

FAMILY PLATFORM



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www.familyplatform.eu
info@familyplatform.eu

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EDITORIAL

This edition of the *FAMILYPLATFORM Journal* is dedicated to a theme that is of great importance not just for families but for contemporary societies as a whole: intergenerational solidarity. Paradoxically, it seems, the growing tendency towards individualisation has been accompanied in more recent times by the rediscovery of forms of solidarity, at times quite unprecedented, within the family. Today, the various generations that make up the family - ever more frequently, as a consequence of demographic changes, consisting of as many as four generations - seem to be engaged not so much in conflict as in a continuous contest to offer solidarity.

The traditional conflict between older and younger generations, characteristic of western societies in the twentieth-century, exploded, as is well-known, with particular virulence in the sixties and seventies, the years of the youth and political movements. Starting from the nineties, thanks in large part to the spread of ever less authoritarian family relations (as Claudine Attias-Donfut underlines in this volume of the journal), forms of comprehension, help and reciprocal support between the various components of the family have been rediscovered as a major resource in the resolution of problems confronting the various generations in social life.

Simultaneously, the turn of the new century has seen the emergence and spread of new expectations about family solidarity. These involve in an analogous way both the young and the less young. The young, for example, confronted by 'precarity' and instability in the labour market, expect to receive economic and relational support from their family; young adults help in the exercise of their new parental responsibilities; and the elderly support in confronting the material, health and psychological difficulties that advancing age brings with it. And in fact - this needs to be underlined - all these expectations come to bear on the generation of adults, that of the ex-baby boomers. Today's fifty/sixty-year-olds thus find themselves at the centre of converging expectations. Not by chance the French scholar Claude Martin has recently defined this generation as the 'pivot generation': a generation destined to carry on its shoulders multiple generational pressures, often difficult to reconcile.

It is in fact the first time in the history of humanity that such a large number of generations find themselves living together in the same historical time and on the same social scene. A situation, as is highlighted by the articles contained in this edition of the journal, capable of generating a scenario that was unthinkable up to a few decades ago – a scenario full of positive features but also, inevitably, of contradictions and ambivalences. Indeed, this latter characteristic constitutes a central theme of the interview with Ariela Lowenstein.

In this scenario an unprecedentedly central role is played by grandparents. The growth in the period of life in which people are grandfathers and grandmothers in good health and active on the social scene - albeit no longer in the labour market - is in fact continual. This new reality has modified not only the social profile of grandfathers and grandmothers and the representations of them but also the role that they are able to exercise in offering active support to other members of the family: no longer just care-receivers, then, but also care-givers. Consider, for example, as confirmed by European data (taken into consideration here in particular by Francesco Belletti), the caring capabilities that grandparents demonstrate in respect of grandchildren, especially those not yet of school age – a form of help that, in contrast to others, is particularly widespread in southern Europe, where the welfare system is less extensive. Although in this respect too the variable of gender is of crucial importance (grandfathers and grandmothers do not furnish the same amount, or quality, of care time: this theme is confronted in the interview with Carla Facchini and Marita Rampazi), there can nonetheless be no doubt about the positive role that both exercise in the vitalisation of forms of solidarity within the family: both through financial and non-financial help.

In short, it is necessary to reconsider the prevalent notion that the elder generations are the exclusive recipients of help provided by the younger generations. It is also appropriate to distinguish, as is also underlined in other articles in this edition of the journal, between the elderly and the 'old elderly'. It is above all the care of the latter that has constituted in the last few decades a problem of great strategic importance in the increasingly older societies of Europe. There is no doubt that this situation is exacerbated by the growing instability of the family, together with the impossibility of an increasingly large number of adult women, on account of their involvement in the labour market, to furnish unpaid labour within the family. Nevertheless, it would be an error not to draw attention to the other side of the coin: the 'young'

grandparents that distinguish themselves for their capacity to play an irreplaceable role in the practice of forms of family solidarity.

It is important to remember, however, in relation to the question of family solidarity, that support and reciprocal help that continue to originate from the family is not and cannot be considered to be a substitute for public support (as Attias-Donfut rightly underlines). In fact, whatever the form and degree of support of public policies, and whatever their actual capacity to respond to needs, the practices of solidarity within the family tend to combine with public services as opposed to replace them. The variety of their forms and their expressions, then, can be explained at least in part by departing from the differences in welfare policies in national and regional terms. Account must always be taken, albeit in terms of the variety of situations in question (for example, in respect of so-called 'large families': in this regard see the thoughts of Raul Sanchez), of the indisputable strategic importance assumed by solidarity between the generations in guaranteeing the wellbeing of the family.

At the end of the day, public and private can come together constructively to confront problems - and overcome the social obstacles and uncertainties characteristic of our times - that fall on the shoulders of families. Nonetheless, a certain number of more general goals - for example, promoting dialogue and awareness between generations and actively involving the elder generations in resolution of the problems that relate to them - remain the specific responsibility of the public sector (as is documented here in the article by Lorenza Rebuzzini, who illustrates the outcomes of initiatives in this direction undertaken by Turin and Manchester municipal councils).

