



# A life course approach to leave policies

The Belgian case as example

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# Overview

- The Lifecourse approach
  - Emergence, principles, popularity, an approach, tool for policy
- Leave policies in Belgium
  - Objectives, employment and family contexts, Leave policies presentation and limitations
- A Lifecourse approach to Leave policies
  - Application of the principles, evaluation



*I. The Lifecourse approach*

# I. Lifecourse : Emergence of a paradigm

**20-30s:** Interest in child development, interactions individual & social context  
*Life histories (Thomas and Znaniecki) 'generation' (Manheim)*  
*'life cycle', 'lifespan' (human development studies)*

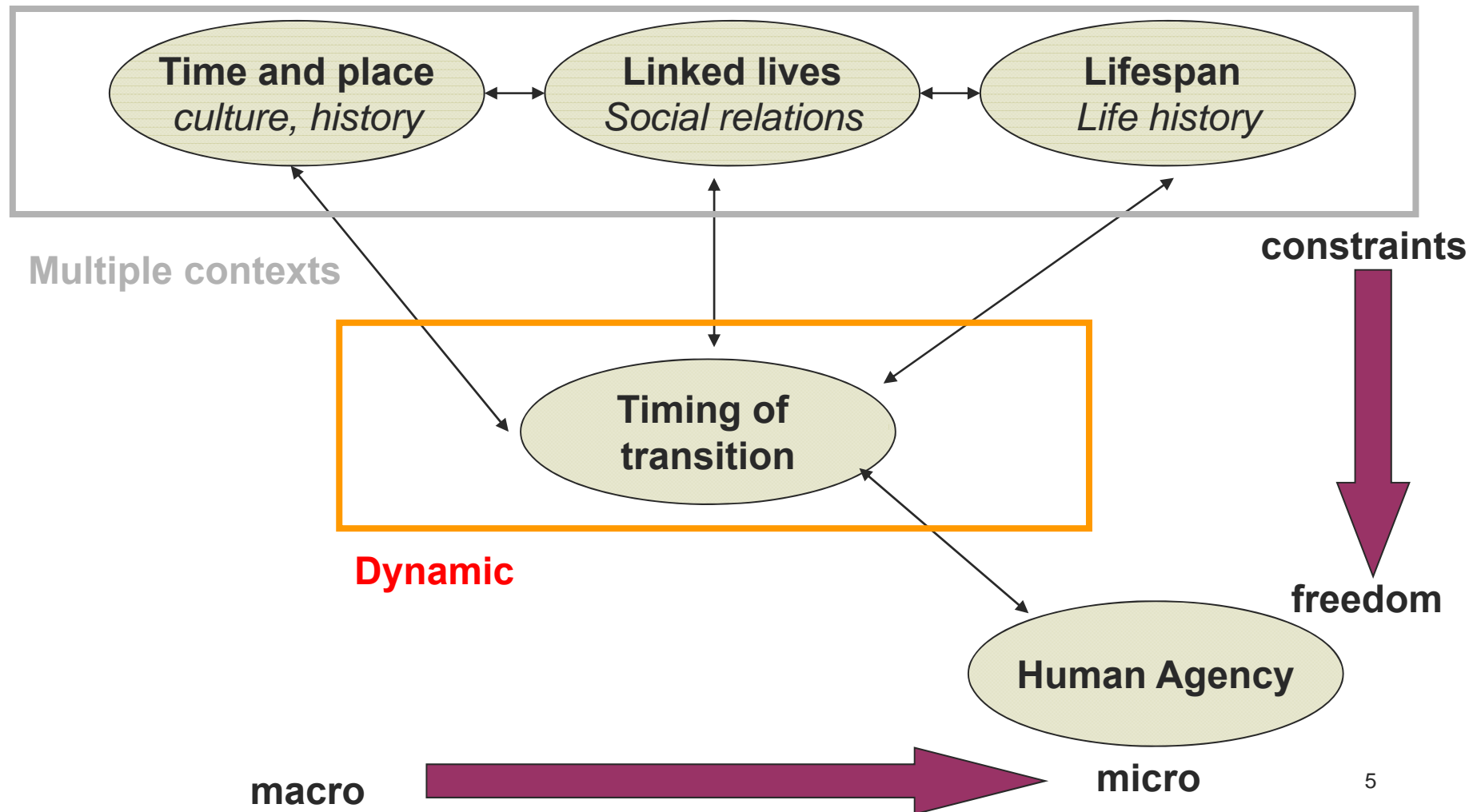
**40-50s:** Individual experience of historical event, changes in society  
*Age differentiation as a structural category (Parsons)*

