristics based on chromosomal or hormonal differences seem to be insufficient to characterize who belongs to which sex (Holmes, 2007). At the same time, the relationship between the biological and the social becomes more complex. In this approach, gender is not a property of individuals but something that is *done* or *performed* and attributed to us from birth, and that we negotiate throughout our lives (see Butler, 1990, 1993) (see also the entry *Life Course* in this Glossary). *Doing gender* is an expression that emphasises the idea of gender "as an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). This new approach highlights a performative vision of gender that underlines the possibility of agency, gives visibility to the diversity of gender identities, and questions the hegemonial imperative of hetero-normativity (Connell, 1987, 2002; Risman, 2004, 2014).

Application in the CLEAR project

In the field of education, there is already a vast literature on gender-related issues. The CLEAR project adopts the intersectionality approach, which emphasises the interplay of multiple positions such as gender, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status and the production of social inequalities and particular types of discrimination. The category of gender is particularly important in the policy analysis and the qualitative research with young people. On the one hand, gender helps us to understand the differences in young people's life courses, in their conceptions about learning outcomes and educational (under)achievement and how they affect their life trajectories. One the other hand, it enables discussing how policies deal with educational (underachievement) in connection with gender and other intersectional categories.

References

Beauvoir, S. (1990). *Le deuxième sexe I, Les faits et les mythes*. Gallimard.

Beauvoir, S. (1994). *Le deuxième sexe II, L'expérience vecue*. Gallimard.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* Routledge.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex.* Routledge.

Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and Power: society, the person, and sexual policies*. Stanford University Press.

Connell, R. (2002). *Gender*. Polity.

Holmes, M. (2007). *What is gender? Sociological approaches.* Sage Publications Ltd.

Oakley, A. (1972). *Sex, Gender and Society*. Harper and Row.

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing Gender. *Gender and Society*, *1*(2), 125-151. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243287001002002

Risman, B. J. (2004). Gender as a social structure: Theory Wrestling with Activism. *Gender & Society, 18*(4), 429-450. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204265349

Authors

Natália Alves, Aina Tarabini, Anna Siri

Innovation Forums

Generally, Innovation Forums (IFs) are meant to create a deliberative space. *Deliberation* is understood as a form of involvement in which the emphasis is placed on discussion, reflection, exchange of arguments and consideration of others' opinions (Bulling et al., 2013). A deliberative setting ideally asks participants "to be truthful in what one says, to respect the arguments of others, to give good reasons for one's own arguments, and to be open to changing one's position by the force of the better argument" (Steiner, 2012, p. 3). Similarly, *innovation* is understood as "a two-stage process, comprising both the generation of ideas, usually referred to as creativity, and characterized by suggestions regarding new processes, products, procedures, or strategies [...] and the implementation of ideas, which refers to the process undertaken to translate the initial suggestions into reality" (Stolberger et al., 2017). The idea of *co-creation* refers to a circular, informal, and horizontal setting of participation where the power in the defining issues to be tackled by the discussion is distributed among participants and facilitated by researchers (see also the entry *Transversal Participatory Approach* in this Glossary).

The IFs are designed 1) to ensure the full participation of all stakeholders and ensure that everyone may express themselves in their own language and to adhere as closely as possible to the ideal of an open exchange of opinions and points of view; and 2) to support different groups in expressing their opinions to the other groups and reach a common understanding.

A core practice of IFs are group discussions. Group discussions can be managed according to different participative methods: e.g., separated thematic discussions in homogeneous groups followed by a debriefing in the plenary; or even gather some small

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

heterogeneous groups around specific topics, where a common ground is already settled and share different experienced-based points of view as added value (see also the entries *Social Inclusion/Exclusion* and *Youth Participation* in this Glossary). IFs can also integrate participative methodologies, such as the *Open Space Technology* (https://openspaceworld.org/wp2/what-is/), or the *World Café Method* (https://theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/). The choice of specific participative methods needs to be assessed and discussed in each context according to local conditions, type and number of participants, timing and facilitation resources. The IFs setting shall be designed in respect of participants and their expectations as stakeholders.

Application in the CLEAR project

In CLEAR, IFs aim at co-creating awareness about the topics of educational (under)achievement and learning outcomes and exchanging insights and experience-based knowledge coming from the participants: young people within and outside the educational system, professionals of formal and non-formal educational, and stakeholders from public and/or third sector organizations.

Planned at the final stage of the project's lifespan, as a key element in the application of Transversal Participatory Approach, the IFs will gather the different actors involved in the research to discuss the project's main findings and major issues. Prior to the IFs, the participants will receive information to tackle the issues at stake in depth, challenge others' opinions and develop their views to elaborate (new) views.

We organize the IFs at a local level as participative and deliberative meetings gathering people who usually do not meet, due to their field of work, their social position and job. In addition, very heterogenous levels of expertise in floor taking will be very likely to be found among the participants. This is the main innovative characteristic of the IFs in CLEAR, where topics and issues raised by international academic research meet with those who design, apply and 'live' educational policies. In CLEAR, the IFs will take place in unformal and friendly spaces, equipped with all necessary workspaces, tables and chairs, interactive digital tools, with a plenary room and a continuous coffee break corner.

References

Bulling, D., Carson, L., DeKraai, M., Garcia, A., Raisio, H. (2013). Deliberation models featuring youth participation. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 3(1), 409–432. https://doi.org/10.18357/ijcyfs43.1201312622

Steiner, J. (2012). Learning to deliberate. In G. M. Carney & C. Harris (Eds.), *Citizens' voices: Experiments in democratic renewal and reform* (pp. 3-7). Irish Centre for Social Gerontology.

Stolberger, J., West, M.A., & Sacramento, C.A. (2019). Innovation in Work Teams. In B. Paulus & B. A. Nijstad (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Group Creativity and Innovation* (pp. 231–251). Oxford University Press.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Authors

Luca Raffini, Francesca Zamboni, Siyka Kovacheva

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is meanwhile a widely accepted term used to describe the intensification of social discrimination and inequality. First coined in 1989 by activist and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality was meant to explain the complex and cumulative ways in which the multiple forms of discrimination (mostly, but not solely, classism, sexism, and racism) overlap and intersect in the production of social relations and in the making of people's experiences, practices and lives (see also the entries *Gender* and *Social Construction* in this Glossary). The intersectional approach thus goes beyond addition of social categories and posits an interactive, mutually constitutive relationship among these categories that cannot be disassociated.

Intersectionality quickly became a popular term among academic and political circles. But despite the growing use of the concept, its meaning is not always clear. Furthermore, it often becomes a label that does not account for the interconnected nature of exclusionary practices and does not clearly signal political action (see also the entry *Social Exclusion/Inclusion* in this Glossary). It is argued (e.g., Smooth, 2013) that even well-intentioned policies often fall short in that they assume all inequalities share the same ontological history and internal logic and thus fail to frame policy issues as intersectional phenomena that need intersectional solutions.

Three elements are critical to avoid misuse of the concept:

1) *The relational nature of inequalities.* The intersectional approach understands inequalities as intrinsically relational. This entails looking at the interactions between different sources of discrimination, but also attending at the intersections between the advantaged and disadvantaged groups to understand the making of social relations.
2) *The contextual and historical nature of inequalities.* The intersectional approach analyses how these intersections operate in specific organizational/structural and representational/discursive contexts that are historically, culturally, and spatially constituted.
3) *The unitary approach to macro-micro dimensions of inequalities.* The intersectional approach addresses inequality from a combined structural-subjective perspective that includes the macro-structural expressions of exclusion and its embodied realizations.

Overall, intersectionality as a concept serves as a heuristic device (Anthias, 1998) or a theoretical/research paradigm (Hancock, 2007) to address the complexity of the social relations by means of its intersections. Furthermore, according to Walby et al. (2012), the

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

intersectional paradigm needs to be addressed through a realist approach able to capture the nature or the ontology of social relations through which inequality operates.

Application in the CLEAR project

The CLEAR research project analyses the complexity of factors affecting learning outcomes in different contexts and it particularly points to their mutually intersecting dimensions (individual, institutional, structural, relational, and spatial). A special attention is paid to multi-disadvantaged groups of young people in order to understand their particular experience of educational (under)achievement. CLEAR problematises the discursive and the policy construction of vulnerable and/or multi-disadvantaged youth and aims at applying a context-sensitive approach to educational inequalities. According to the project rationale, different sources of inequality have different ontological histories and internal logics which must be carefully disentangled. In this sense, and in coherence with intersectionality, CLEAR addresses educational inequalities as relational and contextual phenomena, which are produced and expressed both at micro and at macro levels. The critical intersectional approach informs the project though its various stages, be it the empirical analyses, institutional and expert analyses, or the quantitative and qualitative research with young people.

References

Anthias, F. (1998). Rethinking social divisions: Some notes towards a theoretical framework. *Sociological Review, 46*(3), 506–535. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.00129

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, *1*(8), 139–167.

Hancock, A.-M. (2007). When Multiplication Doesn't Equal Quick Addition: Examining Intersectionality as a Research Paradigm. *Perspectives on Politics*, *5*(1), 63–79. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592707070065

Smooth, W. G. (2013). Intersectionality. From theoretical framework to policy intervention. In A. Wilson (Ed.), Situating intersectionality: Politics, policy and power (pp. 11-41). Palgrave Macmillan.

Walby, S., Amrstrong, J., & Strid, S. (2012). Intersectionality: Multiple Inequalities in Social Theory. *Sociology*, *46*(2), 224–240. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511416164

Authors

Aina Tarabini, Tero Järvinen, Anna Siri

Learning Outcomes

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

The term learning outcomes gained currency during the past decades to refer to a specific understanding of learning/teaching as modelled in a process-product approach. As such, LOs focus specifically intentional activities in teaching/learning and those that can be measured/quantified.

According to Hussey & Smith, learning outcomes are the "observable products of the activities of the educators", that is, "the products of the learning process within the pupil" (2002, p. 223). Learning outcomes are indissociable from their assessment, both conceptually and historically. Indeed, the notion of learning outcomes developed in close articulation with the significant expansion of secondary and tertiary education from the 1950's onwards. Essentially, it was behaviourism that emphasized the clear identification and measurement of learning and the need to produce observable and measurable outcomes. Learning outcomes are therefore very often tied to a taxonomy or hierarchy of learning levels (Moon, 2002). The approach's simple but persuasive idea is that clearly stated objectives will guide teachers and students and explain how student achievement will be measured (Melton, 1997) (see also the entry *(Under)Achievement* in this Glossary). Thus, there is a paradigm shift from teaching to learning and student-centered learning. This change has been linked to the requirement for more precise curriculum design and the recognition that more effective and varied learning methods benefit students. This has increased the requirement to convey knowledge, understanding, skills, and other traits inside qualifications and their components through learning outcomes (Otter, 1995). In parallel, as stated by Hussey and Smith, "The greatly increased public expenditure [on education at this time] encouraged the feeling that educators had to make their practices more *scientific* and accountable" (2002, p. 222 [original emphasis]), which led to the development of quantifiable assessment criteria of the educators' work. It is then clear that, from the very start, learning outcomes are not strictly pedagogical apparatuses, "statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate at the end of a period of learning" (Adam, 2006, p. 2). They are also managerial tools of performance management that currently encompass all subject areas and most (if not all) education and training levels. For example, as argued by Adam, they became "a fundamental building block in the Bologna educational reform process" (2006, p. 3).

Application in the CLEAR project

CLEAR challenges more traditional conceptualisations of learning outcomes and underachievement, which place a strong focus on (statistically) capturing and measuring the quality of learning outcomes. Instead of identifying groups of students who are connected to poor learning outcomes and stratifying them into achievers and under-achievers, CLEAR departs from the assumption that learning outcomes are not natural and self-evident phenomena, but rather result of manifold intersecting factors and people: institutional arrangements, spatial and socio-economic determinants, discursive and socio-cultural influences, as well as individual experiences, dispositions, and

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

cognitive and psycho-emotional abilities. In CLEAR we also stress that learning outcomes are products of the activities of multiple actors (learners, significant others, experts, etc.), and not only educators.