In conclusion, the various points of view expressed by scholars and exponents of the world of family associations in this volume of the journal confirm our direct experience: today, solidarity between generations within the family appears more lively and vital than ever - and also more and more lively, we might add, the more the future becomes gloomy. At the same time, taken as a whole, these testimonies induce us to reflect on an important strategic feature of this reality, i.e. the increasing degree of the exquisitely social nature of this help and solidarity. These forms of help and solidarity thus turn out to constitute outcomes of specific historical circumstances, which have generated requirements and needs of an unprecedented nature in terms of support between the generations.

Carmen Leccardi & Miriam Perego

Editors of FAMILYPLATFORM Journal Volume II

Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Milan-Bicocca



Carmen Leccardi

Carmen Leccardi is professor of Cultural Sociology at the University of Milan-Bicocca, where she has been appointed by the Rector as scientific coordinator for gender issues. She has researched extensively in the field of youth cultures, cultural change, gender and time. Co-editor (1999-2009) of the Sage journal *Time & Society*, and now consulting editor, she was Vice-President for Europe of the International Sociological Association, Research Committee 'Sociology of Youth' (2006-2010). Her recent books include *Sociologie del tempo (Sociologies of Time)*, Laterza, 2009; *A New Youth? Young People, Generations and Family Life* (edited, with Elisabetta Ruspini), Ashgate, 2006; *Sociologia della vita quotidiana (Sociology of Everyday Life)* (with Paolo Jedlowski), il Mulino, 2003. Email: carmen.leccardi@unimib.it



Miriam Perego

Miriam Perego, PhD in Sociology and Methodology for Social Research at the University of Milan-Bicocca, carries out research in the field of gender, social change and youth cultures. Within FAMILYPLATFORM, she is working as a Research Assistant on the changing processes in family life in Europe. Email: m.perego2@campus.unimib.it

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HOW SOCIAL CHANGE IS TRANSFORMING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS

An Interview with Claudine Attias-Donfut

Caisse nationale d'Assurance vieillesse

⌘ What has brought about the biggest recent changes in intergenerational solidarities?

Intergenerational solidarities have always existed, but they have become more prevalent in recent decades due to three main conditions:

- demographic changes related to lengthening life expectancy;
- changing values and attitudes that have profoundly affected the family;
- last but not least, the development of social protection systems embodied by the welfare state: because intergenerational solidarities complement and are even conditioned by public solidarities.

A. Demographic changes

Lengthening life expectancy impacts on all stages of life: youth is extended and old age is deferred in the sense that people are living longer in better health. People are also grandparents for longer – in some cases up to half their lifetimes.

This rise in life expectancy is producing so-called “vertical” multi-generational families (three, four, or even five,) with very few members in each generation. This differs from families in traditional societies, which are more “horizontal” in the sense that they have more children but fewer generations coexisting. Many families now have more grandparents and great-grandparents than grandchildren. This is a significant reversal of family age structures.

B. Changing family relations

Increasing gender equality and a declining patriarchal system have also produced profound changes in intra-familial relations. Education has become less authoritarian; the generations have grown more self-reliant, starting with the oldest which has seen its standard of living improve and is increasingly co-residing less with other generations. Parent-children 'co-residentiality' has also increased, as young people are spending longer in education and finding it harder to integrate into the labour market.

These changes have produced a diversification of family models: the middle-class family model (two parents with two children) still exists, but is only one of others like blended families, lone parent families, and so on. These models have brought about a new kind of family mindset that seeks to balance interdependence between family members with personal autonomy: the "freedom in togetherness" described by sociologist François de Singly.

Clearly, these changing family relationships are also affecting the bonds connecting the generations, but another factor has been more crucial still in that: the development of social protection.

C. The development of social protection

The development of social protection has particularly benefited young people and pensioners. Financial support has enabled young people to continue their education, but not without changing their status: children and adolescents are viewed more as adults in the making than as the producers as they still were in the mid twentieth-century. This support has also encouraged parents to focus on their children's education and strengthen intergenerational solidarities by supporting them in education.

Universal entitlement to - and higher - pensions has given more financial autonomy to the adult generations and reversed the direction of solidarity flows. Many currently elderly people started work at a very young age (in the fields or mines), handing over their entire pay-packet to the family. Solidarity flowed from the children to the oldest family members. This has now reversed, as the development of social protection has given the older age groups financial independence so

that they are no longer financially dependent on their own adult children.

⌘ **What are the particular forms of non-monetary intergenerational solidarity today?**

There are at present several kinds of non-monetary support between generations:

- personal care for elderly people and children, people with disabilities, or adults who have care needs at some point in their lives;
- co-residentiality with one's parents, children or grandchildren;
- grandparental childcare for grandchildren.

In addition, there are other forms of practical help:

- 'odd jobs' about the home, gardening, transport, domestic chores;
- administrative help (form filling, tax returns, health and social security, etc.).