**60-70s:** Development of longitudinal surveys & methods, population ageing  
*Demographical concept of 'cohort' (Ryder), first Lifecourse **research***

**80-90s:** De-chronologisation of the life-stages  
***Theorisation** of the Lifecourse approach (Elder)*

**2000s:** Growing interest in the 'sustainability' of social security  
*Use of the Lifecourse approach in **policy** (e.g. Olivia framework)*

# I. Lifecourse: 'principles' (Elder 1994)



# I. Lifecourse: An 'approach'

Approach  
or paradigm  
or **middle range theory:**

*“A theoretical orientation that established a common **field of inquiry** by defining a **framework** that guides research in term of **problem identification and formulation, variable selection and rationales, and strategies of design and analysis**”*  
(Merton 1968)

# I. Lifecourse

## Popularity

- **'All inclusive'**
  - **dynamic** and **contexts**
  - **constraints** and **freedom**
  - **Methodological individualism** but **holistic approach**
- **... help yourself**
  - **Demography**: marriage duration, transition to adulthood  
*'lifecourse transition'*
  - **Sociology**: social and family relationships over time, socio-professional trajectories, *'life course approach'*, *'life course regime'*
  - **Criminology**: deviance
  - **History**: experience of war, great depression, etc.
  - **Epidemiology**: cumulative risks *'over the life course'*
  - **Psychology**: *'lifespan'* development, *'life cycle'*

# I. Lifecourse

## A **tool** for social policies?

- Objectives
  - Specific situations
- Conception
  - Action field(s)
  - Target groups
  - Accounting for the time
- Evaluation





## *II. Leave policies in Belgium*

## II. Leave policies in Belgium: **Objectives**

*To implement policies allowing to  
combine work with other aspects of life  
( e.g. caring for children and elderly)*

# II. Leave policies in Belgium

## Employment situation

### ■ Employment rate

- 15-64: women 51% men 69% (a)
- Parents: women 67.5% men 92% (b)
- 55-64: women 26% men 43% (a)

### ■ Work conditions

- Public sector : women 48% men 38% (c)
- Part-time : women 40% men 7% (c)
- Fixed-term work contract : 15-24y women 36% 15-24y men 29% (d)

(a) OCDE 2007 (b) ECEO 2003 (c) Eurostat 2005 (%act pop)

(d) Work Forces 2005 (%employees)

## II. Leave policies in Belgium

# Family configurations & changes

- ↑ Cohabitation, ↓ marriages (↑ divorces, ↓ 2nd marriage)  
→ Reconstituted family and other new forms of family
- ↓ total fertility rate 1.7, ↑ Life expectancy 80  
→ Population ageing (65+): 6.2% (1900) → 17% (2008)
- ↑ education duration, delay of first birth  
→ De-chronologisation and de-synchronisation of the life stages
- ↓ household size, 'sandwich generation'

INS (a) 2005 (b) 2006 (c) 2008

## II. Leave policies in Belgium

### Federal basis

- **Event related**
  - Maternity leave, paternity leave
  - Sick leave, palliative leave, etc.
  - Imperative reasons
- **Life stage related**
  - Parental leave
  - 50+, early retirement scheme
- **Flexible but cumulative**
  - Time-credit/career break
- !!! **Regional differences**

