

LoCI seminar 2026-27

<https://zoom.us/j/4070797966?pwd=VW81K252d1BEWHpZR2FaakxxTVZSdz09&omn=96824022110>

ID: 407 079 7966 / Password: kGLX86

6-8 PM Paris time

30/09/2026

Alexis Spire, “Inequalities in ordinary relations with the state”

My presentation analyses the experience of public policies through an approach based on ordinary relations with the state - an expression that designates the set of practical experiences and symbolic representations that the governed have in relation to public authority. Ordinary relations with the state depend on relations of gender, class, race, and age, but they can also evolve over individual trajectories and as institutions themselves change. The ability to make state institutions work to one's advantage requires competences that may be acquired either through the possession of educational capital, or through practical experience with officials, offices and procedures. Whether these are chosen relations (to assert a right) or constrained relations (to respond to a check), ordinary relations with the state take the form of power relations that also depend on intermediaries, who may be lay people (associations or trade unions) or legal professionals (lawyers). In the case of chosen relations with the state, the propensity to turn to a particular institution depends on the level of trust placed in it. In the case of constrained relations, the ability to defend oneself depends heavily on knowledge of one's rights, with, again, marked variations according to social position. Finally, each confrontation with a state institution can in turn affect the representations that the governed have of that institution: such an encounter may acquire political significance and take on meaning within a broader interpretive framework, as in the case of certain forms of adverse treatment that members of minorities interpret as instances of discrimination.

Discussant: Sandro Busso

21/10/2026

Vincent Dubois, « From lateral surveillance to horizontal domination: reporting welfare fraud as a product of competition among the lower classes ».

Abstract: This paper aims to shed light on the normalization of denunciation in contemporary France, focusing on the reporting of social welfare fraud. It first demonstrates how the rise in such reports is linked to the expansion of anti-fraud policies, coupled with an unprecedented stigmatization of welfare recipients and the incorporation of reports from citizens into

administrative surveillance systems. In addition to being a result of public policies, the reporting of benefit fraud stems from social relations within the lower classes, marked by resentment and strategies of distinction toward those at the bottom: the “cassos,” single mothers, and foreigners. The analysis thus demonstrates how horizontal relationships among social agents contribute to state domination, not only through their participation in bureaucratic surveillance but also by reproducing the state categories that socially and symbolically rank social groups.

Discussant: Virgilio Perreira

25/11/2026

Mariella Falkenhain: “Impasse or productive friction? Refugees’ welfare state encounters from a life world perspective”

Abstract: Refugees do not just enter a new territory after displacement. They typically experience a profound sense of loss of certainties, status and future. In parallel, they are newcomers in a complex and unfamiliar welfare state, in which accessing services often involves significant hurdles. This paper will bring both processes – stabilization after a life disruption and experiences of refugees as new welfare claimants – and the respective literatures into dialogue. It does so based on own fieldwork with Ukrainian refugees in Germany, and by proposing the concept of *frictions* in welfare state encounters.

Discussant: Merete Monrad

13/01/2027

Hana Bouhired, “Living under surveillance: how welfare recipients experience administrative control”

Abstract : This paper examines how recipients of the French minimum income scheme (RSA) experience administrative surveillance. Drawing on a qualitative study of RSA recipients, it explores how they perceive and assess the risks associated with administrative controls and how these perceptions shape their everyday practices and their relationship with the welfare state. While existing research has primarily focused on control mechanisms themselves, this paper shifts the focus to recipients' lived experiences of administrative control.

Discussant: tba

17/02/2027

**Weaving a Life: Women's Labour Between Institutions and the Household
Hem Borker**

Across four craft clusters - Sualkuchi (Assam), Pochampally (Telangana), Paithani (Maharashtra) and Bijnor (Uttar Pradesh) - women's weaving work is deeply embedded into and barely distinguishable from the rhythm of daily life, folded into domestic labour, caregiving and, in some sites, migration. Yet the organisation of this labour varies considerably across different modes of institutional incorporation- from women weaving at Government sponsored centres (Kendras) in Paithan at one end of spectrum to government-supported cooperative at Pochampally, private looms in Assam and almost no institutional presence in Bijnor. This paper asks how women's relationship to public and quasi-public institutions shapes the terms on which this labour is recognised and remunerated.

In Paithani, women weave and train others at a Government Centre, using its stable but low wage to expand private looms at home. In Pochampally, a government-supported cooperative of Padmashali caste weavers supplies raw material and purchases finished cloth. In Sualkuchi, migrant Bodo and Karbi women draw on traditional weaving knowledge outside any institutional structure, negotiating between agrarian families left behind and ten-hour labouring days on private looms. In Bijnor, embroidery passes through a long, anonymous chain of intermediaries, with women's participation untouched by institutional setup. Despite these differences in institutional incorporation, a common set of conditions cuts across the spectrum: precarious work, low and uneven remuneration, limited alternatives, and the persistent invisibility and undervaluation of women's contribution.