Given its focus on the processes of constructing learning outcomes, which are interpreted as the result of manifold intersecting factors and people, CLEAR needs to account for the fact that learning outcomes are multifunctional tools, serving the purposes of defining the levels of qualifications frameworks, setting qualification standards, describing programmes and courses, orienting curricula, and defining assessment specifications, therefore "influencing teaching methods, learning environments and assessment practices" (Cedefop, 2017, p. 14). This multi-dimensional perspective also needs to consider the use of learning outcomes as both pedagogical and managerial devices, particularly since these specific student-focused expectations follow a unit of instruction, usually stated in observable and measurable terms.

References

Adam, S. F. (2006). An introduction to learning outcomes. A consideration of the nature, function and position of learning outcomes in the creation of the European Higher Education Area. In E. Froment, J. Kohler, L. Purser & L. Wilson (Eds), *EUA Bologna Handbook, Making Bologna Work*. European University Association (EUA)/Raabe.

Cedefop (2017). *Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes: a European handbook.* Luxembourg: Publications Office. http://dx.doi.org/10.2801/566770

Hussey, T., & Smith, P. (2002). The Trouble with Learning Outcomes. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, *3*(3), 220–233. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787402003003003

Moon, J. (2002). *The Module and Programme Development Handbook: A Practical Guide to Linking Levels, Outcomes and Assessment Criteria*. Routledge.

Melton, R. (1997). Objectives, Competences and Learning Outcomes. Kogan Page.

Otter, S. (1995). *Learning Outcomes in Higher Education*. Routledge.

Authors

Tiago Neves, Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, Georgios K. Zarifis

Life Course

In social sciences, the observation of life events and of the different sequences and interdependencies between them has spurred the search for a broader set of research practices, currently subsumed under the Life Course Research. Within this interdisciplinary research strand, the term Life Course has a central place. Elder et al. (2015, p. 6) define it as "a temporal pattern of age-graded events and roles that chart the social contours of biography, providing a proximal content for the dynamics of human

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

development" (see also the entry *Biography* in this Glossary). An individual's life course is multidimensional as it develops in different mutually related and influencing life domains (Mayer, 2004) that correspond to functionally differentiated spheres of modern societies (Heinz, 2010).

Life course is characterised by trajectories, which are sequences and combinations of transitions between positions and stages, such as entering education and becoming a parent (see also the entries *Life Trajectory* and *Transitions* in this Glossary). People tend to follow normative patterns of age-proper behaviour and proper sequence of transitions in their lives which however vary across social classes or status groups (Mayer, 2004). These normative pathways are shaped by ethical prescriptions and cultural preferences, but they have also been institutionalised through the regulation of the welfare state and its institutions (Kok, 2007). Therefore, an *ecology of expectations* concerning the construction of the life courses is very likely to surround people in their life course management, especially in relation the increasing biographical de-standardisation (see also the entry *Social Construction* in this Glossary).

People make life choices and compromises based on the alternatives that they perceive before them and are not, hence, passively acted upon by social influence and structural constraints. This planfulness and agency depend on the context and its constraints (Elder et al., 2003) as well as prior life experiences and the different forms of resources individuals have at their disposal (Mayer, 2004) (see also the entries *Opportunity Structures* and *Spatial Justice* in this Glossary). Thus, life course is a cumulative process, and advantages and disadvantages do not occur randomly during a lifetime, but according to a logic of path dependence that usually starts with early advantages or disadvantages brought about by people's social origins (Levy & Bühlmann, 2016).

While the institutionalised constructions of the life course and the various policies, which aim to govern individuals' life courses, define normal and desired patterns of transitions, social change constantly undermines such notions of normality (Kovacheva et al., 2016) making the synchronisation of *biographical steps* increasingly complex. Life course de-standardisation refers to life courses becoming less similar and the domination of specific types of life courses becoming weaker (Elzinga & Liefbroer, 2007); in other words, life courses are increasingly becoming less predictable, less stable, and less collectively determined and, hence, increasingly flexible, individualised, insecure, and uncertain – especially for young adults (Brückner & Mayer, 2005; Kovacheva et al., 2016) who are pushed by institutions to make pivotal choices for their future.

Application in the CLEAR project

In the CLEAR project, the concept and theoretical approach of life course offer us a logical framework to explore the individual and subjective dimensions in the construction of learning outcomes and (under)achievement in a lifelong learning perspective. The life course approach is holistic promoting a multidisciplinary focus and an ecological model

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

placing families and individuals in the context of historical, demographic, and social change (Kovacheva et al., 2016). It enables us to study the experiences, expectations, visions, and perceptions of young Europeans, and their ability to create subjective meanings and continuity along the different phases of their life courses, as well as to consider their diverse socio-economic and spatial contexts.

In the CLEAR project, we apply the theoretical instruments of life course research to policy analysis, specifically to understand how various policies interact with individual life courses of young people and to localise the points of possible change. We will apply the paradigmatic principles of the life course perspective, in particular the role of individual agency recognising that young people do not accept their social and historical circumstances passively; they actively construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstance (Elder et al., 2003). The project is also sensitive to another important principle of the perspective – that of linked lives – and will explore the interactions between young people and their families, schools, policy professionals, and other stakeholders in shaping the individual trajectories, in particular the processes of falling into or coming out of vulnerable situations.

References

Brückner, H. & Mayer, K. U. (2005). De-standardization of the life course: What it might mean? And if it means anything, whether it actually took place? *Advances in Life Course Research, 9*, 27–53. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1040-2608(04)09002-1

Elder G. H., Jr., Johnson, M. K., & Crosnoe, R. (2003). The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory. In J. T. Mortimer & M. J. Shanahan (Eds.), *Handbook of the Life Course* (pp. 3–19). Kluwer Academic; Plenum Publishers.

Elder, G. H., Jr., Shanahan, M., & Jennings, J. (2015). Human Development in Time and Place. In M. Bornstein, & T. Leventhal (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science* (pp. 6–54). Wiley.

Elzinga, C. H., & Liefbroer, A. C. (2007). Destandardization of family-life trajectories of young adults. *European Journal of Population, 23*(3), 225–250. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10680-007-9133-7

Heinz, W. (2010). Life course dynamics. In C. Crothers (Ed.), *Historical Developments and Theoretical Approaches in Sociology – Volume I* (pp. 226–248). UNESCO-EOLSS.

Kok, J. (2007). Principles and prospects of the life course paradigm. *Annales de Demographie Historique, 113*(1), 203–230. https://doi.org/10.3917/adh.113.0203

Kovacheva, S., Verlage, T., & Walther, A. (2016). *Life Course*. YOUNG_ADULLLT Glossary. Retrieved from https://www.young-adulllt.eu/glossary/detail.php?we_objectID=201

Levy, R., & Bühlmann, F. (2016). Towards a socio-structural framework for life course analysis. *Advances in Life Course Research, 30*, 30–42.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alcr.2016.03.005

Mayer, K. (2004). Whose Lives? How History, Societies, and Institutions Define and Shape Life Courses. *Research in Human Development, 1*(3), 161–187. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15427617rhd0103_3

Tikkanen, J. (2020). *Constructing Life Courses in Times of Uncertainty. Individualisation and Social Structures in the Context of Finnish Education*. University of Turku.

Authors

Jenni Tikkanen, Sebastiano Benasso, Siyka Kovacheva

Life Trajectory

The concept of life trajectory is strongly related with other concepts of Life Course Research and Biography Research and can be described as a set of social roles occupied by the individual in different social spheres of life (education, employment, privacy) (see also the entries *Biography* and *Life Course* in this Glossary). These social spheres are determined by discourses, social structures and institutions in a particular social context. As a result of the individual life choices and the life chances provided by the existing opportunity structures, the individual takes a certain line of life development (see also the entry *Opportunity Structures* in this Glossary). Thus, by successively occupying certain social roles, the individual constructs his/her own life trajectory (Elder, 1998), which is framed by societal processes and embedded in specific social and cultural contexts. The interaction between, on the one hand, the social inequalities and institutional constraints of the social environment, and on the other hand, the individual's actions and choices, determines the course of the unfolding of his/her life trajectory.

The life trajectories are understood as long-term patterns of time and space, stability and change, often including multiple life transitions, e.g., school-to-work transition, transition from parental home to own home and family, transition to parenthood, etc. (George, 1993) (see also the entries *Transitions* and *Spatial Justice* in this Glossary). Life trajectories are built not only from multiple transitions but also from life events and actions (Walther et al., 2022). The notion of life trajectory is used primarily to describe the individual movements or developments occurring during the whole span of life, i.e., "all that takes place between the two ultimate life boundaries – birth and death" (Levy et al., 2005, p. 11). From a Life Course Research perspective, the individual has one global life trajectory within which it can be distinguished between several other trajectories such as marital, professional, health-related, or residential trajectory. They need to be perceived as interdependent in order to understand how they intermingle with each other and how they affect the global individual trajectory (Levy et al., 2005).

Application in the CLEAR project

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

The concept of life trajectory, as a nuclear concept of Life Course Research, is central to the CLEAR project, mainly in what concerns the qualitative research with young people. The analysis of their global and specific life trajectories will allow understanding how formal and non-formal learning processes and their outcomes affect young people's past, present, and future lives. This analysis will also enable highlighting the complex interconnections between biographical decisions and actions, on the one hand, and educational, social, economic, political, and spatial conditions, opportunities and constraints, on the other hand. It will also allow us to understand, how these interconnections frame young people's life trajectories. Focusing on life trajectories enables to assess the importance of learning outcomes, educational (under)achievement and opportunity structures in the lives of young people, as well as their influence on individual's agency in the process of life course construction.

References

Elder, G. (1998). The Life Course as Developmental Theory. *Child Development*, *69*(1), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.2307/1132065

George, L. K. (1993). Sociological perspectives on life transitions. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *19*, 353–373. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.19.080193.002033

Levi, R., Ghisletta, P., Spini, D., & Widmer, E. (2005). Why look at life courses in an interdisciplinary perspective? *Advances in Life Course Research*, *10*, 3–32. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1040-2608(05)10014-8

Walther, A., Stauber, B., & Settersten Jr., R. A. (Eds.) (2022). *Life Course Research and Social Policies*. Springer.

Authors

Darena Hristozova, Natália Alves

Mixed-Methods-Research

The plenitude of different disciplinary approaches to research inquiry enables a mutual inspiration and support. A growing body of literature is now devoted to mixing the various approaches in order to get closer and approach more holistically specific research problems. In this vein, the Mixed-Methods-Research (MMR) has been defined as the type of research in which a researcher "combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 123).

Cresswell & Plano Clark (2017) identify three core MMR designs: 1) A *convergent* or *parallel* design, when the researcher brings together the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis so they can be compared or combined to gain a more complete

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

understanding of a phenomenon or to validate one set of findings against the other. 2) An *explanatory sequential* design, in which quantitative data are first collected and analysed followed by a subsequent qualitative phase to explain or expand on the quantitative results. 3) An *exploratory sequential design*, which begins with the collection and analysis of qualitative data and continues with the development of a quantitative phase based on the qualitative results.

A critical point in MMR concerns the integration of the different worldviews linked to quantitative and qualitative research (positivism/post-positivism and constructionism/interpretivism) (Bryman, 2012) (see also the entry *Social Construction* in this Glossary). MMR can be considered as a third paradigm based on pragmatism. Pragmatism "debunks concepts such as *truth* and *reality* and focuses instead on *what works*" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 14 [original emphasis]) for the research question. Other challenges related to MMR are mixed methods sampling as well as integration strategies of different kind of data (qualitative and quantitative) and their integrative analysis (Bazeley, 2009).

MMR design is particularly suited for international comparative research: quantitative methods can be used to gain empirical evidence about the distribution of social phenomena in different contexts while their contextuality can be investigated and interpreted in its necessary differentiation by applying qualitative methods (see also the entry *Comparison* in this Glossary). The convergence of both methodological approaches, thus, helps to grasp the diversity of processes, actors, and developments involved. Further, it fosters the concretization and explication of theoretical presuppositions and enables testing of (in-)correct causal assumptions in different contexts.

Application in the CLEAR project

In CLEAR, MMR is applied to integrate the strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a better understanding of the combination of multiple factors affecting the construction and assessment of learning outcomes in diverse contexts. CLEAR integrates in a parallel/convergent mixed-method design quantitative and qualitative analyses, drawing on data sets from multiple sources: EU surveys (e.g., EU-SILC, EU-LFS, EU-AES), international large scales assessments (PIAAC, PISA), and administrative data at European and national level. It also conducts institutional analyses and policy reviews, qualitative interviews with key actors, educational practitioners and young people, but also web-based expert surveys on policy coordination and innovative participatory strategies. The MMR applied in CLEAR contributes to better explore and understand the several mutually intersecting dimensions – individual, institutional, structural, relational, and spatial – involved in the processes of constructing and assessing of learning outcomes.