## II. Leave policies in Belgium Common critics

- **Gender differences**
  - Women use leave more often
- **Specific cases are not accounted for**
  - e.g. multiple births, disabled child, etc.
- **Fixed allocation**



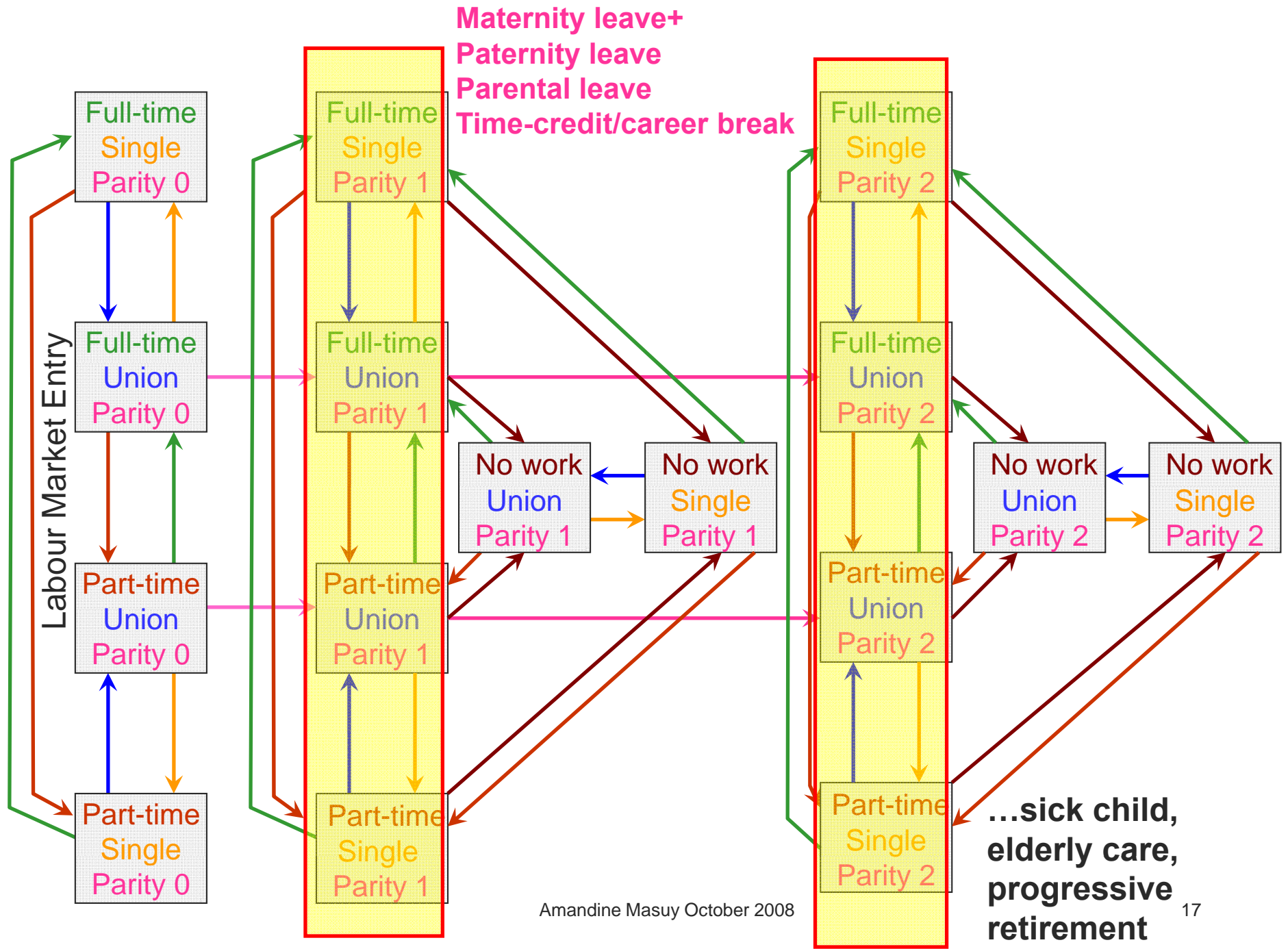
*III. Lifecourse approach to Leave policies*

