

SUCCESS STORY

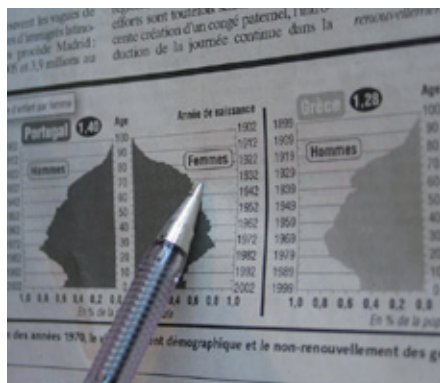
REPRO/Reproductive Decision-Making in a Macro-Micro Perspective

Research area: FP7 – Cooperation/SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES –
Determinants of Birth Rates across the European Union
Number of partners: 10 among which the University of Lausanne (UNIL)

Start date – End date: 2008-02-01 to 2011-01-31
Duration: 36 months
Funding: € 1 295 152 / UNIL: € 91 178
Type of contract: Small or medium-scale
focused research project



LAURA BERNARDI



INVESTIGATING THE DROP IN FERTILITY

In Europe, fertility is decreasing. Why? This is what the study “*Reproductive Decision-Making and Fertility Intentions*” aims at understanding. Laura Bernardi, associate professor in demographics and sociology of the course of life at the Institute of social sciences of UNIL, is taking part in this study within the project REPRO.

What attracted you to demographics?

My life is a succession of chance events. After my baccalaureate in Rome I chose philosophy. Then I went to Belgium through the International non-military service, where I took care of migrating women and their children. With concrete questions, such as how to give them the means of participating in social life, or how to assist their children at school. There I met an Ethiopian demographer who told me “you are curious and interested in the theme of migrations, these are the right studies for you”. Therefore, I started a DEA in demographics at the University of Louvain La Neuve, and then added a PhD.

And what made you choose research?

For my thesis, which I did under the auspices of the Max Planck Institute, I went to Kenya. I met people who told me about their reality, and that’s where I started to like research. As a child I loved to ask questions, which irritated everybody, and suddenly I was able to turn my obsession into a job. I could ask all the questions I wanted,

then go home and turn all the answers I had obtained into something real.

How did the REPRO project come about?

When I came back to Europe, the Max Planck Institute offered me the running of an independent research group to continue my work on fertility. I was granted a scholarship for a study on the sociocultural factors of the reproductive behaviour in Europe in relation to the decline of fertility and the rise in the age of motherhood and, in 2008, the European subsidy for REPRO. Meanwhile UNIL appointed me to the post of associate professor in demographics and sociology of the course of life. Everything linked up logically.

“Personally, as I need systematics and inter-personal exchanges, this job is reassuring. It allows me to delve deep into the subject and to build upon the base of my own curiosity about other people.”



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The European project REPRO is conducted in collaboration with an important network of researchers and demographers across the European continent. Laura Bernardi’s contribution focuses on the following theme: “Intention to have a child and reproductive behaviour: a qualitative and comparative approach”. The researcher and her team try to explain how men and women shape their fertility projects. How stable are they in their intentions? Are the obstacles to the realisation of their project

linked to economic factors? Psychological? Interpersonal? What is at stake in this study is the ability to suggest which policies should be implemented in order to stop the drop in fertility in Europe.

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