References

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Bazeley, P. (2009). Editorial: Integrating data analyses in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 3*(3), 203–207. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689809334443

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research.* Sage Publications Ltd.

Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *1*(2), 112–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689806298224

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research. Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences.* Sage Publications Ltd.

Authors

Isabella Quadrelli, Valeria Pandolfini, Alexandra Ioannidou

Multi-Disadvantaged Youth

Young people with (multiple) disadvantages have been targeted by several policy programmes all over Europe with varying definitions between the countries. While in some countries and policy contexts the term is used interchangeably with notions such as vulnerable youth, youth-at-risk, excluded or disconnected youth, or early school leavers (see also the entries *Early School Leavers* and *NEETs* in this Glossary), there is no widely accepted agreement on how to define disadvantaged youth. Generally, it points out to groups of young people who have fewer chances to reach their goals in the life course, particularly due to lack of structural opportunities and the existence of institutional barriers (see also the entries *Life Course* and *Opportunity Structures* in this Glossary):

> Disadvantage stands for unequal opportunities and the risk of social exclusion in school-to-work transitions. It is described as the interplay between a *structural* lack of accessibility, manageability and relevance of transition opportunities and *individual* lack of resources. Referring to *constellations of disadvantage* rather than *problem groups* avoids structural problems becoming individualised (Walther et al., 2005, p. 8 [original emphasis]).

Among the factors that facilitate social disadvantages are, e.g., physical or mental disabilities, difficult family constellations, low social support and resilience, critical life events (illness or sudden death of close persons, abuse, legal problems, substance addiction), lack of skills and intrinsic motivations, irregular migration status, ethnic discrimination or discrimination based on sexual orientation etc. (see Bendit & Stokes, 2003, p. 265).

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Disadvantage occurs rarely alone, but often in different, mutually dependent or *multiple* variations. Sometimes even less serious problems may accumulate to severe disadvantage (Bullock & Parker, 2014, p. 4) and lead to social and material inequalities, "which form the backdrop of everyday life for disadvantaged youth, constituting stressors and deprivations that exert influence both contemporaneously and as part of life course trajectories" (Nurius et al., 2015, p. 567) (see also the entry *Life Trajectory* in this Glossary). When exposed to such stressors, young people respond in different ways depending on their previous experiences and social support. In addition, other categories of social inequality, such as ethnicity, class, race, or gender, can lead to *intersectional* and, thus, intensified experiences (see also the entries *Gender* and *Intersectionality* in this Glossary). The research shows that although "gender trends among disadvantaged youths are less well-known", the "disadvantaged boys' and girls' greater exposure to risks, such as involvement with deviant peers, substance use, or lower levels of physical activity may attenuate gender differences" (Mendonça & Simões, 2019, p. 785). Finally, disadvantage is a *dynamic* development with several stages, including the "onset, progression, response to interventions and treatment and (one hopes) escape. Some disadvantages are permanent, others episodic or transitory and each has the possibility of getting worse or better" (Bullock & Parker, 2014, p. 5).

Researchers distinguish between the sociological concept of disadvantage and the experience of disadvantage. Sociologically, the term disadvantage describes an "unintended consequence of accelerated technological, economical and social changes" (Bendit & Stokes, 2003, p. 263) that have affected some portions of the population more than others. Thus, the main factors lie beyond the reach of individual agency. However, the term *disadvantaged youth* evokes contradictory feelings regarding the experience of disadvantage. On the one hand, these youth feel that participation in *second-chance programmes* may open up new possibilities of vocational training or financial support (see also the entry *Youth Participation* in this Glossary). On the other, they find that such participation can have a stigmatising effect when seeking a job or subsequent regular training (Bendit & Stokes, 2003, p. 266 [original emphasis]). Actually, young people in policy measures need a more inclusive educational and employment environment that provides them with more opportunities irrespective of their ethnic origin, family background, bodily appearance or health status (Wintersteller et al., 2022) (see also the entry *Social Exclusion/Inclusion* in this Glossary).

In countries like Germany, disadvantaged youth is codified as a legal term to structure access rights to *positive action* type of programmes, which risks becoming a label associated with negative or stigmatising images (Walther & Stauber et al., 2002). If disadvantages are seen as purely individual deficits, it can spur "individualisation of structural deficiencies" (Bendit & Stokes, 2003, p. 265; Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka, 2019). Otherwise, educational disadvantages can also be explained as affected by segmented education systems that need to be adjusted to their needs. In any case, young

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

people with multiple disadvantages are seldom listened to in the policy-making design, and ”are even less likely to be involved in youth organisations" (Williamson, 2002, p. 95).

Application in the CLEAR project

In the CLEAR project, we see the concept of multi-disadvantaged youth as a socially constructed, relational, and dynamic term, which describes the current situation of young people, rather than their given anthropological condition, thus trying to avoid the essentialisation of their individual deficiencies. When relating to the term as a policy concept, we pay a particular attention to context-sensitive settings that create vulnerable conditions for certain groups, as well as to the construction of the term under specific regional and national settings, including economic development, labour market situation, and institutional opportunity structures. In CLEAR we argue for policies that foster the active participation of and cooperation among all actors involved in design and implementation of programs addressing multiple disadvantage (see also Fasching & Felbermayr, 2022).

References

Bendit, R., & Stokes, D. (2003). 'Disadvantage': transition policies between social construction and the needs of vulnerable youth. In A. López Blasco, W. McNeish & A. Walther (Eds.), *Young people and contradictions of inclusion: towards Integrated Transition Policies in Europe* (pp. 261–283). Policy Press.

Bullock, R., & Parker, R. (2014). A historical review of the concept of severe and multiple disadvantage and of responses to it. [Discussion Paper]. Retrieved from https://lankellychase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Historical-review-of-SMD.pdf

Fasching, H., & Felbermayr, K. (2022). Participative Cooperation During Educational Transition: Experiences of Young People With Disabilities in Austria. *Social Inclusion, 10*(2), 358–368. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v10i2.5079

Mendonça, C., & Simões, F. (2019). Disadvantaged Youths' Subjective Well-Being: The Role of Gender, Age, and Multiple Social Support Attunement. *Child Indicators Research*, 12, 769–789. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-018-9554-3

Nurius, P. S., Prince, D. M., & Rocha, A. (2015). Cumulative disadvantage and youth well-being: A multi-domain examination with life course implications. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *32*(6), 567–576. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-015-0396-2

Parreira do Amaral, M., & Zelinka, J. (2019). Lifelong learning policies shaping the life courses of young adults. An interpretative analysis of orientations, objectives, and solutions. *Comparative Education*, *55*(3), 404–421. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2019.1619333

Walther, A., & Stauber, B. et al. (Eds.) (2002). Misleading Trajectories. Integration policies for young adults in Europe? Springer.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Walther, A., Pohl, A., Biggart, A., Julkunen, I., Kazepov, Y., Kovacheva, S., & Ule, M. (2005). Thematic study on policy measures concerning disadvantaged youth. [Report]. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/youth_study_en.pdf

Williamson, H. (2002). *Supporting young people in Europe: principles, policy and practice.* [Report]. The Council of Europe international reviews of national youth policy 1997-2001 – a synthesis report. Council of Europe Publishing.

Wintersteller, T., Wöhrer, V., Danz, S., & Malik, M. (2022). "They Really Only Look for the Best": How Young People Frame Problems in School-to-Work Transition. *Social Inclusion, 10*(2), 335–346. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v10i2.5158

Authors

Jozef Zelinka, Marcelo Parreira do Amaral

NEETs

NEET is an acronym for young people *Not in Education, Employment, or Training*. The term represents young people between the ages of 15 and 29 years (Eurofound, 2012, 2013; International Labour Organization, 2013, 2015) and does not have a standardized measuring definition, particularly in terms of characterizing economic inactivity. OECD (2014, 2015) statistics and analyses have been significant in the conception and implementation of education and training and labour market policies targeted at this particular group of young people, namely by the EU.

Theoretical discussions on NEETs have highlighted several aspects. Simmons & Smyth (2016), for instance, highlight the contradiction that, while in the neoliberal discourse education and training are portrayed as enhancing chances of entering the labour market, a large number of young people are underemployed not due to a lack of qualifications, but due to a lack of suitable job openings (see also the entries *Skills Ecosystems* and *Opportunity Structures* in this Glossary). Yates et al. (2007, p. 329) state that "NEET is a problematic concept that defines young people by what they are not, and subsumes under a negatively perceived moniker a heterogeneous group of young people whose varied circumstances and issues are not conceptualized."

Furlong (2006) asserts that the popularity of the term NEET is partially attributable to the negative connotations of having no status or status zero and provides two arguments against the use of the notion of NEETs. Policies addressing NEETs may fall short of their objectives because the criteria are overly wide, as the majority of young people experience phases of NEET status but not all are in risky situations. On the other hand, the definition may be too limited, as an increase in employment does not necessarily lead to a reduction in vulnerability, given the growth in precarious employment (see also the entry *Vulnerability* in this Glossary). Avis critiques the policy discourse on NEETs as pathologizing, since it reflects the moral panic of the middle classes and portrays NEETs

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

as the source of social problems while ignoring the structural roots of the "economy of insecurity" (Avis, 2014, p. 274).

More recently, Lőrinc et al. (2020) questioned the individualisation of the *NEET problem* emphasising the structural dimension of young people's negative school experiences and their difficult transition to work (see also the entry *Transitions* in this Glossary). The acronym NEET is further associated with the special status that young people obtain, which often labels them as in *need* of help or assistance. Such passivist ascription can lead to secondary stigmatisation and instrumentalization of young people's life courses further aggravated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemics with its significant impact on apprenticeships and training. To aid in the economic recovery from the pandemic, the Commission established a Youth Employment Support package on July 1, 2020 to serve as a *bridge to employment* for the upcoming generation (European Commission, 2020).

Application in the CLEAR project

CLEAR recognizes the significance of education in creating sustainable, innovative, and resilient society, as well as its role in reducing the levels of inequality and disparity**.** CLEAR evaluates the dominant definitions of learning outcomes and education (under)achievement as a result of asymmetric discursive and power relations that are shaped by unequal spatial distribution of economic, political, and educational resources and opportunity structures, which in turn shape the definitions of policy addressees. From these addresses, NEETs stand as significant: dealt with in the European Union and member-states policies, young people are trapped among education and training policies and labour market policies. Referring to the most recent policies and strategies to be critically analysed by the CLEAR project, the EU Youth Strategy was agreed in 2018 and establishes a framework for cooperation with EU-member states on their youth policies from 2019 to 2027 focused to *engage, connect, and empower* young people (Eurodesk, 2018).

References

Avis, J. (2014). Comfort radicalism and NEETs: a conservative praxis. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, *24*(3), 272-289. https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2014.943030

Eurodesk. (2018). Engage, Inform, Empower. Position Paper "*Recommendations from the main European Youth Information and Mobility networks on the New EU Youth Strategy".* Retrieved November 17, 2022, from https://eurodesk.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/EURODESK_ERYICA_EYCA_Position-Youth.pdf

Eurofound. (2012). *NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Eurofound. (2013). *Young People and NEETs.* European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Work Conditions. Retrieved from https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/young-people-and-neets-1

European Commission. (2020). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions *"Youth Employment Support: A Bridge To Jobs For The Next Generation",* Brussels, 1.7.2020 COM(2020) 276 final. Retrieved November 17, 2022, from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0276&from=EN

Furlong, A. (2006). Not a very NEET solution: representing problematic labour market transitions among early school-leavers. *Work, employment and society*, *20*(3), 553-569. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017006067001

International Labour Organization. (2013). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013. A generation at risk*. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_212423.pdf

International Labour Organization. (2015). *What does NEETs mean and why is the concept so easily misinterpreted*? https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_343153.pdf

Lőrinc, M., Ryan, L., D'Angelo, A., &Kaye, N. (2020). De-individualising the 'NEET problem': An ecological systems analysis. *European Educational Research Journal*, *19*(5) 412–427. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904119880402

OECD. (2014). *Society at a Glance 2014*: *OECD Social Indicators*. OECD Publishing.