# III. Leave policies & Lifecourse: An example

- Population: women (childless at labour market entry)
- Life events:
  - **single** ← → **union**  
(cohabitation, marriage)
  - **parity 0** → **parity 1** → **parity 2**  
(single birth, in union, irreversible)
  - **full-time** ← → **part-time** ← → **no work** ← → **full-time**  
(any sector, no work-parity 0 states not considered)

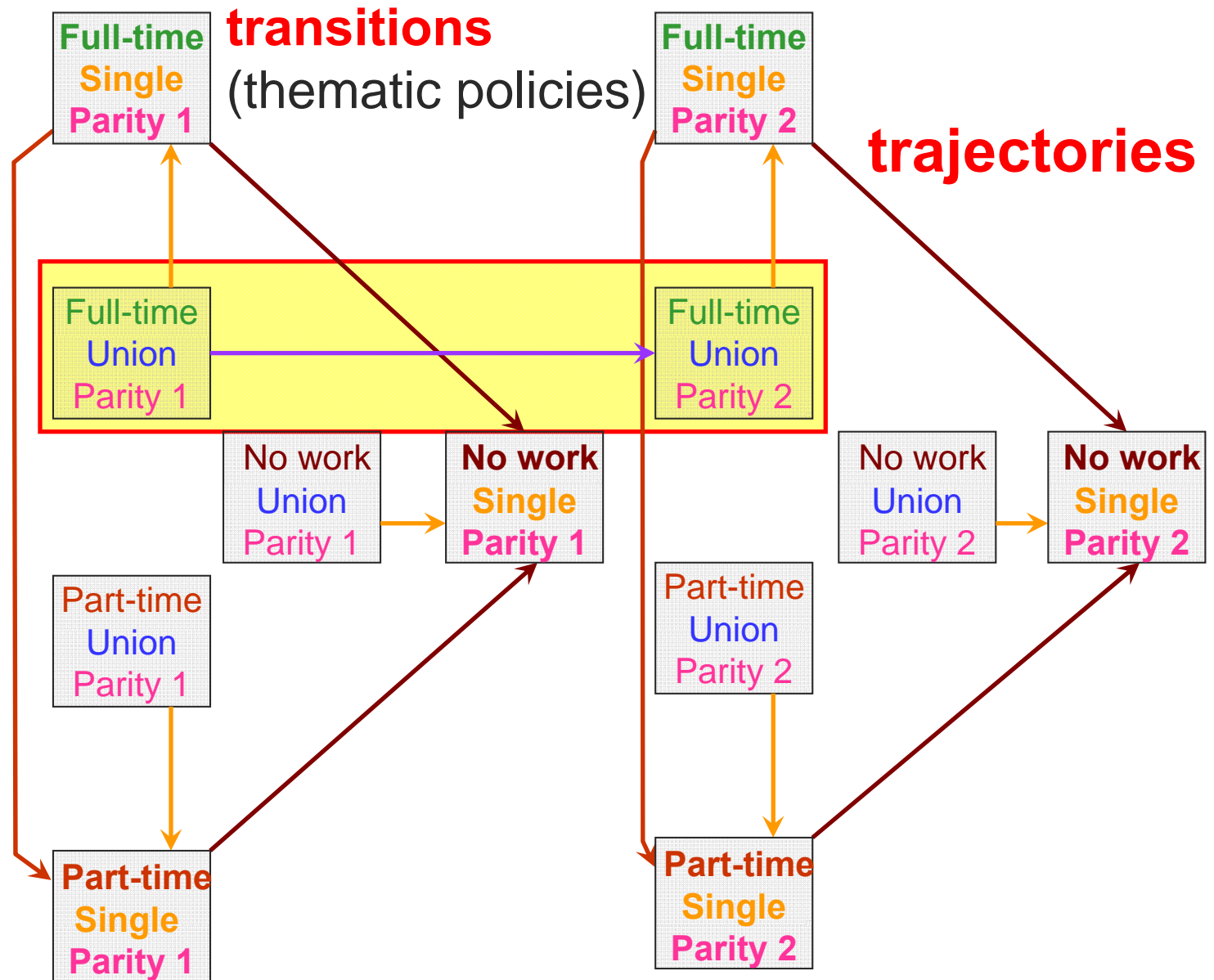
**!!! Assumption:** no simultaneous transition