Who gives to whom? Who receives from whom? These questions were answered by the findings of one of the first surveys done on intergenerational solidarities – a tri-generational study on a sample of nearly 5,000 people representing 2,000 three- (sometimes four-) generation families living across France but not necessarily in the same household. The representatives of each generation were asked what they had given to and received from the other two in the previous five years.

Unsurprisingly, the higher-educated, higher income groups were givers. However, the low- and middle-income givers gave more than the high-income groups proportionate to income: in other words, the lower earners did more.

Where does the giving go? Mainly to the children as support while in education, unemployed, unmarried or at risk of social exclusion. In these cases, the giving partakes of an investment in human capital. However, more is given to girls than boys, simply because girls tend to stay in education longer.

Who gives most? Chiefly, the pivotal generation, the family founders, but also the childless (through giving to their nephews, nieces or collateral relations, etc.). The truth of the old adage *a father gives more to ten children than ten children to their father* was also borne out by the findings.

The rate of giving decreases with ageing, but not in retirement: the amount of giving is the same before and after retirement, and even increases. Giving declines throughout old age, but never stops entirely. It decreases with the move into advanced age. Giving decreases for children but not for grandchildren (who are, by then, in higher education).

The survey¹ distinguishes between cash gifts and services:

- Cash gifts: the oldest generations were found to give most money to the so-called pivotal generation and the grandchildren; those in the pivotal generation give to their children, but little to their own parents; very few young people give to their parents (none give to their grandparents). In other words, financial solidarities flow downwards between the generations. This may seem self-evident because that is the experience of most of us, but historically it is a new phenomenon: before universal social protection came in, and even before it was improved, solidarity flowed upwards (children started working young to help their parents).
- Services (care, childcare, etc.): these are more evenly distributed between the pivotal generation (which provides help to dependent parents) and grandparents who provide occasional childcare.
- State help goes more towards the older (through old age benefits and pensions) and younger (through study grants) generations than to the pivotal generations (who have a greater income tax burden).

The methodology used to evaluate services in percentage terms was that the nearly 5,000 respondents interviewed - 1958 from the pivotal generation (aged 49-53), one of their parents (1217, average age 77) and one of their adult children (1493, average age 27) - were asked to

¹ The research is that mentioned above, i.e., tri-generational research on a sample of nearly 5,000 people representing 2,000 three and four generation families living across France but not necessarily in the same household.

specify the frequency and time represented by each service provided (help with housework, loan of a car, care, help with homework, shopping, etc.). The results were then valued in cash terms. This showed that the family contribution (more often made by women than men) is a significant effort that justifies being described as a "domestic economy". These findings also highlighted the special role of the pivotal generation (a concept which has since compelled recognition) represented by the fifty-somethings.

One of the kinds of help provided deserves fresh attention: grandparental childcare. It has always been there, but it is now taking a new form. In the research, the sample groups were asked to specify what help they received from their parents. The finding is that young people today are receiving more help than the two earlier generations. Today's grandparents are spending more time with their grandchildren.

This might seem illogical given the increase in collective support through the expansion of nursery schools and day nurseries. The explanation for it lies in the increased needs of young working couples. Not only are women working, they are also engaging more with their careers. And young couples also want more "me time", and so often draft in both sets of grandparents. Meanwhile, grandparents have fewer grandchildren. But it is less common today for grandparents to have direct charge of bringing up their grandchildren – mainstream psychological opinion goes against it, stressing the importance of parents raising their children themselves. In contrast, grandparents are more readily enlisted for occasional help to look after a sick child, for example, or to supplement public childcare provision. This increased involvement by grandparents can also be put down to the higher rate of marital breakdowns. Grandparents are the first-line bulwark to cushion the effects of family crisis whose help is more readily enlisted in the event of divorce. In fact, the first US surveys on the role of grandparents were prompted by the grandparental role in relationship breakdowns.

Contrary to popular belief about family decline, family solidarities are ultimately more enduring today than ever before and more reliant on the grandparent generation. At the end of the day, what impact does grandparental support have? A study carried out by economists is informative: it seems to help young mothers get into and stay in the labour market. Their availability also influences the decision to make a career. Added to this is their contribution to child-raising and giving

roots in a family tree. Through transmission, they act as "resident historians" to quote one interviewee.

⌘ **How does France compare to other European countries in terms of intergenerational solidarities?**

A European comparative study done in 2004 and repeated in 2006² - SHARE (the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe) - shows commonalities and distinctive features.

The common trends included:

- enduring intergenerational solidarities, whatever the level of self-absorption and type of social protection;
- the pivotal generation plays a central role in every country (flows to the younger generations for monetary support, more generalised flows for time-based help);
- financial transfers flowed downwards through the generations in all welfare systems, while social support tended to flow upwards (with the exception of grandparental help).

But there are several differences, too:

- Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands have a higher proportion of people involved in exchanges of practical support and care, but these are inter-household, occasional flows. The mutual assistance network is largely composed of family members, but also of a substantial minority of non-relatives.
- In Spain, Italy and Greece, by contrast, exchanges are exclusively focused on family members, especially within the household. They are regular, intensive and only between a handful of people.

