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“ENDINGS INTO BEGINNINGS”: LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT AND NARRATIVE REOPENING IN DEALING WITH RETIREMENT

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Retirement is often considered as the end of a professional life and the transition to a new phase of life. It can bring to a more peaceful life, trigger to vulnerability, or can be characterized by new engagements. Given the changes that entails, why should it also not be an occasion for learning and development in itself? We approach this issue from a first-person perspective, through a persons' diary writing. We rely on a longitudinal case study, part of a project on vulnerability in the life-course supported by LIVES (Swiss Center of Expertise in Life Course Research). Our diary project focuses on 3 on-line diaries written during a 20-year period. Here, we analyze the diary of a man anticipating, experiencing, and reflecting upon his professional retirement. We thus examine the process of sense-making by which the diarist interprets his experience of retirement and ageing. The results show a narrative of hope and openness to the new opportunities for learning and development fostered by the retirement situation. This is not exempt from a narrative of struggle and suffering, associated with very difficult personal moments, including a serious period of depression and anxiety. We conclude that this retired person is very far from being that “retired from the world” man who “passes time” until he dies. We discuss the implication of this study.

THE DISCOURSES OF AGEING AND LEARNING SHARED AMONG OLDER PEOPLE IN SERBIA

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The aim of this study is to describe the discourses of ageing and learning among a small group of older people from Serbia. Representations of ageing as, degeneration, and decrepitude have been questioned and deconstructed and at the same time, the idea of successful ageing has emerged since the end of the 20th century. Serbia is considered to be one of the six oldest countries in Europe while retirement leads to a sustention decrease of the personal economic status. Semi-structured interviews were led with six people older than 60. Two broader themes were part of the interview: 1. participants' reflection and elaboration about the usual ways of talking about this period of life and 2. discourses of learning during old age. Thematic analyses revealed that five perceptions of ageing could be defined. These discourses were labelled as: (1) “it is finally the time for enjoying”; (2) “idle hands are the devil's workshop”; (3) “refusal to accept the physical changes”; (4) “it is the time for a quiet and calm life”; and (5) “it is socially isolated life”. Participants expressed their disagreement with the dominant rep-