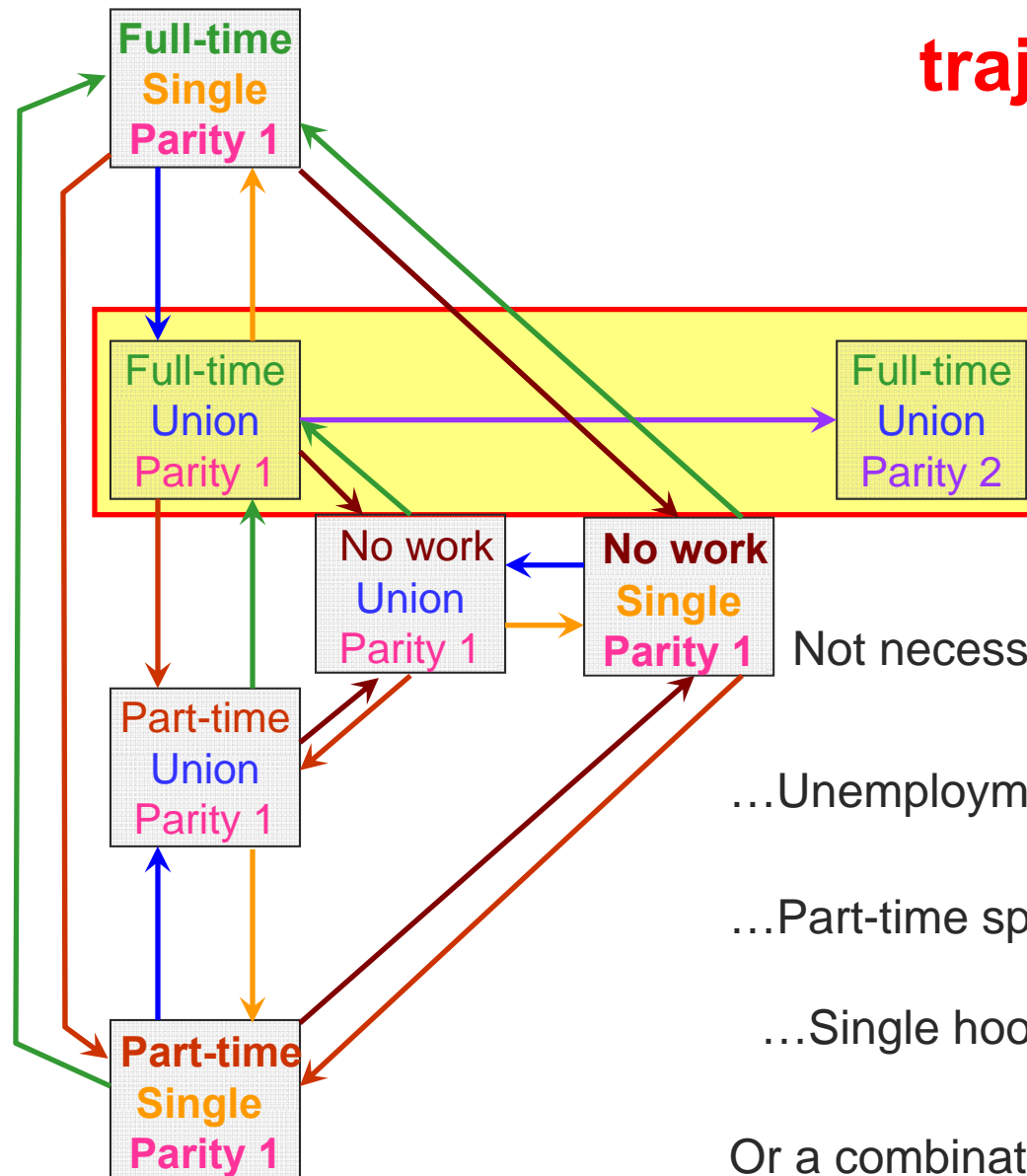
**Frail statuses**  
(risk groups)