The other countries - France, Germany, Austria and Switzerland - fall between these two groups, combining elements of tight local networks and more widely dispersed networks.

² The same surveys were carried out simultaneously in a dozen European countries plus Israel in 2004 and 2006 on the same individuals (longitudinal surveys) supervised by Axel Borsch-Supan (Mannheim Institute of Economics of Ageing, Germany) under the aegis of the European Commission. See <http://www.share-project.org/>.

⌘ **What is the relationship between public support and intergenerational solidarity?**

Contrary to another popular belief, the frequency of help is not greatest in the more family-centric, co-residential southern Europe, but rather in the northern countries, which also have the most extensive social solidarity networks that include both family and friends. But northern Europe is also where we find the most public support for children, the disabled and the elderly. So family support networks complement this, and this enables a larger number of people to be reached.

This European comparison between public and private solidarities is borne out by SHARE. It highlights the fact that those who were receiving public support in 2004 but not in 2006 did not benefit from increased family solidarity. Conversely, those who did not receive public support in 2004 but did in 2006, suffered no loss of family solidarity. In other words, an increase in public support is not a disincentive to family help. This is clear to see when tracking the same families over time: where public support decreases, the family does not necessarily step in; the two forms of support complement and play into one another. It might even be said that the reason why the family has been able to maintain its role is because the development of social protection has brought order to the relations between generations precisely by giving the family the resources needed to provide support to one or other of its members. Most of the surveys show this. Some have implied a substitution effect between private and public help. But what we are actually seeing is a change in the nature of the help provided through intergenerational solidarity, such as where home help is brought in to do the work previously done by a family member - that family members will continue to help but in other ways (keeping company, shopping, etc.). Likewise, study grants enable the family to do more to support young people in education. In this way, public support gives leverage.

A family does not live in a self-contained world, but in an environment on which it depends for its inputs. Without those environmental inputs, it may collapse. In a crisis, the family pulls together to help its members in difficulty, but if the crisis endures, and no public support is forthcoming, the family will eventually become depleted.

⌘ **What is the link between intergenerational solidarities and inequalities?**

Where inequalities are concerned, the effects pull in opposite directions depending on which transfers we are looking at. There is no doubt that transmissions of assets are a factor - or even a perpetuating factor - in widening inequalities. In France, half of all inheritances include the transmission of a house which is often kept, or a gift which is used to buy a house. In both cases, the transmission further widens equality gaps.

Various studies bear out that in comparable social circumstances, two young couples will have different life courses depending on whether or not they have benefited from a transmission of assets: those who have been gifted money get onto the housing ladder earlier with a smaller mortgage. And home ownership has knock-on effects throughout the rest of life.

In-life transfers, however, have the reverse effect: they benefit those most in need, where there are several children. This is because amongst siblings, the most successful highest earners tend to help those out who are having difficulties. Those in the most difficult circumstances receive the most from their parents. Similarly, it is elderly parents on the lowest incomes with children who earn more who receive help from their children.

In short, there is a tendency to balance living standards within the family, with the better-off paying for the worst-off. So solidarities operate to reduce intergenerational inequalities.

⌘ **What are the consequences of the current crisis? And what are the future prospects?**

The first challenge is the problem of pension funding: we are already seeing public pensions falling and an increase in private insurance-based systems that only the best-off can afford. The big question mark is how the labour market will develop. A return to full employment would largely resolve the problem. But demographic trends - against the background of an ageing population - raise the spectre of shrinking resources to meet growing needs.

The second challenge is changing attitudes, where the trend is towards greater individualisation, especially among young people. This trend is reflected in a lesser willingness to make life sacrifices and beyond that, a belief that the existence of public help and private services enables support to elderly parents to be outsourced. This trend illustrates the process of "denaturalisation" of help identified by Guberman & Lavoie (2008), in a Quebec study: what was seen as natural (i.e., taking care of others, for the older generations) no longer is. It is felt to be the community's responsibility to organise itself to provide help to those in need.

There is therefore a risk of a return to large pockets of poverty among pensioners, wider inequality between families, the risk of a polarisation between the casualties of the crisis who are bereft of family solidarities, and the unscathed who benefit from such solidarities. Pensioners will be less able to help their families and will need even more help from them.

This latter scenario requires social policies to be redefined either:

- by reorienting social protection to target the worst-off (as practiced by 'Anglo-Saxon tradition' countries) and letting the market meet the needs of the rest, in particular through the development of a private insurance system for elderly people with care needs while the state funds coverage for the poorest groups; or
- by pursuing a proactive policy to reduce income disparities: this is the path chosen by Nordic countries where the entire population receives public support in return for reduced income disparities.

What makes social policy reforms even more important is that harm done to the social protection system often cannot be undone.

⌘ **Isn't the idea of intergenerational solidarities just a way of diverting public attention from falling social protection standards?**

It can be. Hence the need to stress how these solidarities and public solidarity play into one another. The family cannot take the place of public help because it is sustained by it. Strong family-centric attitudes as found in southern European countries are not enough to develop

intergenerational solidarities. You still need a system of substantial public help. Families need this public support to continue doing what they do.