OECD. (2015). Youth not in education or employment (NEET) (indicator). In *OECD iLibrary*. Retrieved November 15, 2022, from https://doi.org/10.1787/72d1033a-en

Simmons, R., & Smyth, J. (2016). Crisis of youth or youth in crisis? Education, employment and legitimation crisis. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *35*(2), 136-152. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2016.1164470

Yates, S., & Payne, M. (2007). Not so NEET? A Critique of the Use of 'NEET' in Setting Targets for Interventions with Young People. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *9*(3), 329-344. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260600805671

Authors

Georgios K. Zarifis, Natália Alves, Paula Guimarães

Open Science

Open Science is an umbrella term for a new paradigm in scientific work, which seeks to increase the quality, efficiency, comprehensibility, and reusability of scientific results. It

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

aims at all stages of the research cycle (hypothesis, data collection, processing, data storage, long-term preservation, publication and dissemination of research results, reuse of data and information) (Open Science and Research Initiative, 2014, p. 8) and promotes transparency, accessibility, and reproducibility of the whole research process. Depending on various stakeholder groups, the Open Science practices underlie various discourses and requirements (see Fecher & Friesike 2013), which are, however, united by the common goal to innovate and open the scientific process to all actors, stakeholders, and the wider public (see also the entries *Innovation Forums* and *Transversal Participatory Approach* in this Glossary). Especially if the science is publicly funded, the Open Science practices are meant to guarantee safe and transparent handling of the data and information.

In practice, the Open Science refers to how research is designed, performed, and assessed, and encompasses various dimensions:

- Open Access refers to the possibility to freely access to research publications.
- Open and FAIR Data (**F**indable, **A**ccessible, **I**nteroperable, **R**eusable) refer to research data that have no restrictions on their access and that enable their secondary reusability.
- Open Research Infrastructure refers to facilities, resources and services that are used for scholarly research, including data sets, archives, software packages, e-infrastructures, computational models, and observational platforms.
- Open Educational Resources, that is learning, teaching, and research materials, in any format and medium, that are published under an open license, allowing free access, reuse, use for any purpose, adaptation, and redistribution by others (UNESCO, 2019, p.13).

Open Science enhances the trustworthiness of research findings in academia and society particularly in two ways: a) through the transparency and reproducibility of research data and b) through the openness of the research process to the involvement of societal actors leading to co-creation and innovation of knowledge. According to Vicente-Saez & Martinez-Fuentes (2018) "Open Science is transparent and accessible knowledge that is shared and developed through collaborative networks".

Application in the CLEAR project

Open Science in its different dimensions is implemented in CLEAR at all research stages. It applies to empirical field analyses, as much as to quantitative and institutional reviews. During the application of the transversal participatory approach, the Open Science practices will be deployed to ensure that young people and local stakeholders will be involved in the development of knowledge and that this knowledge will be made accessible to all relevant decision-makers. The research beneficiaries will profit from the research results by making use of the open research platforms (website, social media), open dissemination practices (policy briefs, reports, interviews, conferences, peer-

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

reviewed publications), and open discussion forums (roundtable discussions, Innovation Forums). CLEAR pays a particular attention to an open working environment also within the Consortium, while protecting sensitive data and information according to the highest ethical standards.

References

Fecher, B., & Friesike, S. (2014). Open Science: One Term, Five Schools of Thought. In S. Bartling & S. Friesike (Eds.), *Opening Science* (pp. 17-47). Springer,

Open Science and Research Initiative (2014). *The Open Science and Research Handbook*. https://www.fosteropenscience.eu/content/open-science-and-research-handbook

UNESCO (2019). *Draft Recommendation on Open Educational Resources.* UNESCO 40th General Conference. (Draft). Document Code: 40 C/32. UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370936

Vicente-Saez, R., & Martinez-Fuentes, C. (2018). Open Science now: A systematic literature review for an integrated definition. *Journal of Business Research*, *88*, 428-436 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.12.043

Authors

Alexandra Ioannidou, Jozef Zelinka, Natália Alves

Opportunity Structures

The concept of opportunity structures draws on a rich vein of studies opened by the debate about the notions of life chance (Dahrendorf, 1979) and opportunity (Merton, 1968), and refers to the visions and patterns of action applicable in response to culturally framed problems. In the analysis of youth transitions, Roberts (1968) introduced the opportunity-structure (OS) theory to account for the different paths and trajectories observable, stating that the interaction between structuring agents creates blueprints or career routes within which different groups of young people are required to make successive and reflexive choices (Roberts, 2009) (see also the entries *Life Course, Life Trajectory* and *Transitions* in this Glossary). Opportunity structures frame the configuration of possibilities and constraints for thought or action, in a given context. They represent

> collective and individual responses to situations confronting us, [meaning that] our responses to these situations are fundamentally framed by the kinds of opportunities for thought or action that we have at our disposal, or by the range of both construals and constructions of the nature of the problem/issue we are confronting, and the range and kinds of responses from which we might select (Dale & Parreira do Amaral, 2015, p. 30).

OS are strategically selective, as they limit the courses of action that are likely to see actors realise their intentions. They are also unevenly distributed, as the possible options differ

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

among groups of young people according to their background, resources, and previous course of action.

In the debate and research on opportunity structures, the tension between structure and agency represents a significant focus. In Blau's (1994) structuralist formulation, structures related to institutions and population's stable characteristics, affect the likelihood of specific courses of action, as outcomes. Other scholars stress instead the relationship between structuring factors and agents, capable of successive and reflexive choices (Roberts, 2009), concluding that opportunity structures favour some actions and decisions over others (Parreira do Amaral & Jornitz, 2019), without pre-determining the course of social action.

Furthermore, recent research (Dale & Parreira do Amaral, 2015; Benasso et al., 2022) has proposed to distinguish among different types of opportunity structures. *Discursive opportunity structures* shape public discourses circulating at different levels (from international to national, from mainstream to common sense) and determine what a problem is and how to deal with it. *Institutional opportunity structures* organise the implementation patterns and modes of action according to specific structural features at the national level, contextualising and actualising the discursive opportunity structures in relation to local systems. *Socio-relational opportunity structures* focus on the effects of the intersection between individual biographies and policies (structures) and emphasises the active character of participants, whereby people negotiate the meaning of policies and measures they enter (or reject), framing them as opportunities (or not) (see also the entries *Biography* and *Youth Policy* in this Glossary). Finally, opportunity structures articulate according to a spatial perspective, as territorial contexts have a deep impact on individual trajectories. Local socio-economic conditions and local welfare arrangements shape regional skills ecosystems (Dalziel, 2015) and regional opportunity structures (Glauser & Becker, 2016; Cefalo et al., 2020) contributing to significant intra-national variations (see also the entries *Spatial Justice* and *Skills Ecosystems* in this Glossary).

Application in the CLEAR project

In the CLEAR project, the OS concept provides a bridge across several analytical dimensions, as they allow to highlight the relational and spatial dimension of learning outcomes, as well as the connection between individuals, institutions and structures. We perceive the institutional and discursive opportunity structures as one of the decisive moments in identifying the limits and possibilities of young people to participate in the construction of learning outcomes.

References

Benasso, S., Cefalo, R., & Tikkanen, J. (2022). Landscapes of Lifelong Learning Policies Across Europe: Conceptual Lenses. In S. Benasso, T. Neves, D. Bouillet & M. Parreira do Amaral (Eds), *Landscapes of Lifelong Learning Policies across Europe* (pp. 19-39). Palgrave Macmillan.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Blau, P. M. (1994). *Structural contexts of opportunities*. University of Chicago Press.

Cefalo, R., & Scandurra, R. (2021). Territorial disparities in youth labour market chances in Europe. *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, *8*(1), 228–238. https://doi.org/10.1080/21681376.2021.1925580

Dahrendorf, R. (1979). *Life chances: Approaches to social and political theory*. The University of Chicago Press.

Dale, R., & Parreira do Amaral, M. (2015). Discursive and institutional opportunity structures in the governance of educational trajectories. In M. Parreira do Amaral, R. Dale & P. Loncle (Eds.), *Shaping the futures of young Europeans: Education governance in eight European countries* (pp. 23–41). Symposium Books.

Dalziel, P. (2015). Regional skill ecosystems to assist young people making education employment linkages in transition from school to work. *Local Economy*, *30*(1), 53–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/0269094214562738

Glauser, D., & Becker, R. (2016). VET or general education? Effects of regional opportunity structures on educational attainment in German-speaking Switzerland. *Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training, 8*(8), 423–448. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40461-016-0033-0

Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social theory and social structure* (3rd ed.). Free Press.

Parreira do Amaral, M., & Jornitz, S. (2019). Die Konzeptualisierung von Bildungsverläufen Jugendlicher: eine Governance-Perspektive auf Lebenslauf. In R. Langer & Th. Brüsemeister (Eds.), *Handbuch Educational Governance Theorien* (pp. 417–440). Springer.

Roberts, K. (1968). The entry into employment: An approach towards a general theory. *The Sociological Review*, *16*(2), 165–184. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1968.tb02570.x

Roberts, K. (2009). Opportunity structures then and now. *Journal of Education and Work*, *22*(5), 355–368. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080903453987

Authors

Ruggero Cefalo, Sebastiano Benasso, Jozef Zelinka, Xavier Rambla

Policy Coordination

Any analysis of (under)achievement must take policy coordination into account. In general, several levels of governance and different policy areas address the learning outcomes of young people. Time horizons and geography add further levels of complexity (see also the entry *Spatial Justice* in this Glossary).

The European Union, the member states, many cities and regions, and most local authorities attempt to guarantee that all the youth achieve certain basic learning

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

outcomes. For the last decade, the European institutions have coordinated the relevant policies and the main authorities by means of yearly country-specific recommendations that the member states must take into consideration when running the national budget. These recommendations often link education and training to employment targets and policies regarding skills development. This is one of the reasons why the bulk of lifelong learning policies that target young adults in the European Union are centred on employment (Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka, 2019).

Time horizons posit important challenges too. On the one hand, although individuals take stock of their education in the middle term of their biography, decision-makers and civil society representatives aspire to improve achievement, reduce unemployment and tackle skills mismatches in a few years' time (see also the entries *Biography* and *Skills Ecosystems* in this Glossary). On the other hand, in many European countries the academic year starts in August or September and terminates in June or July, while the pattern of employment policies follows the fiscal year from January to December.

The geographical dimension is also significant. Remarkably, regions are not always equivalent authorities insofar as some regions are the locus of political identity for many citizens, but other ones are simply a vague geographical reference for the majority (Keating, 2013). Furthermore, cities and regions have disparate institutional capacities. Thus, in Austria and Germany, certain city-state *Länder* are endowed with a strong and well-funded government. At the other extreme of the institutional capacity continuum, certain regions are loosely articulated towns that are scattered along railways and roads with uneven power of territorial integration (Rambla & Milana, 2020) (see also the entry *Spatial Justice* in this Glossary).

Application in the CLEAR project

In the CLEAR research project, policy coordination is a crucial dimension of analysis for the investigation of policies addressing low-achievement in basic and digital skills of recent graduates and the adult population. The objective is to analyse different modes of coordination between the relevant policy actors and explore how skills formation and skills utilisation connect. This is important for estimating how the labour market development and the skills provision interact and define the desired skills and competencies.

References

Keating, M. (2013). *Rescaling the European State The Making of Territory and the Rise of the Meso*. Oxford University Press.

Parreira do Amaral, M. & Zelinka, J. (2019). Lifelong learning policies shaping the life courses of young adults. An interpretative analysis of orientations, objectives and solutions. Comparative Education, *55*(3), 404-421. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2019.1619333

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Rambla, X. & Millana, M. (2020). The stepping- stones of lifelong learning policies: politics, regions and labour markets. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *39*(1), 1-4. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2020.1747589

Authors

Xavier Rambla, Paula Guimarães, Ruggero Cefalo

Skills Ecosystems

A skill is the learned ability to perform an action successfully. Everybody acquires a varied set of skills depending on her routines, but most people engage in systematic education and training to acquire specialised skills (UNESCO-UNEVOC, n.d.). Well-known sociologists of education, such as Michael Young, have challenged the assumption that equates knowledge with skills, because knowledge entails an array of cognitive and socio-emotional processes that do not necessarily generate skills. Remarkably, humans develop knowledge by means of continuous movements between theoretical or discursive knowledge and practical or tacit knowledge. Skills normally highlight the practical side and often overlook the theoretical side of knowledge (Young, 2010).