# Lifespan (1)



# Lifespan (2)

## trajectories



Not necessary the straight line

...Unemployment spell

...Part-time spell

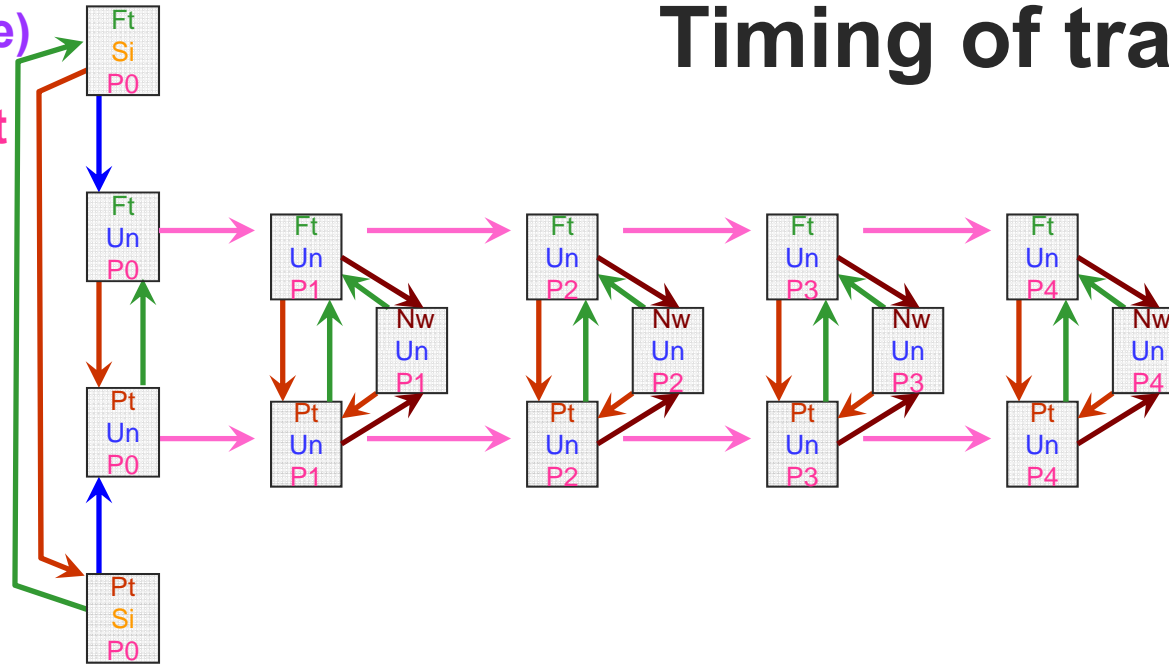
...Single hood spell

Or a combination of them

# Timing of transition

Employment rate (fe)  
 Total Fertility Rate  
 Mother employment  
 Ever married  
 Single parent