Drawing on feminist political economy and social reproduction theory, the paper examines women's paid work as inseparable from the unpaid domestic and care work that sustains it. Institutional support, does not offer a corrective instead often formalises it- for example the cooperative membership in Pochampally still submerges women's earnings into a household wage; the Kendra's stability in Paithani coexists with a ₹5,000 monthly wage that women describe as their only 'gender-appropriate' option. Where institutions are absent, as in Bijnor, the same dynamic operates without even this partial recognition, women's labour becomes doubly invisible, unaccounted for by any institutional body and undercounted within their own households despite sustaining them. In each case, gendered constraints -limited mobility, lack of alternatives, caste histories, agrarian decline - are what channel women into weaving in the first place.

The paper argues that women's labour across these sites cannot be read as wage-work alone: it is piecing together a life, in which earning, caregiving and enduring ("*jeevan kat rahi hai*") are inseparable. Weaving cannot be reduced either to exploitation or empowerment — it provides income, flexibility, skill, relationships, belonging and a sense of purpose, even as it remains embedded in structures of precarity and gendered obligation, an endurance that coexists with an affective and existential register exceeding precarity without redeeming it. This has a direct bearing on how public institutions address women's artisanal and craft work. Schemes designed around flexibility and home-based production - the Paithani Kendra model, cooperative model —remain organised around lower-class women's labour without transforming the gendered terms on which it is extracted. Moreover, the paper also argues that

the policies in this domain must reflect on whether empowering women through flexible, home-compatible craft work need to be evaluated not only by income generated, but by whether they redistribute — or merely formalise — the unpaid costs that flexibility currently offloads onto women themselves.

Discussant: tba

24/03/2027:

Ben Geiger, “Welfare experiences”

<https://welfare-experiences.org/>

Discussant: tba

28/04/2027:

Lasse Schmidt Hansen, “Choosing your provider: How people in vulnerable positions select, contrast, and evaluate public and non-profit welfare services”

Abstract: People in vulnerable positions in society often have the most frequent and intensive contact with the welfare state. Yet welfare services are increasingly delivered through hybrid arrangements or outsourced to non-profit and for-profit providers, whose differing logics and values shape service provision. As a result, users may have markedly different experiences, and their needs may be met to varying degrees depending on the provider. This study examines how people in vulnerable positions select, evaluate, and contrast similar welfare services delivered by different providers, focusing specifically on public and non-profit organizations. Empirically, we study Danish day shelters (in Danish “væresteder”) run by either the municipality or non-profit organizations. The study draws on an ethnographic approach, combining participant observation with in-depth interviews with expectedly + 30 users. Data collection is ongoing, and the seminar will present preliminary findings.

Discussant: Bettina Leibetseder

26/05/2027:

Claire Dupuy and Virginie Van Ingelgom, “Citizens’ lived policies as anchors of politics: Feedback from multiple policy experiences and perceptions in Western Europe”

Citizens in Western European countries encounter a variety of policy experiences over the course of their lives, which support their vote choice and feed back into their political attitudes and behaviours. We argue that public policies are even more consequential: citizens also interpret their lived policies - their everyday multiple policy experiences and perceptions, and rely on these interpretations to make sense of core components of politics, like political actors. We conduct a qualitative secondary analysis of four primary datasets collected in Belgium, France, and the United Kingdom across four periods (1995-2019). We report that participants draw from a large array of lived policies to discuss who political actors are - an estranged group that benefit from better policies, and what they do – failing to represent citizens' needs. The mechanisms of group-building and principle-definition account for how citizens ascribe meaning to political actors based on their lived policies.

Discussant: Vincent Dubois

30/06/2027:

Bettina Leibetseder, Nina Füreder, Public Institutions, Social Inequality, and Political Change: Comparing Working-Age Adults in Wels and Steyr

Over the past decades, Upper Austrian mid-sized towns have undergone substantial socio-economic and demographic change. Although both Wels and Steyr remain strongly shaped by automotive, engineering, and manufacturing industries, they differ in migration patterns, population ageing, and political orientations. Wels has become a larger and more diverse service and logistics centre, while Steyr retains a stronger industrial working-class tradition.

This comparative study examines how working-age adults with low incomes and/or low levels of formal education interact with public institutions in both cities. It explores how personal experiences with institutions shape their strategies and chances, and how institutional responses to challenges such as education, housing, health, and unemployment affect their living conditions, opportunities, and social and political attitudes.

By comparing two towns with a shared industrial legacy but different trajectories, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of institutional experiences, social inequality, and political change in times of economic restructuring and persistent fiscal constraints. Within this seminar, we will present preliminary results from our first wave of interviews in both towns.

Discussant: Vincent Dubois