



***Retirement Timing and Social Stratification:
A Comparative Study of
Labor Market Exit and Age Norms
in Western Europe***

Jonas RADL

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Abstract

The goal of this dissertation is to enhance our understanding of the micro and macro level determinants of retirement timing in contemporary Western Europe. This objective is pursued by means of a statistical analysis of large-scale comparable survey data. In short, three points of emphasis characterize this study in comparison with previous research on the topic: 1) the focus on social stratification in terms of gender and class differentials; 2) the central attention paid to social norms of aging; and 3) the joint consideration of individual and country level mechanisms in explaining retirement timing.

The review of the previous literature in the second chapter demonstrates that the currently available theoretical approaches by themselves are inappropriate for explaining social variability in retirement timing. Building on the life course paradigm and social class theory, I consequently outline a novel analytical framework for the study of differential retirement behavior. It can be characterized as a choice-within-constraints approach (chapter 3), which essentially focuses on differences between older workers in age norms and late-career opportunity structures, paying special attention on class and gender disparities.

In the fourth chapter, I gather empirical evidence on international and individual differences in retirement age norms in Western Europe on the basis of data from the European Social Survey (ESS). Subsequently, I turn to examining actual retirement behavior in the fifth chapter. Using data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) a series of event-history models is used to scrutinize the determining factors of retirement timing at the country and individual level variation. In chapters 6 and 7, two case studies on Germany and Spain examine the impact of pension legislation on social stratification in retirement in a detailed manner. The two country studies are based on ad-hoc module on the transition from work into retirement, which has been implemented in the respective national labor force surveys (Encuesta de la Población Activa (EPA) and Mikrozensus) of 2006.



Jury: Martin Kohli (EUI) (Supervisor), Fabrizio Bernardi, (EUI) (Co-Supervisor), Hans-Peter Blossfeld (Otto Friedrich University, Bamberg), Bernhard Ebbinghaus, (University of Mannheim)

Bio

Jonas Radl obtained his degree in Sociology from the Free University of Berlin (2006), where he has also been employed as a teaching assistant. He has worked as a research assistant at the *Research Data Centre of the German Statutory Pension Insurance (FDZ-RV)* before embarking on his doctoral studies at the European University Institute in 2006.

During his PhD he was a visiting scholar with the *Center for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences (CEACS)* and the *Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)* in Madrid. He has also been a Junior Visiting Fellow at the *Center for Research on Inequalities and the Life Course (CIQLE)* of Yale University, New Haven.

While he has published extensively on retirement, his research interests also include social stratification and inequality, social norms, and intergenerational transfers. Jonas Radl will continue his research at the *Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED)* in Madrid.