1  
 9  
 7  
 5  
 ~30%  
 2.25  
 24%  
 98%  
 6.3%



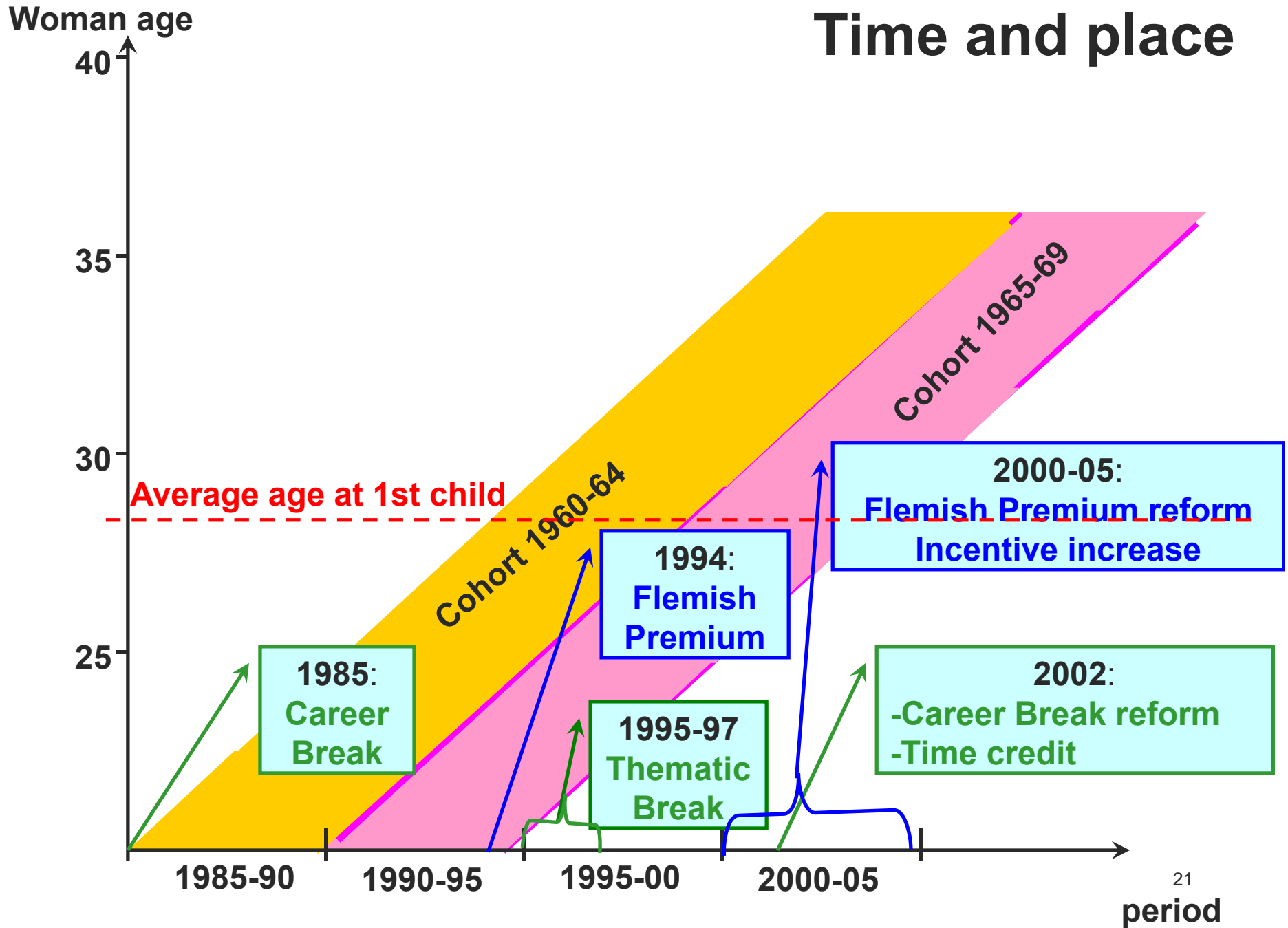
2  
 0  
 0  
 5  
 69%  
 1.7  
 67.5%  
 46%  
 12%

