Life Trajectories In Turbulent Times

Today's main plenary is organized by the "National Centre of Competence in Research for Life course perspectives". An interview with one of the leaders of this Centre.

Eric Widmer, Professor in Sociology and President of the Swiss Sociological Association, explains Geneva's status as "National Centre of Competence in Research" for life course perspectives, and his own perspective on the ESA Conference 2011.

"Between IDEMO – the inter-disciplinary research institute based in the Sociology Department at UniGe which hosts eight professors and 20 researchers – and the recently awarded Swiss funding for an 8 year, multi-site study on "LIVES – overcoming vulnerability: life course perspectives", Geneva is certain to carry on its long tradition as a renowned centre for research into family relationships and live courses. The LIVES project allows us to develop a long-term research plan and ensure a strong programme for the Department for the next decade, including hiring PhD, post-doc and further research staff here in Geneva as well as working with multi-disciplinary teams from around Switzerland. Its a great working environment," commented Dr. Widmer.

As for the Conference itself, Dr. Widmer is looking forward to this evening's Special Plenary Session on Life Trajectories In Turbulent Times. "It will be a pleasure to interact with three such important scholars from Europe and North America." And hopes for the Conference? Widmer is thinking big: "We can make a positive contribution to how families deal with hardships – economic and relational" in these undoubtedly turbulent times.

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**What does Geneva look like? Flash interviews:**

**Julia, USA and Italy**
1) I think that people from Geneva are very cold, but also very educated.
2) It is a religious fest, which goes back to the Protestantism of Calvin. It’s just for Geneva.

**Herald, Germany**
1) I haven’t seen anyone from Geneva yet, because we drove here by car.
2) My French is too bad to know what this holiday could be about. I have no idea.

**Emma, Sweden**
1) I have a very good impression of them, but I have to say that I just arrived here.
2) I never heard about this before. I have no idea.

**Rafael, Spain**
1) I came from Madrid, so the city seems to be really quiet and neat. People are quite cold here.
2) I’m surprised to hear about this, because it is in the middle of the week. Probably it’s something about the Calvinists.

**Lady from the USA**
1) I like the diversity. There are a lot of people around.
2) I have no idea. It might be something for the young people. What could you have a holiday for in September?

**Tatiana, Italy**
1) My point of view is different, because I have a close friend here. I live in a private house. It is my first time in Geneva, but my point of view is marked by my friend. The city seems to be very easy and organized. I don’t know if people are friendly yet, but service is good.
2) My friend explained this to me. It’s a Calvinist feast. Citizens of Geneva fast during this time.

**Baterina and German, Germany**
1) We can’t make a picture of the city yet. It’s very diffuse. We were just talking about this, but we just arrived.
2) We have no idea. Maybe it has something to do with a revolution or something alas of Geneva’s history?

**Peter, Netherlands**
1) I just arrived. It’s a beautiful city, with the old buildings and the modern buildings together. It’s a tight and neat town.
2) I don’t know. Something about young people?

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"Jeûne genevois" means Geneva fast. It is a public holiday in the canton of Geneva. It dates back to the 16th century. Geneva’s fast began for the first time on October 1567 as a sign of friendship with Protestants undergoing persecution in France. Five years later, news of the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre and the slaughter of several thousand Huguenots beginning on 24th August 1572, triggered a fast throughout Geneva on the following 3rd September. Since then, "Jeûne genevois" occurs on the Thursday following the first Sunday of September.
A social network for the ESA Conference? Yes, we can!

The social network aims to help researcher and practitioner discussing, commenting and following research papers before, during and after the conference. It gives summarized details about planned sessions and a first overview of the existing set of papers for each session. Connected users can comment any paper or give general comments for the session: they can bookmark papers that they want to follow. Users can find any author and get in touch with him by a simple research. The social network is updated weekly and some information can be missing or incorrect. An email with instructions will be sent to all users.

