In recent years, fertility rates have declined in most middle–high income countries, and explanations have tended to focus on the rise of economic uncertainty. Under uncertain conditions, shared narratives of the future - i.e. socially constructed imagined futures- play a potent role in directing individuals’ decision–making about childbearing.

To assess this role, a controlled laboratory experiment in two contrasting settings was conducted: Florence (Italy, N = 814) and Oslo (Norway, N = 876). Individuals were randomly exposed to a specific positive or negative future economic scenario (treatments) and compared with individuals who were not exposed to any scenario (control group). Then, each respondent was asked whether he/she intended to have a child in the next three years.

The seminar will present the main results of the experiments and the effect of the shared narratives of the future on fertility intentions.