Life-oriented approach for urban policy decision-making: Surveys and applications

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In this study, we propose an additional approach, called life-oriented approach, for supporting urban policy decisions. The life-oriented approach argues that people’s decisions on various life choices are not independent of each other and that an understanding of life choices should not be constrained by the boundary of any single discipline. People’s life choices are closely linked with the quality of life (QOL), which can be roughly captured from the perspective of life domains such as residence, neighborhood, health, education and learning, job, family life, family budget, leisure and recreation, and relevant travel behavior. For example, residential and travel behavior has been widely studied in the urban and literature. In the life-oriented approach, it is argued that residential and travel behavior results from decisions on other life choices and it also influence the other life choices. In other words, the life-oriented approach emphasizes two-way relationships between residential and travel behavior and other life choices and this argument is also applicable to the other life choices. For putting this approach into practice, it should be clarified how to capture and represent such two-way relationships between life choices, especially linked with the evaluation of effects of urban policy on the QOL. In line with such considerations, the purpose of this study is to investigate how different life choices are interrelated and how life choices influence the QOL. For this purpose, we implemented two life choice surveys in Japan: a two-wave panel survey in 2010 and 2014, and a life history survey in 2010, with respect to about 1000 households, respectively. The panel survey includes more than 100 behavioral items related to residence, family budgets, health, neighborhood, education and learning, job, family life, leisure and recreation, and travel behavior. In the life history survey, four types of biographies (residence, household structure, employment and education, and car ownership) are investigated, where biography is defined as a series of mobilities in each life domain over the life course, while mobility indicates a change occurring in each domain. Analyses based on an exhaustive CHAID approach revealed complicated inter-domain and intra-domain interdependences over different time scales, where not only state dependence but also future expectation are clarified to be influential to life choices. These findings suggest the necessity of developing life choice models with flexible structures that capture the influences of state dependence and future expectations within and across domains as well as other behavioral interdependences over different time scales in a unified framework.

Keywords: life-oriented approach, QOL, life choices, behavioral interdependence, state dependence, future expectation, urban policy