Skills are relational insofar as nobody can develop her skills apart from social interaction with other people. Institutions and social structures also contribute to shape particular articulations of skills that the literature labels as *skills ecosystems*. Finegold (1999) developed the concept of *high skill ecosystems* to refer to a range of mutually reinforcing factors that helped nurture the cluster of high-tech bio-medical and software firms in California's Silicon Valley. Buchanan et al. (2001) maintained that the concept of skill ecosystem could be usefully applied to a broad range of contexts, defining skill ecosystems as "clusters of high, intermediate or low-level competencies in a particular region or industry shaped by interlocking networks of firms, markets and institutions" (Buchanan et al., 2001, p. 21). There is ample evidence of the persistence of low skills equilibria in many countries (e.g., the UK), where the competitiveness of companies is based on a low-price product strategy and the low wages of workers (Finegold & Soskice, 1988). In low-skills equilibria, people are matched with their jobs but at a very low level of skills. Low-skills equilibria can adversely affect the economic development of a local economy, region or sector, or indeed an entire country. These price-based strategies leave the local workforce vulnerable to displacement because of innovation and competition in global markets and workers have few incentives to remain in education because local employers are neither seeking nor are they willing to reward high levels of skills (see also the entry *Vulnerability* in this Glossary). For their part, employers have little incentive to upgrade production processes or workers' skills since this can undermine their price-based competition strategy (Wilson & Hogarth, 2003). These examples demonstrate that a perfect match between available skills and job tasks is not always a positive indicator and contributes to challenge the very idea of an optimal and perfect

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

match between the supply of skills from the education and training sector and the demand for skills from the labour market (skills match/mismatch) advocated by manpower forecasting and human capital approaches (see also the entry *Opportunity Structures* in this Glossary).

According to this analytical framework, Buchanan et al. (2001) argued that VET policy could not rely on stand-alone training interventions and would need to be integrated with regional and economic development measures aimed at supporting industry efforts to develop, utilise and retain a highly skilled workforce. The core claim pertained the need to address the range of contextual factors that shape approaches to skill formation and usage within a particular ecosystem (Payne, 2008), including: business characteristics; institutions and policy frameworks regarding education, vocational training, lifelong learning and the labour market; the structure of jobs (job design and work organisation).

At the heart of the skills ecosystem approach is an attempt to integrate VET policy within a wider business improvement and economic development agenda, thereby proposing a multi-factorial approach to skill formation that includes skill demand and usage as well as supply, tailored to their specific context. National and local skills strategies require high a degree of coordination between actors and governance activities across different areas and scales of government, and beyond government, in the formulation and implementation of skills policies for young people (see also the entry *Policy Coordination* in this Glossary).

Application in the CLEAR project

Within the frame of CLEAR, it is important to recognize that the concept of skills ecosystem comes with strong spatial justice implications attached, calling for the investigation of relations among actors, policies, and institutions at different territorial levels. As argued by Dalziel (2015), skills in the local labour force are a critical factor of regions' development, touching upon the issue of coordination in skills formation and utilisation, as well as the perspectives of employers and young people making life career-related decisions. This is backed up by research on regional disparities emphasizing territorial and regional dynamics as structural characteristics resulting in diverging real incomes and rates of labour force participation (Dijkstra et al., 2015; Scandurra et al., 2021).

References

Buchanan, J., Schofield, K., Briggs, C., Considine, G., Hager, P., Hawke, G., Kitay, J., Meagher, J., Mounier, A. & Ryan, S. (2001). *Beyond Flexibility: Skills and Work in the Future*. New South Wales Board of Vocational education and Training.

Dalziel, P. (2015). Regional skill ecosystems to assist young people making education employment linkages in transition from school to work. *Local Economy*, *30*(1), 53-66. https://doi.org/10.1177/0269094214562738

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Dijkstra, L., Garcilazo E., & McCann, P. (2015). The effects of the global financial crisis on European regions and cities. *Journal of Economic Geography, 15*(5), 935-949. https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lbv032

Finegold, D. (1999). Creating self-sustaining high-skill ecosystems. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, *15*(1), 60-81. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxrep/15.1.60

Finegold, D., & Soskice, D. (1988). *The failure of training in Britain: analysis and prescription*. Oxford University Press.

Payne, J. (2008). Skills in context: what can the UK learn from Australia's skill ecosystem projects? *Policy and Politics*, *36*(3), 307-323. https://doi.org/10.1332/030557308X307685

Scandurra, R., Cefalo, R., & Kazepov, Y. (2021). Drivers of youth labour market integration across European regions. *Social Indicators Research*, *154*(3), 835-856. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02549-8

Wilson, R., & Hogarth, T. (2003). *Tackling the Low Skills Equilibrium: A Review of Issues and Some New Evidence*. Department of Trade and Industry/University of Warwick.

UNESCO-UNEVOC. (n.d.). Skills. In *TVETipedia Glossary*. Retrieved November 4, 2022, from https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary

Young, M. F. D. (2010) Alternative Educational Futures for a Knowledge Society. *European Educational Research Journal*, *9*(1). https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.2304/eerj.2010.9.1.1

Authors

Ruggero Cefalo, Xavier Rambla

Social Construction

The term social construction refers to an understanding of reality as a joint process of meaning-making. Reality is seen not as an objective, external entity that inscribes its features equally on all human subjects, but rather as the product of – sometimes cooperative, sometimes conflictual – interpretations grounded in social interactions. While the main tenets of social construction have important roots in phenomenology (Alfred Schutz, Edmund Husserl) and symbolic interactionism (George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer), it is Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's book *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966) that represents the prime pillar of the social constructionist approach.

For the social constructionist approach, daily events may be assimilated as routine – an unproblematic reality. That is, individuals may find it easy to grasp a given phenomenon, attributing meaning and significance to it, when the same phenomenon is similar to others experienced previously. However, there may also be problematic situations in

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

which multiple interpretations compete to establish themselves as the true or legitimate. This competition is, first and foremost, anchored in language, which is the tool through which all interpretations, concepts, communications of an experience are made possible (Charon, 1998). These problematic situations can be framed, then, as disruptions of the *habitualization*, a process which refers to how

> any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be reproduced with an economy of effort and which, *ipso facto*, is apprehended by its performer *as* that pattern. Habitualization further implies that the action in question may be performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 71 [original emphasis]).

The expression *social constructionism* is often used interchangeably with *social constructivism*. Although both terms share the same epistemic background, as they define the process of construction or *inscription* of knowledge, there are relevant differences between them. While social constructivism describes the process through which an individual experiences, makes sense of and reflects reality, social constructionism describes the process of collective modelling, practicing, and constructing knowledge artifacts. In other words, the *user's knowledge* (constructivism) is a result of rational and rather theoretical abstraction, while the *maker's knowledge* (constructionism) results from practical experiences and trial-error-method (Floridi 2011, p. 284). When deliberating on the constructions of learning outcomes or (under)achievement, both perspectives can offer fruitful insights (see also the entries *Learning Outcomes* and *(Under)Achievement* in this Glossary). While the emphasis on constructivism highlights the individual's role in reflecting upon his or her educational achievements, the constructionist approach helps to grasp how "some groups successfully define a condition as problem within their society" (Kitsuse & Spector, 1973, p. 418). Learning outcomes can, thus, be seen as a phenomenon that requires individuals to ascribe a meaning to it (constructivist emphasis), as much as a social problem that has been defined, modelled, and hegemonically defined by some groups (constructionist emphasis).

Application in the CLEAR project

CLEAR's overall approach has close ties with the notion of social construction. Indeed, CLEAR focuses on the processes of constructing learning outcomes, which are interpreted as the result of manifold intersecting factors and people. That is, learning outcomes are problematised as socially constructed, and not as natural, self-evident or taken-for-granted phenomena. Therefore, CLEAR will focus on how competing definitions and interpretations of learning outcomes are displayed, enacted and implemented at different levels. This process of *un-naturalising* learning outcomes becomes a basis for redefining them with a view on equity and inclusion.

References

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Doubleday & Company.

Charon, J. M. (1998). *Symbolic Interactionism: an introduction, an interpretation, an integration.* Prentice-Hall.

Floridi, L. (2011). A Defence of Constructionism: Philosophy as Conceptual Engineering. *Metaphilosophy*, *42*(3), 282-304. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9973.2011.01693.x

Kitsuse, J. I., & Spector, M. (1973). Toward a Sociology of Social Problems: Social Conditions, Value-Judgments, and Social Problems. *Social Problems*, *20*(4), 407–419. https://doi.org/10.2307/799704.

Authors

Tiago Neves, Jozef Zelinka

Social Exclusion/Inclusion

Social exclusion and inclusion refer to the degree in which individuals and social groups of a given society have access to rights, resources and opportunities to participate in its political, social, economic, and cultural spheres (see also the entry *Opportunity Structures* in this Glossary). While inclusion refers to membership of a community, social exclusion refers to non-membership. Both concepts are usually regarded as multidimensional, covering a wide range of realms of vulnerability that may impact groups and individuals with varying degrees (housing, health, political participation, income, territory, body, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.) (see also the entries *Spatial Justice* and *Vulnerability* in this Glossary). This gives rise to various forms of exclusion, such as exclusion from education, employment or social relations. However, despite its wide use in scholarly discussion across the scientific disciplines and policy rhetoric alike, there is no general agreement on the content and use of the term. On the contrary, it has been shown how different meanings of social exclusion are embedded in conflicting political ideologies with different understandings of the phenomenon, which, in turn, have resulted in different political programmes (Byrne, 1999).

Within the context of empirical research, social exclusion has been examined from the points of view of e.g., social structure, social groups, policies, and individuals. In the structural approach, the developmental trends and changes in the society resulting in the exclusion of individuals and certain social groups (financial recession, crisis of the welfare state etc.) are examined. When exclusion is studied at the level of social groups, the research tends to be more sectoral, focusing on a specific population identified as being in vulnerable positions, such as the long-term unemployed, refugees, NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), etc. (see also the entry *NEETs* in this Glossary). From the individual perspective, social exclusion is typically examined as the accumulation of different excluding disadvantages in the person's life course (Järvinen & Jahnukainen,

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

2016) (see also the entry *Multi-Disadvantaged Youth* in this Glossary). Critical policy analysis, in its turn, is interested in how target groups of policies are constructed in policy discourses and policy programmes.

Reducing young people's social exclusion has become a major policy issue across Europe. A key division between the policies is whether their approach to disadvantage and social exclusion is individualizing or structural (Pohl & Walther, 2007; Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka, 2019). In an individualizing approach, disadvantage and social exclusion are attributed to deficiencies of individuals, and the policy focus is on boosting individuals' characteristics, mostly employability. A structural approach, in its turn, connects disadvantage and social exclusion to inequalities in societal rights, resources and opportunities, and policies are designed to increase societal participation and membership (see also the entries *Youth Participation* and *Youth Policy* in this Glossary). In other words, the objective of inclusive policies is to improve the living conditions and societal opportunities of excluded groups and individuals so that they can be engaged in society as citizens with full human and social rights.

Application in the CLEAR project

In line with the overall objectives of the CLEAR project, we approach social inclusion and exclusion as phenomena that are constructed in the interaction of manifold intersecting factors, such as institutional arrangements, spatial and socio-economic determinants, discursive practices as well as individual dispositions and action. The project aims to promote social inclusion by actively engaging young people from vulnerable and multi-disadvantaged positions in identifying the main drivers and causes of their current situations. By adopting an innovative transversal participatory approach that creates opportunities for active involvement of young people and gives voice particularly to those in vulnerable situations, the aim is to design innovative policy solutions that prevent social exclusion and increase young people's societal participation, overall well-being, and full civic inclusion.

References

Byrne, D., (1999). *Social exclu*sion. Open University Press.

Järvinen, T., & Jahnukainen, M. (2016). Now which of us are excluded? Conceptual examination of marginalization and social exclusion. In T. Hoikkala & M. Karjalainen (Eds.) *Finnish youth research anthology 1999-2014* (pp. 547–564). Finnish Youth Research Society / Finnish Youth Research Network.