⌘ **What can local authorities do to support that interaction?**

Local authorities can help through initiatives promoted by self-help groups and even cultural organisations: by helping to bring people from different generations together, they help build an attachment to society and have a decisive impact on family functioning.

Voluntary organisations act preventively if only by giving young people something to do so that they are not left to their own devices. Unfortunately, active voluntary groups are the first casualties of cuts to subsidies in a recession.

⌘ **You talked about the attachment to society created by private and public solidarities. But surely employment is the main pathway to inclusion?**

Employment is certainly a key issue, especially as the financing of social protection depends on it. But we must not undervalue the role of family solidarities in helping to find a job and even get into work. Families play a key role, both in helping to steer people towards good training courses, or leveraging their social networks to identify job vacancies.

Even someone in work needs intergenerational solidarity to organise their life, look after their children if any, and so on. In short, a job alone is not enough. You need to be in social networks. Support from the family can help to improve the way we live.

⌘ **How do migration and intergenerational solidarity play into one another?**

The literature on the subject presents contrasting pictures of the relationship. One, following the modernisation theory, argues that migration speeds up or itself partakes of the modernisation process: this theory argues that acculturation brings about a more individualised lifestyle, a change in gender relations, a weakening of authority structures and a change in relations with the extended family. These structural changes interact with cultural changes to create sources of conflict between young people, whose adjustment to the host society

culture is more rapid, and their parents who live in a form of biculturalism in which the cultures of the country of origin and the host country mingle without blending.

Contrasting with this picture of conflicted families on the brink of disintegration, the other depicts immigrant families as actually typified by great cohesion, closeness and intergenerational solidarities, more acutely family-centric, responding to a need for protection in an alien or hostile environment.

Although apparently at odds, these two portrayals are not inconsistent: solidarity can exist alongside different cultural orientations, as well as with conflicts, which also embraces the ambivalent relationship which the insights offered by the sociologist Kurt Leuscher tells us characterises all generational relations. There is much to be said here for looking more deeply into the impact of these within-family relationships on the pathways to inclusion or integration of immigrants and successor generations. This would also include exploring their macro-social and intercultural implications, because intergenerational ties in transnational families are powerful vehicles of two-way cross-cultural influences between emigration and immigration societies.

These influences are particularly significant and fast-acting on the vexed issue of women's status. Significantly, more women than men choose to stay and integrate into the host country when it affords them greater freedom and equality than they had in the country of origin. And if they do return for any reason, they can become active agents of change to that effect. In other cases, the influence is exerted through those who have not emigrated but kept up lasting, long-distance ties with those who have.

Just to close off these few brief thoughts on migration, let me say a word about the interest of a read-across approach to the two big demographic trends, ageing and migration, which produce specific phenomena like retirement migration, i.e., return migration by those who want to spend their retirement years elsewhere than where they have lived and worked. Female labour migration is also expanding to meet the growing needs of the elderly services sector, which has far-reaching consequences for the intergenerational family ties of these migrant women. This is a big issue which, although not recent and already researched to some extent, seems destined to loom even larger.

Let me conclude by emphasising that while these few thoughts reflect my roots in French society, they apply to all societies - adjusted to suit the context, obviously - but especially that future research should wherever possible be both international and comparative in approach. The paradigm of intergenerational relations has within it universal aspects that only international comparisons can bring to light. In the meantime, we must continue to explore the matter and go beyond the debates that tend to reduce the whole issue to a generation gap which simplifies a far more complex reality.

Claudine Attias Donfut



Dr Claudine Attias Donfut is a sociologist and the Director of the Ageing Research Department of the CNAV (national social security pension fund) in France. She also works as associate senior researcher at Centre Edgar Morin, EHESS (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales). Her research interests lie in relations and economic transfers between generations, family and the welfare state, sociology of the life course, transition to retirement and ageing, ageing in developing countries, European comparative studies, and the sociology of immigration.

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FAMILY SOLIDARITY AND THE NEW FORMS OF SOCIAL UNCERTAINTY

An interview with Carla Facchini and Marita Rampazi

University of Milan-Bicocca & University of Pavia

⌘ **Professor Facchini, in your view, who are the elderly today? How can they be defined?**

Before answering this question it's necessary to remember that in the course of the last few decades average life expectancy has increased dramatically, rising from about 65 years of age at the beginning of the fifties to about 70 in 1970/1971, to almost 80 in 2010. This means that, in contrast to what was the case in the first half of last century, after reaching 60-65 years of age - the age at which in the statistics the label "elderly" gets applied - the majority of people can expect to live on average another 15 to 20 years. Moreover, it is quite likely that these people will spend over half of this time in physical and economic conditions not unlike those they enjoyed in their mature adulthood. So it is completely misguided to view the elderly as a homogenous block. Even more than is the case with adults, the elderly are characterised by a wide variety of conditions both in terms of their health and self-sufficiency and in terms of their economic resources, family type and degree of social inclusion.

