





- ▶ **Design** process:
  - ▶ What do people remember easily?
  - ▶ What should we rather not waste time asking?
- ▶ Exploit results from **cognitive** research:
  - ▶ The rare life events are easy, such as children and partners
  - ▶ Job and accommodation can become more difficult
  - ▶ Health and health care usage is nearly impossible
- ▶ Certain design elements help the **memory**:
  - ▶ The order of questions
  - ▶ Life grid representation allowing comparisons across different life domains, thus detecting errors becomes easier
  - ▶ Anchoring by using “landmark events”
- ▶ These features for **electronic implementation**



- ▶ SHARELIFE allows linking individual decisions to **institutional background** variables
- ▶ The SPLASH project collects data on **institutional context** to ease **cross-country evaluation of welfare state policies**



# Conclusions

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- ▶ Life histories have been **very powerful** for SHARE: number of users, number and quality scientific papers
- ▶ Power comes from **interaction: cross-country x time** (secular welfare state changes)
- ▶ **Data quality** much better than expected
- ▶ Not just another module: **takes about 1 hour**
- ▶ Efficient recall if **domains are done in parallel** (mental anchors)
- ▶ **Childhood and parental background** variables most powerful