Parreira do Amaral, M., & Zelinka, J. (2019). Lifelong learning policies shaping the life courses of young adults. An interpretative analysis of orientations, objectives and solutions. *Comparative Education, 55*(3), 404–421. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2019.1619333

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Pohl, A., & Walther, A. (2007). Activating the disadvantaged: Variations in addressing youth transitions across Europe. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 26*(5), 533–553. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370701559631

Authors

Tero Järvinen, Tiago Neves

Spatial Justice

The concept of spatial justice aims to properly consider the spatial dimension of social inequalities in contemporary societies. It underlines the socio-spatial differentiation in the fair distribution of opportunities, access to rights and public goods, and – in general – of positive and negative outcomes of social and institutional processes (see also the entry *Opportunity Structures* in this Glossary).

The concept of spatial justice entails a representation of space that goes beyond being a mere container of social relations, as it instead depicts complex socio-spatial relations, in which the space both influences and is influenced by social agents. Spatialized relations can have both negative and positive effects on individuals and groups, producing unfair distributions of opportunities: "Locational discrimination created through the biases imposed on certain populations because of their geographical location is fundamental in the production of spatial injustice and the creation of lasting spatial structures of privilege and advantage" (Soja, 2009, p. 3).

The concept was developed in the field of critical geography and urban studies – consistently with the *spatial turn* in social sciences – by scholars like David Harvey (1973), Edward W. Soja (2009, 2010) and Susan Fainstein (2010), with the aim to develop a standpoint for supporting actions to improve social equality in disadvantaged locales (Soja, 2010) – in light of the lessons by Henry Lefebvre (1968) on the *right to the city* (see also the entry *Social Exclusion/Inclusion* in this Glossary).

While many works in this field have a focus on large cities – as specific sites of inequalities – and urban planning, our understanding of the concept is that cities are not the one and only key site of spatial injustice. Other spatial and regional cleavages and forms of uneven development (e.g., urban/rural, inner and marginal areas/core areas, competitive and lagging regions) are key in differentiating life course, chances and opportunities, as well as in generating varying interactions with educational, training and labour market policies. Along this line, inter-regional spatial disparities are considered a major source of social and political instability for the EU (Iammarino et al., 2019).

Two strands of foci on spatial justice can be found in the research literature:

- on the one hand, a *distributive* approach considers how public goods are allocated, accessible and available in different spaces, with the aim to achieve a fair redistribution of educational, health and labour opportunities;

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

- on the other hand, a *procedural* approach takes into consideration how policy- and decision-making processes represent, design and manage measures – and their intended or unintended outcomes – in different locales, with the aim of disentangling representations of space in and spatially differentiated outcomes of (multilevel) arrangements and decisions.

When we turn to educational effects, learning outcomes may be affected by spatial dimensions before, during and after schooling. Neighborhoods/locales may cumulate economic, social, environmental and cultural disadvantages, with negative consequences on a range of individual life chances – usually reinforced (if not caused) by institutional dimensions: different locales receive unequal educational resources due to wealth, power, and connectedness factors that impact on the quality of teachers, school programs, out-of-school opportunities students might experience (e.g., Beach et al., 2018; Kettunen & Prokkola, 2022) (see also the entries *Educational Inequality* and *Learning Outcomes* in this Glossary).

"The political organization of space is a particularly powerful source of spatial injustice" (Soja, 2009): failing to provide adequate schooling facilities and opportunities, and producing exclusionary residential segregation and educational zoning are examples within the field of educational policy, severely affecting individual outcomes. Nevertheless, a sole focus on educational organization is not enough. The approach to spatial justice implies the need for a wider conceptualization of local (educational) spaces, that do not include educational institutions and policies only (Amos et al., 2016). This calls for an attention to a wider set of influencing factors on learning outcomes, both societal and institutional: e.g., environmental factors (including air quality and pollution), welfare services (healthcare, transportation, etc.), forms of spatial organization (level and type of local autonomy and multilevel arrangements), characteristics of the productive systems and of the labour market (economic sectors and innovation structuring the demand of work), demographic trends (migration flows, family arrangements).

Application in the CLEAR project

The focus on spatial dimension of (in)justice in education and its societal outcomes is a core feature of the CLEAR project. On the one hand, a focus on distributive dimension of educational opportunities and outcomes is aimed to advance evidences useful to support fine-grained representations for academic and policy-making purposes. Inter- and intra-national differences will be considered as a key feature in most working packages. On the other hand, a focus on representations of different locales by different agents, and their consequences on and for educational policies (e.g., Armstrong, 2012; Jones et al., 2016) will be relevant in most analyses. In this respect, the incorporation of multiple voices in our research is aimed to increase awareness and opportunities on the need for integration of people living in different contexts in decision-making.

References

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Amos, K., Loncle, P., Martelli, A., Barberis, E., Becquet, V., & Theobald, U. (2016). Translation of Policy Instruments and Negotiation of Actors in Local School Spaces. In A. Walther, M. Parreira do Amaral, M. Cuconato & R. Dale (Eds.), *Governance of educational trajectories in Europe: pathways, policy and practice* (pp. 75-94). Bloomsbury.

Armstrong, F. (2012). Landscapes, spatial justice and learning communities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *16*(5-6), 609-626. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2012.655496

Beach, D., From, T., Johansson, M., & Ohrn, E. (2018). Educational and spatial justice in rural and urban areas in three Nordic countries. *Education Inquiry*, *9*(1), 4-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2018.1430423

Fainstein, S. (2010). *The Just City*. Cornell University Press.

Harvey, D (1973). *Social Justice and the City.* Edward Arnold.

Iammarino, S., Rodriguez-Pose, A., & Storper, M. (2019). Regional inequality in Europe: evidence, theory and policy implications. *Journal of economic geography*, *19*(2), 273-298. https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lby021

Jones, S., Thiel, J. J., Davila, D., Woglom, J. F., Zhou, X., Brown, T., & Snow, M. (2016). Childhood Geographies and Spatial Justice: Making Sense of Place and Space-Making as Political Acts in Education. *American Educational Research Journal*, *53*(4), 1126-1158. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216655221

Kettunen, M., & Prokkola, E.-K. (2022). Differential inclusion through education: Reforms and spatial justice in Finnish education policy. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, *40*(1), 50-68. https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544211001383

Lefebvre, H. (1968). *Le droit à la ville*. Ellipses.

Soja, E.W. (2009). The city and spatial justice. *Justice spatial / Spatial justice*, 1, pp. 1-5.

Soja, E.W. (2010). *Seeking spatial justice*. University of Minnesota Press.

Authors

Eduardo Barberis, Ruggero Cefalo

Transitions (linear/non-linear)

The concept of transition refers to the idea of change and most often it is applied to the changes in an individual life course: from one life period to another, from one status or role to another (see also the entries *Life Course* and *Life Trajectories* in this Glossary). Transitions can be perceived as moments within a particular life trajectory characterized by accelerated changes, compared to the relative stability of stages (Levi et al., 2005). Youth is a dynamic life period with various transitions, for instance within education, from school to work, and from single life to marriage and parenthood.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Life course transitions take place in different ways and with a different logic in traditional and contemporary societies. Linear transitions are characterized by sequential passage of the individual through different life stages with the entry into specific life roles being supported by tradition. Due to cultural, economic, and social changes, tradition has been gradually replaced by the processes of individualization. Modern socio-economic changes have led to the *standard biography*, the relatively predictable and linear moves from youth to adulthood, being replaced with the *biography of choice* in which individual actions and personal choices become increasingly important in the construction process of their life paths while the stable context and traditions dissolve (du Bois-Reymond & López Blasco, 2003; Giddens, 1991) (see also the entry *Biography* in this Glossary). Thus, non-linear life transitions are becoming increasingly prevalent: transitions do not follow a strict sequence, an individual can make a transition but then has to return to the old life role, and they may be able to make only some of the "traditional" life transitions (Jones, 2009). The de-standardization of life transitions is also associated with the extended period of educational training, increasing labour market insecurity, and labour flexibilization (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998).

While the youth are expected to individualize their lives by constructing educational and occupational trajectories based on their personal preferences and choices, the consequences of the choices are often unpredictable, and the choices are not always real in the sense that there might not actually be meaningful options available. Thus, some experts have challenged the assumption that the set of meaningful options has been expanding so much as, for instance, Giddens (1991) has interpreted (Furlong, 2009). In this vein, it is interesting to link the change from linear to complex transitions with the analyses of inequalities (see also the entries *Educational Inequality*, *Gender* and *Intersectionality* in this Glossary).

Application in the CLEAR project

Life transitions are important markers reflecting specific patterns of the individual life course construction. Emphasizing the concept of linear/non-linear transitions in the CLEAR project will help us to gain a better understanding of the nature of contemporary life transitions, their meaning for the individual, and their impact on individuals' residence in different social spheres. The concept is important because it reflects the processes of an individual's transition from one life stage to another, showing the importance of individual planning and life decisions made for the individual's current life situation and life prospects. At the same time, we acknowledge that individual lives that consist of trajectories and transitions are constructed in a reciprocal process of political, social, economic, and spatial conditions, as well as welfare state regulations and provisions, in addition to biographical decisions and investments. We perceive high-quality learning outcomes to be those which enhance the ability of young people to develop personally meaningful life projects and make successful life transitions. The process of learning and

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

its outcomes needs to be explored as embedded in the particular social context (time and place) in which the individual life unfolds (Mayer, 2009).

References

du Bois-Reymond, M., & López Blasco, A. (2003). Yo-yo transitions and misleading trajectories: towards Integrated Transition Policies for young adults in Europe. In A. López Blasco, W. McNeish & A. Walther (Eds.), *Young people and contradictions of inclusion: Towards Integrated Transition Policies in Europe* (pp. 19–42). Policy Press.

Furlong, A. (2009). Revisiting transitional metaphors: reproducing social inequalities under the conditions of late modernity. *Journal of Education and Work, 22*(5), 343–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080903453979

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Polity Press.

Jones, G. (2009). *Youth*. Polity.

Levi, R., Ghisletta, P., Spini, D., & Widmer, E. (2005). Why look at life courses in an interdisciplinary perspective? *Advances in Life Course Research, 10*, 3–32. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1040-2608(05)10014-8

Mayer, K. U. (2009). New Directions in Life Course Research. *Annual Review of Sociology, 35*(1), 413–433. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134619

Wallace, C., & Kovacheva, S. (1998). *Youth in Society. The Construction and Deconstruction of Youth in East and West Europe.* Macmillan and St. Martin's Press.

Authors

Darena Hristozova, Xavier Rambla, Jenni Tikkanen

Transversal Participatory Approach

The integration of participatory approaches in Social Sciences Research questions how more traditional methodologies usually construct hierarchies and distribute power among the involved subjects (see also the entry *Mixed-Method-Research* in this Glossary). “Participatory research is not a single, unified methodology, but a problematic approach to research, which continues to make assumptions about knowledge-production and the value and worth of research” (Brown, 2022, p. 202). A central common trait among participatory approaches is the shifting of the role of participants from *objects* to *subjects* of research. Although from different perspectives, participatory methodologies such as the Participatory Action Research, Community Based Participatory Research (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995) or Creative Methods (including performance-based methods and creative forms of elicitation approaches), they all challenge the dominant understanding of research as a *top-down* activity. Participatory approach changes the status of participants from mere *information bearers* – to be triggered by the stimulation of researchers – to *co-*

This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

producers of research (see also the entries *Innovation Forums* and *Youth Participation* in this Glossary). In terms of power, this does not imply a naïve assumption of a complete horizontality. On the contrary it fosters the acknowledgement of the consequences of stratification and power unbalances, that constitutes the basis from which different standpoints are placed in relation to reach a deeper understanding of society. A clear distinction of roles between researchers and participants, as partners who collaborate and cooperate with respect to shared objectives, is thus needed (see also the entry *Open Science* in this Glossary).

Among the main risks in the application on participatory methods is the reproduction of unrealistic claim of horizontality, which leads to misleading assumption of exchangeable roles needed to be considered. Further, the promise of benefits that cannot be granted to participants should be monitored also, as well as the – more or less conscious – exploitation of asymmetries of power that potentially produce negative effects far beyond that of non-activation. Furthermore, inaccurate and inadequate settings for the application of participatory actions may cause deception, frustration, manipulation (e.g., researchers applying their skills to direct the participants towards desired outcomes, under the disguise of alleged horizontality), and *extractivism*, understood as an action of researchers appropriating the knowledge produced by the participants, without any form of restitution (Serafini, 2022). At the opposite, virtuous pathways of shared knowledge production and the creation of trust must be pursued throughout the research process.