Woman age

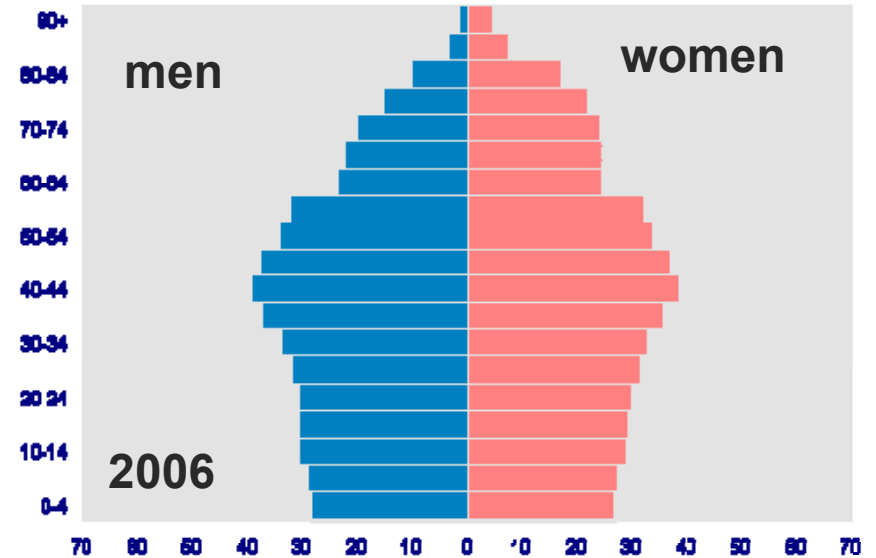
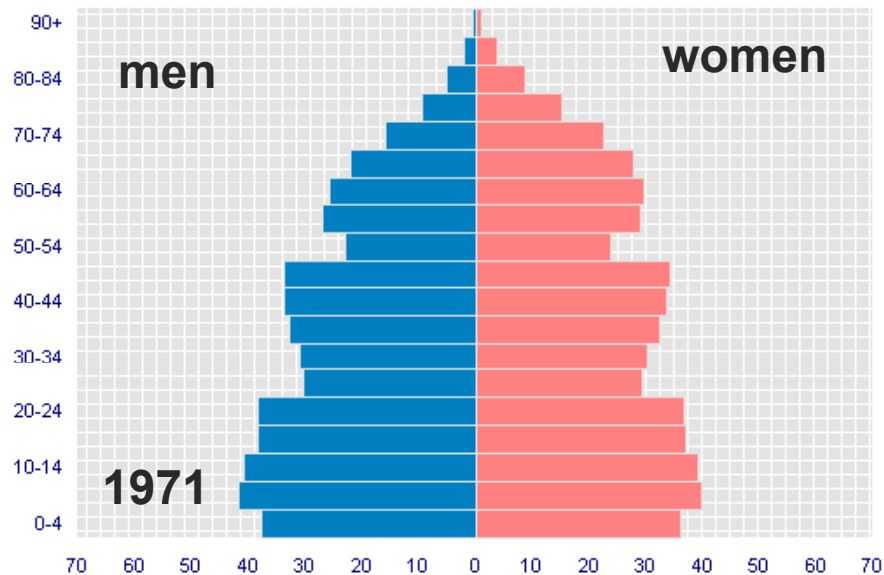


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# Time and place



# Linked Lives



- Availability of grand-parents or other family members
- Elderly care responsibility
- Child care access to services (OECD 2004)
  - <3 yrs old: 38.5%; 3-5 years old:99.5%
- Dual income/ mono-parental family: cumul

# III. Leave policies & Lifecourse

## New views

- **Gender differences**
  - Women use leave more often
  - + long term consequence on career, lifetime income (pension)
- **Specific cases are not accounted for**
  - e.g. multiple births, disabled child, etc.
  - + trajectories, importance of additional resources
- **Fixed allocation**

# III. Lifecourse & Leave policies

## New approach to social policies

- Objectives
  - Specific situations: *Event, sequence*
- Conception & evaluation
  - Action field(s): *Multi-dimensional*
  - Target groups *Trajectory*
  - Accounting for the time: *Timing and duration, cumulative (dis)advantages*



[ Thank you for your attention ]

*Questions?*

*Comments?*



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