This multiplicity is without doubt related to gender, social conditions, the socio-economic characteristics of the geographical contexts in which their lives unfold and the various forms of welfare available in them. But just as fundamental is the role played by age - in all its dimensions. By this I mean both age understood as a progression along the life course and age conceived in terms of subjects belonging to a particular generation. Marita Rampazi and I use this term in the sense that Mannheim attributes to it³, in that we want to underline that the cohorts

³ I refer here to Karl Mannheim's reflections on the generations (see Mannheim, 1952, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*).

born between the first few decades of last century and the fifties experienced in their youth, or in other words, in the life phase that is most important from the point of view of biographical 'projectuality', historical events that assumed huge symbolic significance for the construction of their identity. These events took the form above all of the war and (especially in Italy and Germany) the transition to democracy for the older generations and of the political movements of the late sixties for the following generations. Moreover, in many European countries, and even more so in those that, like Italy, Spain or Portugal, were invested at a later stage by the processes of modernisation (industrialisation, universal education, secularisation and the loss of the importance of traditional family membership), these 'historical' generations also took the form of fully fledged 'social' generations.

If we consider the "old elderly", or those who today are older than 85, it's necessary to keep in mind that generally in Italy these people did not go to school beyond primary school and began to work at a very young age as unskilled workers in industry, construction or agriculture. These are sectors that were characterised by very physically demanding work and a low level of skill, but which also witnessed the development of increasingly extensive social security provisions. The extreme precarity associated with the war was the thing that marked this generation more than anything else (or, more precisely, that constituted it as a generation in sociological terms). On the other hand, in cultural terms, this generation enjoyed firmly established certainties of another form within a panorama still strongly influenced by pre-modern traditions, especially so far as the structure of the family and the nature of family roles were concerned. The ethic that characterised it was centred, for men and women respectively, on economic production and biological reproduction. In the course of their lives these people also came to know, or better still, they succeeded in conquering 'new' certainties, thanks to the development in the post-war period of systems of civil and social security. These new certainties were thus added to the already existing ones, thereby contributing to the construction of a cultural model in which collective 'progress' was closely intertwined with individual advancement – obviously on the condition that the beneficiaries respected the restrictions imposed by their given work and family roles.

Let's now turn to the following generation, the generation of people that were born between the mid-thirties and the war years. These subjects

enjoyed at least a basic education and rarely started working before the age of fourteen. Generally, they worked in industry or the tertiary sector and though they did jobs that were often physically demanding and of a limited skill level, they identified to a significant extent with their work – an identification which was underpinned by regular wage or salary increases and improvements in conditions and also by some form of career progress. In its youth this generation experienced a world that was undergoing huge transformations from a strictly political point of view (the end of the war and in some countries the return to a democratic system) and from a socio-economic one. It's enough to think of the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation or the migratory flows between and within European countries that took place in the fifties and sixties. But what it is particularly important to underline here is that that these processes went hand-in-hand with the extension of socio-economic rights. So, if we wanted to make use of the two-fold term certainties/precarity, we could say that these processes went hand-in-hand with an expansion in the sphere of 'certainties', especially in regard to protection against the risks of sickness and invalidity that had affected previous generations. As is well known, from the sixties onwards in European countries at various speeds, systems of universal welfare were instituted.

Finally, let's consider the generation of today's 60-65 year olds. These subjects not only enjoyed a basic education but in many cases also had the opportunity to undertake high school and university studies: in Italy only 5.2% of people in this age bracket do not have any school certificate whatsoever, as against 40.3% of the older generations; and 20% have at least a middle school certificate, as against 5% of the older generations. So far as their occupational status is concerned, most of these people worked in industry or the tertiary sector, as blue- or white-collar workers, but generally with some professional qualifications and with a high degree of job stability. Generally speaking, the people who were in their twenties in the period between the sixties and the seventies belong to a generation that in its youth and its mature adulthood lived through a historical phase in which the problematic features of the 'change of epoch' taking place in the post-war years also came to the surface. Alongside the consolidation of the certainties in social and work environments emerged an increase in 'uncertainties' in the private sphere both regarding the fate of one's marital relationship and the social and family condition of one's children. As a matter of fact, today's young people are increasingly

exposed to growing 'precarisation' both at work and in their personal relations

In this third generation we find people who are currently facing a phase of transition to the third age which can go on for many years. In this sense the label "elderly" is without a doubt too narrow to characterise their condition. Many of these people continue to enjoy a state of health and engage in physical activities very similar to those of a mature adult: we might refer to them as "late-adults". Others, though continuing to enjoy good health, begin to experience a change in their social and family situation that leads to the assumption of roles that are much closer to those traditionally associated with old age: in this case we might adopt the definition "young elderly".