Application in the CLEAR project

The Transversal Participatory Approach creates opportunities for an active involvement of different target groups at different stages of the research and dissemination activities. It provides settings where different actors in the educational arena as well as young people can actively discuss the project's research results and identify the most relevant issues to be addressed by policy makers. The goal is to involve different actors in the research as critical fellows, and not merely as an audience to be targeted.

As one of main targets in CLEAR are youths in disadvantaged and/or vulnerable positions, we pay a further attention to aspects of potential risks and discomfort. We assume that those youths probably share a feeling of distance – and sometimes exclusion – from the institutions and, more broadly, from the world of adults. We therefore carefully invite youths to commit to a participatory process and make precautions in relation to perceived pressure.

References

Benasso, S., Bouillet, D., Neves, T., & Parreira do Amaral, M. (Ed.) (2022). *Landscapes of Lifelong Learning Policies across Europe: Comparative Case Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Brown, N. (2022). Scope and continuum of participatory research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *45*(2), 200-211. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2021.1902980

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Cornwall, A., & Jewkes, R. (1995). What is Participatory Research? *Social Science & Medicine*, *41*(12), 1667-1676. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(95)00127-S

Giorgi, A., Pizzolati, M., & Vacchelli, E. (2021). *Metodi creativi per la ricerca sociale. Contesto, pratiche e strumenti*. Il Mulino, Bologna.

MacDonald, K. (2002). L'Intervention Sociologique after Twenty-Five Years: Can it Translate into English? *Qualitative Sociology*, *25*(2), 247–260. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015466617713

Parreira do Amaral, M., Kovacheva, S., & Rambla, X. (Ed.) (2019). *Lifelong Learning Policies for Young Adults in Europe: Navigating between Knowledge and Economy*. Policy Press.

Serafini, P. (2022). *Creating Worlds Otherwise: Art, Collective Action, and (Post)Extractivism*. Vanderbilt University Press.

Touraine, A. (2000). A method for studying social actors. *Journal of World Systems Research*, *6*(3), 900–918. https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2000.211

von Benzon, N., Holton, M., & Wilkinson, C. (Eds.) (2021). *Creative Methods for Human Geographers*. Sage Publications Ltd.

Wright Mills, C. (1959). *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press.

Authors

Luca Raffini, Sebastiano Benasso, Cristina Cavallo

(Under)Achievement

The concept of (under)achievement, or more precisely academic (under)achievement, has been a focus of research and policymaking at national and European level for many years. Academic (under)achievement is a recurring public discourse crisis and has been called the *predominant rhetoric* in education in recent years (Weiner et al., 1997). According to Whitmore (1980), it was the post-Sputnik self-excoriation in the late 1950s that brought the word to prominence. In general, (under)achievement refers to the ability, or rather inability of some students to reach certain levels of school attainment (see also the entry *Learning Outcomes* in this Glossary). When tackling this issue, there are several approaches to be distinguished.

A psychological approach to (under)achievement looks at the difference between actual and predicted attainment of an individual. This branch of research seeks to understand "why persons fail to achieve their potential or fail to meet expectations for performing at a level that they are capable of performing" (Levesque, 2011, p. 3025). In this vein, researchers define underachievement as "a discrepancy between ability or potential (expected performance) and achievement (actual performance) that cannot be explained by learning disability or the documented need for any other category of special education

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

services" (Levesque, 2011, p. 3025). The psychological approach is, thus, interested in the individual's abilities and skills which either match the expected outcomes or not. Hence, the adoption of a quasi-behaviouristic approach to learning outcomes largely overlooks the importance of pedagogical interactions and learners' involvement in the learning activities on academic achievement, which provides useful information for educators. On the one hand, learners should have the opportunity to interact with educators and with other participants in order to increase their learning opportunities. On the other hand, educators should provide a learning environment in which participants are motivated and involved in the learning process.

A sociological approach, looks at the relative performance of groups of population and the differential attainment between them, contrasting, e.g., the performance of (students in given) schools against their socioeconomic background (see OECD, 2010). It seeks to understand, why certain groups differ in their academic achievement, explaining it on the ground of their different socio-economic status, religion, gender or geography (Harris et al., 2021, p. 5) (see also the entry *Gender* in this Glossary). Some researchers also see correlations between achievement and ethnicity/culture (Herrera et al., 2020) or between achievement and obesity (Gillies, 2008, p. 2). A core distinction here is made between *achievement* and *attainment*. While educational attainment is limited to the "level of academic performance, often expressed in quantifiable terms" (Gillies, 2008, p. 4), academic achievement is a much broader term transcending schooling and includes skills and abilities that are not quantifiable and visible in testing.

The research on Gifted Education has identified several factors commonly associated with underachievement, which are equally connected to the individual. Among them are low academic self-perception, low self-efficacy, low self-motivation, low goal valuation, negative attitudes toward school and teachers, and low self-regulatory or metacognitive skills (see Levesque, 2011, p. 3028). It has, however, pointed out to the fact that the group of underachievers is very heterogenous and that each student "may underachieve for a somewhat unique combination of reasons" (ibid.). In this regard it is difficult to distinguish what exactly leads to the discrepancy between ability and achievement, since "no reason exists to believe that all gifted students should achieve well academically (Janos & Robinson, 1985) or that ability and achievement should be perfectly correlated (Thorndike, 1963)" (Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 154). Relying only on testing may be also misleading, as the "grades often do not reflect what students know" (Siegle, 2018, p. 287).

The issue of (under)achievement contains normative value judgements, as it presupposes that there is a standard or expected outcome against which the student is measured, which may itself cause difficulties to some groups of learners: "Should we identify individuals as underachieving because they choose not to perform in areas that they do not value and that are not of interest to them?" (Siegle, 2018, p. 288). In this regard, every form of reverse intervention, be it counselling or instructional intervention (Levesque, 2011, p. 3030), needs to acknowledge that (under)achievement can occur accidentally,

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

either earlier or later in the academic or occupational career, that it appears as a combination of various selective factors, and that only some students develop a chronic pattern (cf. Levesque, 2011, p. 3027). Further, the focus on (under)achievement needs to be shifted more towards the socioeconomic composition of a school or territory, as well as towards the organization of academic activities (from curricula to pedagogics), to complement the strict individualistic explanation of (under)achievement (see also the entry *Spatial Justice* in this Glossary). To sum up, there are several conceptual difficulties with the notion of (under)achievement. On the one hand, identifying the criteria for achievement and underachievement is a complex and contested field. On the other hand, identifying (under)achievement or failure to reach one's own potential is similarly awkward.

Application in the CLEAR project

In the CLEAR project, we use the term (under)achievement in brackets, in order to highlight its selective character and the fact that what counts as academic (under)achievement in one country or region may not apply the some in other contexts. Further, it is our goal to look beyond the simplistic logic of categorising students into achievers, over-achievers and low-achievers, and instead problematise the very construction of the term, its use in policy-making and in various learning environments and skills ecosystems. We look particularly at the manifold intersecting people and factors that cause some portions of students appear as underachievers, keeping in mind that academic achievement applies to a much broader set of abilities and skills, which are not depicted in quantified and measurable learning outcomes, but can equally contribute to pursuing a successful life course.

References

Gillies, D. (2008). Educational potential, underachievement, and cultural pluralism. *Education in the North*, *16*, 1-22. https://www.abdn.ac.uk/eitn/journal/49/

Harris, J., Purdy, N., Walsh, G., Jones, S., & Rowan, A. (2021). *Educational Underachievement in Northern Ireland: Review of Research 2021.* [Report]. Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement. Retrieved from https://www.stran.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CREU-Review-of-Research-2021.pdf

Herrera, L., Al-Lal, M., & Mohamed, L. (2020). Academic Achievement, Self-Concept, Personality and Emotional Intelligence in Primary Education. Analysis by Gender and Cultural Group. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*(3075). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.03075

Levesque, R. J. (2011). Underachievement. In R. J. Levesque (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Adolescence* (pp. 3025–3035). Springer.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

OECD. (2010). *PISA 2009 Results: Overcoming Social Background – Equity in Learning Opportunities and Outcomes (Volume II)*. [Report]. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091504-en

Reis, S. M., & McCoach, D. B. (2000). The Underachievement of Gifted Students: What Do We Know and Where Do We Go? *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *44*(3), 152-170. https://doi.org/10.1177/001698620004400302

Siegle, D. (2018). Understanding Underachievement. In S. I. Pfeiffer (Ed.), *Handbook of Giftedness in Children* (pp. 285–297). Springer.

Weiner, G., Arnot, M., & David, M. (1997). Is the future female? Female success, male disadvantage, and changing gender patterns in education. In A. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown & A. Wells (Eds.), *Education: culture, economy, and society* (pp. 620–630). Oxford University Press.

Whitmore, J. R. (1980). *Giftedness, conflict, and underachievement*. Allyn & Bacon.

Authors

Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, Joseph König, Jozef Zelinka

Vulnerability

In research literature, vulnerability has gained several meanings and understandings, which Brown et al. summarise in three clusters:

> first, as an anthropological condition of humans and as a cultural trope about the problems of life in increasingly fragmented and unequal societies; second, as a policy and practice mechanism, which plays out in interventions, sometimes overtly and explicitly, sometimes subtly or unnoticed; and third as a more robust concept to facilitate social and political research and analysis (Brown et al., 2017, p. 498).

As an anthropological condition, vulnerability is ascribed to the individual as his or her given or natural state. However, this essentialising understanding does not account for the set of circumstances and situations that make the individual or group appear as (more or less) vulnerable (Luna, 2009, p. 128). Since, under specific conditions, everyone can experience a state of vulnerability, be it sickness, natural disaster, or sudden death of a close person. It is these *vulnerant* conditions and circumstances (Burghardt et al. 2017, p. 12) – also called stressors – that create the *possibility* of entering a vulnerable state. In this respect, vulnerability shall not be intended as an individual characteristic, but in relational terms, in connection with contextual social and institutional factors that contribute in the production of vulnerability (see also the entry *Social Construction* in this Glossary). Such factors might result from structural division of (educational, economic, labour market) opportunities, social and cultural traditions of a given region or country, as well as from institutional structures, which might open up or close one's life chances (see also the entries *Opportunity Structures* and *Spatial Justice* in this Glossary). Thus, in

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

social terms, we may understand vulnerability as the difficulty of individuals, groups, organizations and institutions to cope with negative consequences (in terms of opportunities and rights) of various – not rarely plural – vulnerant factors or stressors.

In policy-making, vulnerability often appears as an interpretive frame of educational policies targeting vulnerable and multi-disadvantaged groups (Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka, 2021) (see also the entry *Multi-Disadvantaged Youth* in this Glossary). The seemingly vulnerable condition of certain groups serves as legitimation to intervene with appropriate measures (Brown, 2017, p. 423), which results in policies constructing their target groups *as vulnerable* and promoting to *assist* them in pursuing their educational goals (see also the entry *Youth Policy* in this Glossary). In this respect, it is important to keep in mind the lesson by scholars like Judith Butler (2020) or Richard Sennett (2003) highlighting the fact that vulnerable people are not identified with their vulnerability – especially when categorized with institutional labels – in ways that may become stigmatizing and disrespectful for their dignity. Vulnerability shall not become a passivizing concept, but include also spaces for action and acts of resistance.

In welfare studies, vulnerability is often intended as a long-term, procedural perspective that takes into account factors affecting social participation other than money-metric measures of poverty (Alwang et al., 2001). In particular, vulnerability is used to describe rising uncertainty in global post-industrial societies, in which changes in key structures of contemporary societies (e.g., family structures, labour trajectories) resulted in a "growing diversity and less stability in the organisation of personal life" (Spini et al., 2013, p. 2) as much as in an increasing perception of risks for the social cohesion as such, since the welfare state coverage of risks becomes less effective. New social risks not covered by traditional welfare measures, the individualization of life courses and of related contingencies, the growth of social inequalities and the difficulties of welfare state to face them are deemed to increase vulnerability and insecurity (see also the entry *Life Course* in this Glossary). In particular, Robert Castel (2000) identifies four *zones* of social life – integration, vulnerability, assistance and disaffiliation – maintaining that the rise of social vulnerability increases the risk of dissociation from the social bond, when assistance and integration do not work.