After-hour Networking – A Presentation of the PhD Workshop

To access this conference can be quite competitive – at least for the participants of the PhD Workshop which takes place at the University of Geneva. 24 out of 192 students were selected after having sent in an abstract. They started the workshop with lectures on very different subject and then continued with the paper presentation sessions. After presenting the paper, a discussion took place as well as the counter-presentation of an opposed opinion. The planning was really narrow, but today’s PhD-students know well the importance of discipline and respected the limits. I had the chance to talk to one of the participants, Antti Shiva from Finland, who presented his work on the infrastructure of electrical supply and the possibilities to better manage blackouts. As this subject is rather technical, he appreciates this excellent opportunity to meet other people working on related subjects. The exchange with fellow researchers was one of his main reasons to come to Geneva. “During group discussions, it is hard to express yourself. But afterwards there’s so much time to continue talking! We even had a common dinner, which also was a great opportunity.” He appreciates the effort which was put into this conference and allows it to be such a big, international event.

Franziska Meinherz

I grew up in a small village in the Grisons (alias Graubünden – Grischun – Grigioni). This is the largest canton of Switzerland, situated in the very east. When I wanted to take a train – the Rhaetian Railways, whose rails are extra narrow because of the small valleys between high mountains – I would first look at my timetable with our neighbour. On my way to the train station I would talk to at least five more people, who wanted to know where I was going, whether our cherries were doing well, how my grandfather was, if my aunt was doing fine with her new job or if I intended to go to some party in another village.

Now I am studying in Geneva. The canton of Geneva is 25 times smaller than the Grisons. The population density of the Grisons is 27 inhabitants per km². The population density of Geneva is 1648 inhabitants per km². When I want to take a train in Geneva and step out of the front door, I close the door behind me with a key, even if my flatmate stays in there. Because during the day, a thing I would never have imagined doing before. When I meet someone who seems to be my neighbour, he comes out of a door on the same floor, I don’t greet him. Then I hurry to the tram station without talking to anyone, on my way, because people would find it very strange. The tram takes me to the railway station. If I would go there on an alp on 1200 metres altitude, it would take me 40 minutes. If I walk 40 minutes starting from my family’s house in the Grisons, I would be on an alp. There are enough bars and clubs open to allow a party in another village.

Obviously, the Grisons are a very rural canton. Parties are usually organised by the farmer school centre, by the winemakers or by some random association. Everybody goes there: children, teens, parents, grandparents, and a few tourists. Only in winter there are more tourists than local people, and there are enough bars and clubs open to allow a separation of generations. In Geneva, party people are not only assorted according to their year of birth, but also according to their social affiliation, their favourite music and their political ideas.

...to be continued

Franziska Meinherz

From Grison to Geneva

Le quartier des Pâquis is the international area par excellence. However, carrying on with the visit of a river drive, the right shore, you will discover unexpected international area: Les Pâquis. One has only to walk through its streets to check it. Les Pâquis are not international because of different institutions, like the Nations. In Pâquis you will be able to taste all nationals snacks, Eritrean, Spanish restaurants and Asian food. In other words, this part of the town represents the diversity enriching Geneva. Besides, people appreciate its exotic and living aspect. Presented this way, Les Pâquis, seem to be a pleasant place. However, not everyone will represent the red light area. They think that it is a dangerous place and they are afraid of going through it by night.

Red light area. Then, there is also a lot of drug dealing go on in nearby streets. But does this justify completely avoiding this area? Or denigrate it? Not at all! In this perspective, Les Bains des Pâquis. Existing since 1872 should be convincing. Situated on the lakeside and with Le Lac d‘Eau in front of them, they are appropriate if you want to swim or just relax. What more is, the entrance is not expensive, it only costs two francs. In this beautiful place right on the lake, you can also eat typical fondue at La Buvette des Bains des Pâquis that is open until 9 pm.

After the meal, we would recommend a visit to Palais Mascotte situated on 43 Rue de Berne, supposed to be the most ancient nightclub of the country, with quite charming locals. Composed of three floors, you will respectively find a Cabaret Bar, the Zazou Club and Le Duc separation restaurant. Tonight, at Zazou Club, from 9 pm, there will be a musical spectacle: “Autour d’Edith Piaf” of Eric Willemin. At Le Duc Restaurant, you can have dinner at 9pm and admire the cabaret spectacle: “Las Vegas “. it started last Friday.

Finally, we notice that Les Pâquis have two facets, a positive and a negative one. But for sure, more than in any other part of town, one should be careful. Tourists are always the first victims of dirty tricks of different kinds...

Les Pâquis

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