⌘ **In your opinion, how does intergenerational solidarity between grandparents and grandchildren (and between grandparents and children in general) manifest itself and take form within the contemporary family?**

To understand the key features that characterise solidarity between grandparents and grandchildren today it is particularly important to keep in mind that as a consequence of the increase in life expectancy there has been a continuous growth in the number of situations in which the family scene is made up of three if not four generations. In this regard it is enough to note that the latest comparative survey conducted by SHARE (Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe) has revealed that about one third of people over 80 form part of a family that extends over 4 generations. This figure rises to 40 to 50% in the majority of the countries in northern and central Europe but falls to 20 to 30% in Austria, Switzerland and the Mediterranean countries, i.e. in those countries that have been invested by a more rapid process of ageing but that at the same time are characterised by a limited birth rate and a tendency to have children at a later age. Alternatively, one could cite data from ISTAT (Istituto Italiano di Statistica), which shows how in Italy 98.2% of people under the age of 15 have at least one grandparent still alive (indeed, on average they have 3.1), and how 87.2% of those between the ages of 15 and 24 have at least one living grandparent. What this means is that much more than in the past it is highly likely that people install a relationship with their grandparents and that this relationship extends over a considerable time, constituting one of the fundamental component of family relations.

At the same time, the last few decades have seen a marked increase in the employment of adult women or - in other words, married women with children - in Italy over the last 40 years this figure has risen from about 30% to almost 50%. This has led to a remodelling of the requirements and capacities for care-giving within families. It has meant, especially in countries like Italy with limited services for young children, that the elderly in their capacity as grandparents have been increasingly involved in the care of grandchildren. The latest *Multiscopo* survey by ISTAT, conducted in 2007, shows that, of the elderly that have at least one non-cohabiting grandchild, 85.6% take care of their grandchildren at least sometimes and that only 14.4% never take care of them. 24.4% of these grandparents take care of their grandchildren often, 15.7% in emergencies, 9.3% when their grandchildren are sick and 8.9% during the school holidays. What this means is that even when the care of grandchildren is not continuous, the presence of grandparents and the possibility of being able to rely on their support is nonetheless a fundamental factor, in that it makes it possible to make better use of the services that are available, dealing with the gaps that they leave open due to the way they work (limited opening hours, closures during holidays, or unavailability in the case of children's illness).

The support that grandparents provide for their grandchildren and the closeness that derives from it has huge importance for both parties above all in terms of affection, in that it enriches their relationship. This is particularly important if one considers the overall impoverishment in the quality of the social networks in which each of the two is inserted: the children, in that they increasingly tend to live in families in which they do not have any siblings or in which there is only one or in which there is only one parent; and the elderly, in that, when they retire, they often see a reduction not only in their social role but also in their network of friends.

But this support and this relationship are important for another reason: they introduce into the everyday life of the subjects in question two mutually reflecting temporal dimensions – 1) a 'projectual' dimension for the grandparents, and for the grandchildren, 2) a different positioning in the history of the family (and perhaps also in history as a whole).

⌘ **How does this role of grandparents impact on the relationship between elderly parents and adult children? Are there any gender differences in this regard?**

The supporting role that grandparents play in relation to grandchildren tends to reinforce the relationship between the grandparents and their own children as well. For example, the daily care provided to grandchildren has the inevitable effect that everyone sees each other and discusses how the day has gone. Besides that, the parents' support makes it possible for young women to work and thereby pursue their own biographical project. The help of grandparents increasingly assumes the contours of an opportunity offered to young mothers to continue to pursue their project of a professional career.

In Italy, for example, it is no accident that research conducted over the last ten years has revealed a marked tendency for the different generations to live very close to one another. 5.5% of the people who have formed a family of their own live in the same apartment block as their mothers (11.6% within 1 kilometre; 11.2% in the same town/city). The figures in respect of people's fathers are only slightly lower: respectively, 4.8%, 10.5% and 11%. Certainly, the regularity of contact and the support offered and received is facilitated by this physical proximity but it is reasonable to assume that the proximity is actually desired and sought after precisely because these relations between the generations are regarded by both parties as a fundamental building block for the construction of their identity and for their social relations.

We cannot forget, however, that there are significant gender differences at least in terms of the identity of the major caregiver. All the research shows that both the relations between parents and children and the relations between grandparents and grandchildren are more systematic in the case of women. Although the role of grandfathers is becoming increasingly significant, the process of caring continues to revolve around women. One reason for this is the fact that within the family, intergenerational support has been reinforced particularly in terms of care-giving (while support in terms of economic help has tended to become relatively less important), with a consequent expansion in the contribution women make to family solidarity. This process of 'feminisation' constitutes one of the most important characteristics of the change that is currently taking place in the forms of intra-family solidarity. There is another dimension of change in intergenerational relations that is emerging in certain contexts in Europe (above all where

there is a strong tradition of family-based welfare): a reversal in the direction of family solidarity, or, in other words, no longer from young people to elderly people, but vice versa. What is involved, however, is a partial reversal: for late-adults with parents of a very advanced age the traditional logic continues to prevail, which sees them as the principle caregivers of more elderly family members, but once again here too it is women who are involved to a greater extent.

⌘ **Professor Rampazi, in your view do the elderly experience a dimension of social uncertainty? And if so, why?**

The research that Carla Facchini and I have done over the years clearly demonstrates that this dimension does exist, even though it involves a range of different forms in the heterogeneous set of subjects normally labelled as “the elderly”. The interesting thing is that while in the past the predominant dimension for the elderly seemed to be that of insecurity, today, for many of them there are emerging new situations of uncertainty, which have a number of features in common with those experienced by young people.

