

**Abstract for the International Conference on Policies for Happiness and Health,
University of Siena, 19th – 21st March 2018**

Title: Investigating the relationship between intergenerational social mobility and subjective wellbeing – a regional approach

Authors: Caspar Kaiser^{a,b}, Joan Madia^a, Nhat An Trinh^a

In this paper, we make use of the first five waves of the European Social Survey to investigate the relationship between intergenerational social mobility and subjective wellbeing. The literature has approached this question using individual-level data (e.g. Nikolaev and Burns 2014; Clark and D’Angelo 2015; Stuck and Steiber 2017; Zhao, Li, Heath and Shryane 2017). This is problematic since the effect of intergenerational social mobility cannot be estimated when controlling for both social origin and social destination due to perfect collinearity. Moreover, given that an individual’s experience of intergenerational social mobility is time-invariant, standard fixed-effects models cannot be used. To overcome both of these problems, we make use of a new approach: Instead of estimating the effect of the experience of social mobility on subjective wellbeing on the individual level, we move the analysis to the level of generations in regions. As a first step, we calculate rates of absolute and relative social mobility for three generations across nearly 200 European regions. We then use these rates as regressors in fixed-effects models on mean levels of subjective wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing is measured as both life satisfaction and subjective health. Intergenerational social mobility is conceived in terms of social class mobility between parents and their children, where social class is measured using the European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC) – a measure that has been developed to facilitate comparative analysis of socio-economic inequalities in Europe. Our results indicate that absolute mobility has a sizable negative effect on life satisfaction and subjective health. This is entirely driven by rates of absolute downward mobility, while rates of absolute upward mobility do not yield significant effects. The results are in line with previous findings lending support to Sorokin’s (1959) “Falling from Grace Hypothesis”, and loss aversion more generally. In contrast, we do not find evidence for an effect of relative mobility on subjective well-being.

Keywords: Subjective wellbeing, life satisfaction, subjective health, intergenerational social mobility, European Social Survey, fixed-effects, NUTS regions

^a Department of Social Policy and Intervention, University of Oxford

^b Corresponding author: Nuffield College, 1 New Road, Oxford, United Kingdom. E-mail: caspar.kaiser@nuffield.ox.ac.uk