Application in the CLEAR project

The CLEAR research project pays a particular attention to carefully determine the groups of young people, who are temporary and only under given conditions in a vulnerable situation, which makes them more prone to be seen as initially unwilling or incapable of learning (Oksala, 2015), as well as to understand potential future transformations of vulnerant factors and vulnerability. Young people in vulnerable and/or multi-disadvantaged situations are given voice and heard to in several participatory activities throughout the project to ensure that their experiences will contrast and/or complement the quantitative and institutional analyses.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

References

Alwang, J., Siegel, P. B., & Jorgensen, S. L. (2001). *Vulnerability: a view from different disciplines.* [Discussion Paper]. Social Protection Discussion Papers and Notes 23304. The World Bank.

Brown, K. (2017). Introduction. Vulnerability and Social Justice. *Social Policy & Society*, *16*(3), 423-427. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746416000622

Brown, K., Ecclestone, K., & Emmel, N. (2017). Review Article. The Many Faces of Vulnerability. *Social Policy & Society, 16*(3), 497-510. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746416000610

Burghardt, D., Dederich, M., Dziabel, N., Höhne, T., Lohwasser, D., Stöhr, R., & Zirfas, J. (2017). *Vulnerabilität. Pädagogische Herausforderungen.* Verlag W. Kohlhammer GmbH.

Butler, J. (2020). *The Force of Nonviolence*. Verso.

Castel, R. (2000). The Roads to Disaffiliation: Insecure Work and Vulnerable Relationships. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *24*(3), 519-535. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00262

Luna, F. (2009). Elucidating the Concept of Vulnerability: Layers not Labels. *The International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics, 2*(1), 121-139. https://doi.org/10.3138/ijfab.2.1.121

Oksala, J. (2015). Johanna Oksala on Foucault, Marx and Neoliberal Subjects. *Theory, Culture, and Society*. Retrieved November 11, 2022, from https://www.theoryculturesociety.org/johanna-oksala-on-foucault-marx-and-neoliberal-subjects/

Parreira do Amaral, M., & Zelinka, J. (2021). Vulnerabilität als (neues) europäisches bildungspolitisches Deutungsmuster? Ein Beispiel aus dem Bereich des Lebenslangen Lernens. In A. Koepfer, J. J. W. Powell & R. Zahnd (Eds.), *International Handbook of Inclusive Education*: *Global, National and Local Perspectives* (pp. 523–546). Verlag Barbara Budrich.

Sennett, R. (2003). *Respect*. Allen Lane.

Spini, D., Hanappi, D., Bernardi, L., Oris, M., & Bickel, J. F. (2013). Vulnerability across the life course: A theoretical framework and research directions. [Working Paper]. *LIVES working papers*, *2013*(27), 1-35.

Authors

Jozef Zelinka, Eduardo Barberis, Georgios K. Zarifis

Youth Participation

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Participation means being involved in the economic, cultural, and political processes that shape people's lives, directly or indirectly exercising control on these processes and on the decisions that affect them. In a broader sense, we can define as *participatory* all the activities that are oriented to impact civil society or attempt to alter systematic patterns of social behaviour (Norris, 2002). More specifically, political participation unfolds within a given political system or organisation, where one takes part through a set of attitudes or concrete behaviours, seeking to influence socially binding decisions. Social participation is understood as a person's involvement in community-based activities. A typical form of social participation is volunteerism. Hence, we can understand participation as an eminently instrumental activity, i.e., as aimed at the pursuit of specific interests, but also as an expressive activity, i.e., as one that has a symbolic and identifying value.

According to mediatic narratives, young people are disenchanted and increasingly sceptical about representative democracy and traditional forms of political organization. The weak public prominence of young people in the public sphere tends to correlate with their marginality and social vulnerability (see also the entry *Vulnerability* in this Glossary). The dominant understanding of young people as not interested and not involved in social and political participation is based, nonetheless, on a narrow conception of what it means to participate. Where the *traditional* tools for analysing participation fail is the capacity to read the changes which have interested the society at large, including the meanings, channels, and modes of participation. On the contrary, the forms of participation applied by contemporary youths are far more innovative, especially in the way how young people think about and engage in politics. They are "less institutionalized, and distanced from traditional political actors" (Pleyer, 2010, p. 141) (see also the entries *Innovation Forums* and *Transversal Participatory Approach* in this Glossary).

The process of individualization and the weakening of collective identities challenge the traditional channels of participation, and the displacement of politics outside the political system pushes toward the individual dimension and the every-day life. This becomes increasingly relevant especially for the new generations. Young people tend to be active in *lifestyle politics* that directly connect the individual to universal concerns, as well as in *hybrid* forms of participation placed on the margin between individual and collective, private and public. The political activation of youth is often invisible as it is rooted in informal, non-institutionalized, horizontal practices (see also the entry *Youth Policy* in this Glossary). Youth participation, once divorced from traditional collective social cleavages, is concerned with their personal autonomy, personally meaningful and individually oriented. Nevertheless, it is a kind of individualism which is compatible with collective engagement. The "reinvention of politics" in the age of individualization (Alteri et al., 2016) is framed by Micheletti & McFarland (2012) as a form of "individualized collective action" (i.e., political consumerism). According to Bennett & Segerberg (2013), collective action, based on the mobilisation of pre-existing collective identifications, gives way to

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

connective action oriented towards connecting the individual dimension in a collective perspective. Youths are at the forefront of a "collaborative individualization", defined "as a means of characterizing young people's attempts to define their identities as simultaneously self-reliant and in need of support and collaboration" (Cuzzocrea & Collins, 2015).

In contemporary society, the spectrum of actions and practices by which young people can contribute to change the world and the environment in which they live have been transformed and pluralized. As a result, the concept of participation itself is worth rethinking. According to Crisholm & Kovacheva (2002) three dimensions of participation can be distinguished: 1) involvement in institutional politics, 2) protest activities, and 3) civic engagement, i.e., volunteerism or *direct social action* as defined by Bosi & Zamponi (2015). Young people tend to be more active in protest and civic engagement practices than in institutional politics (Pitti, 2018). A clear example of this is the mobilisation of young people in the *Fridays for Futures* global movement.

Behind the rhetoric about the political disinterest of young people and their low attitude to participation lies a wider process of deinstitutionalization and a "cultural disconnection" (Loader, 2007) between youth and institutions, as the latter seem unable to recognise and understand the needs and languages of young people. Youth participation thus calls us to question the individual and social conditions and characteristics that promote or inhibit activation, the spaces and tools available to young people to make their voices heard or take action, and also the resources available to them to do so. Finally, it prompts us to reflect on processes of institutional innovation, capable of incorporating the languages and modes of activation of young people.

Application in the CLEAR project

This is the critical approach adopted by CLEAR, as youths are involved as critical and meaningful actors, and not merely as an audience to be targeted. The Transversal Participatory Approach creates opportunities for an active involvement of different target groups at different stages of the research and dissemination activities. It provides settings where different actors in the educational arena as well as young people can actively discuss the project's research results and identify the most relevant issues to be addressed by policy makers.

References

Alteri, L., Leccardi, C., & Raffini, L. (2016). Youth and the Reinvention of Politics. New Forms of Participation in the Age of Individualization and Presentification. *Partecipazione e conflitto*, *9*(3), 717-747. https://doi.org/10.1285/i20356609v9i3p717

Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2013). *The Logic of Connective Action. Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Bosi, L., & Zamponi, L. (2015). Direct Social Actions and Economic Crises: The relationship between forms of action and socio-economic context in Italy. *Partecipazione e conflitto*, *8*(2), 367-391. https://doi.org/10.1285/i20356609v8i2p367

Crisholm, L., & Kovacheva, S. (2002). *Exploring the European Youth Mosaic: The Social Situation of Young People in Europe*. Council of Europe Publishing.

Cuzzocrea, V., & Collins, R. (2015). Collaborative Individualization? Peer-to-peer Action in Youth Transitions, *Young*, *23*(2), 136-153. https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308815569390

Loader, B. (Ed.) (2007). *Young citizens in the digital age. Political engagement, young people and new media*. Routledge.

Micheletti, M., & McFarland, A. (2012). *Creative Participation. Responsability-taking in the Political World*. Routledge.

Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic Phoenix. Reinventing political activism*. Harvard University Press.

Pitti, I. (2018). *Youth and Unconventional Political Engagement*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Pleyers, G. (2010). *Alter-globalization. Becoming actors in the global age*. Polity Press.

Authors

Luca Raffini, Cristina Cavallo, Francesca Zamboni

Youth Policy

Youth policy is a special field of policy designed and implemented at local, national and supranational level. The policies supporting young people aim at fostering their social inclusion through the provision of more opportunities for accessing quality education, employment, health and well-being services, and full civic participation (see also the entries *Opportunity Structures, Social Exclusion/Inclusion* and *Youth Participation* in this Glossary). Many other policy fields touch upon youth policy, such as lifelong learning, family, sports and cultural policies, which is why it is necessary to understand youth policies as a cross-sectoral field. The national youth policies in EU countries vary in their definitions of youth, in setting different age limits and, more importantly, in treating youth as a resource and/or as a problem for themselves and for the society in general. Similarly, the focus of local and national policies shifts between the empowerment of young people and their social protection as group in vulnerable situation (see also the entry *Vulnerability* in this Glossary).

Advanced by the White Paper on Youth (2001), the EU has supported and supplemented the youth policy actions on the national and local levels. The common strategies and programmes and the new European institutions, such as the Youth Partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe, enrich the scope and improve the

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

cooperation and coordination of youth policies (without any harmonization of national legislation) (see also the entry *Policy Coordination* in this Glossary). The current EU Youth Strategy for the years 2019-2027 places youth participation at the centre stage by 1) promoting the participation of young people in civic and democratic life, 2) connecting young people across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding, and 3) supporting youth empowerment through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work.

Application in the CLEAR project

The research themes of CLEAR will inform on several aspects of youth policies. To start with, youth policies often attempt to impinge on educational achievement by opening opportunities for the most disadvantaged youth. Similarly, youth policies cut across two crucial policy areas that affect the achievement of certain learning outcomes, namely education and employment. Other entries (see the entries *Opportunity Structures*, *Policy Coordination*, *Skills Ecosystems* in this Glossary) discuss the coordination of these policies, which contribute to shape skills ecosystems and opportunity structures. However, one of the most distinctive themes of the project will shed new light on significant aspects of youth policies to the extent that participatory research on (under)achievement will bring the voice of young people themselves to the forefront.

References

Chevalier, T., & Loncle, P. (2021). Introduction: The Development of Youth Policies in Europe in Past Decades. *Youth and Globalization*, *3*(1), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1163/25895745-03010001

European Youth Portal. (2022). *Welcome Aboard!* https://europa.eu/youth/home_en

Ghailani, D., Peña-Casas, R., Coster, S., & Regazzoni, P. (2021). *Access to social protection for young people. An analysis of policies in 35 countries*. European Social Policy Network (ESPN). Publications Office of the European Union.

Lonean, I., Braziene, R., & Taru, M. (2020). *Youth Policy Evaluation Review*. [Report]. Youth Partnership. Retrieved November 15, 2022, from https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/54308218/Youth+Policy+Evaluation+Review.pdf/8b558a4c-7f0e-db9f-b123-039f2703aca5

Moxon, D., Bacalso, C., & Șerban, A. (2021). *Beyond the pandemic: The impact of COVID-19 on young people in Europe.* Brussels. European Youth Forum.

Nico, M., Taru, M., Potočnik, D., & Salikau, A. (Eds.) (2017). *Needles in haystacks. Finding a way forward for cross-sectoral youth policy*. Council of Europe Publishing.

Rambla, X., Bouillet, D., & Petkova, B. (2020). Young adults as a target group of lifelong learning policies: a standard approach to diverse contexts. In M. Parreira do Amaral, S. Kovacheva & X. Rambla (Eds.), *Lifelong Learning Policies for Young Adults in Europe. Navigating between Knowledge and Economy* (pp. 65-84). Policy Press.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.

Williamson, H., Fras, M., & Lavchyan, Z. (2021). *About time! A reference manual for youth policy from a European perspective.* Edited by T. Basarab & H. Williamson. Council of Europe Publishing.

Authors

Xavier Rambla, Siyka Kovacheva

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme under Grant Agreement No. 101061155.