

Comparing the politics and policies for better economic and social welfare: reflections from a social epidemiologist

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Why are inequalities in health so resistant to policy efforts?

- Role of politics, and political discourse - Julia Lynch
- Role of social epidemiology? Type of evidence in fact facilitates this political framing:

With a focus on individual risk factors, health inequalities are reduced to individual characteristics (e.g. occupational level), whereas they are in fact the outcome of collective processes, such as social stratification



In need of another type of evidence (1)

A better understanding of these collective, dynamic processes is imperative to better support policy measures that have the potential to reduce health inequalities



In need of another type of evidence (2)

- These collective processes include economic inequality, welfare regimes etc. (Julia)
- Looking beyond structures: how structures impact on people - two examples from our group
 - reinforcing effect of social norms on health inequalities
 - impact of political discourse on people's wellbeing



Social norms as an emergent property

- Social norms regarding overweight influenced by the actual prevalence of overweight which then impact on the individual behaviour, which then... (feedback loop)
- Example of computational model indicates that these norms withhold individuals from losing weight

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Social norms and obesity prevalence: From cohort to system dynamics models

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Summary

Group-level obesity can be seen as an emergent property of a complex system, con-



Impact of discourse on people's wellbeing

The inability of people to live up to the social norm (neo liberal) of activation and responsabilisation is framed as an individual failure, with a negative impact on health.



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Individualisation in public health: reflections from life narratives in a disadvantaged neighbourhood

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