To clarify the sense of these claims I must first of all explain how “uncertainty” differs from “insecurity” and call to mind what the characteristics of uncertainty are in the experience of young people today. The principle feature of insecurity is fear, while the salient characteristic of uncertainty is doubt. Fear is paralysing, while doubt has an ambivalent effect: it can variously represent a brake on or a stimulus to action.

What does a person who feels insecure fear? Our hypothesis is that he/she is afraid of losing something that he/she possesses, or of not being able to fill in for the lack of “something” that he/she aspires to possess – something to which important characteristics of his/her personal and social identity are tied. When the possible loss, or lack, depends on factors that the subject knows with certainty that he/she cannot control, there comes into being an experience of precarity, whether real or perceived, that can create a sort of paralysis of the will. Insecurity depends in part on the characteristics and the personal histories of the subjects in question and in part on the type of guarantees that different social structures offer against the risks of physical, psychic, relational and economic difficulty.

What does a person in a situation of uncertainty have doubts about? Above all he/she has doubts about his/her capacity to make sense of his/her experience, to make the right life choices, to realistically evaluate the set of opportunities, risks and constraints that are present in the particular social panorama in which he/she finds himself/herself. The less defined and constricting is the 'structuration' of the context in which one lives, the more generalised is the uncertainty: doubt implies the freedom to make choices, the meaning and consequences of which are not automatic, given *a priori*. In a situation of uncertainty one can be overwhelmed by the fear of not having sufficient resources to manage responsibly the liberty one has or that one thinks one has. But one can also be stimulated to exercise capacities of self-reflection, to define autonomously the direction of one's life course. In this sense, uncertainty contains within it both potential elements of insecurity and the possibility of elaborating strategies that enable one to control them.

The cultural panorama of modern industrial society did not leave much space for the experience of uncertainty. The situations that were "not automatic" were viewed as exceptions, not the norm. Usually these coincided with particular key turning points or with the arrival at the thresholds of certain age brackets tied to the transition from one phase of life to the next. In particular, uncertainty was thematised as the principle characteristic of the moratorium conceded to young people in view of the definition of a project for adult life consistent with their abilities and capacities. This type of project implies a choice between life courses whose meaning is clear-cut, whose evolution is foreseeable and whose unfolding is largely irreversible. In the past, the certainties entailed in such paths were guaranteed by a shared cultural panorama and by a structured and intelligible institutional system. Once a young person's doubts about what course was feasible and appropriate were resolved, he/she had no more to do than embark upon that path, knowing for certain that the direction and the stages to pass through were inevitably implicit in the initial choice.

For this reason perhaps, the dimension of uncertainty has traditionally been excluded from the analysis of the condition of adults and the elderly. By contrast, a great deal of attention has been focused on the insecurity of certain categories of people, those subject to the risk of increased precarity in their life conditions. So far as this risk is concerned, the elderly have been and still are viewed as particularly exposed, because the process of ageing brings with it a potential loss of resources, in particular, resources connected with three important

dimensions of identity: the body, economic and social conditions and the sphere of interpersonal relations.

The risk of increased precarity intertwines with that of exclusion, in a logic of *disengagement*, on the basis of which there takes form the idea that old age coincides with a phase of life in which the time of the project is over. Generally, the event that symbolically marks the conclusion of this course is retirement. In the phase that opens up after withdrawal from active professional life there is little to be done other than manage the loss of psychological, physical, and relational capacities associated with ageing. At the most, one can rely on the affection of the family to ward off loneliness and to preserve some form, however indirect, of projection into the future: sharing the hopes of one's children and investing part of the time that remains in following the growth of one's grandchildren. There is no uncertainty in the idea of *disengagement*: becoming old is a natural, ineluctable fact. At most there may persist some element of unpredictability in respect of the greater or lesser rapidity with which after a certain age a person's decline eventuates.

Today some changes are taking place which, as I have said, are introducing new elements of uncertainty into the experience of youth and at the same time are undermining the system of certainties on which the elderly and late-adults have constructed their life courses. The de-institutionalisation taking place in late-modern societies goes hand-in-hand with a progressive individualisation/diversification in biographies. 'Non automatic' life prospects is beginning to become a normal and generalised component of individual experience. On the one hand, there is an increase in the propensity towards insecurity, tied to the economic and institutional crisis that has struck many western countries. On the other, in the cultural imagination is increasingly being given to the idea that when the future is not automatic, it's possible not just for risks to emerge but also *chances* – chances, that is, for a reflective construction of oneself, a process that potentially can develop over the course of one's entire life.

For young people this means having to formulate projects that are open to changes of mind and possible changes of route. In the future there could emerge new opportunities and new constraints, difficult to foresee in the present, which will have to be managed with flexibility and inventiveness. Professional and affective equilibriums are becoming provisional: they have to be continually renegotiated and subjected to

the test of doubt. The search for a sense to one's own life, typical of the phase of the moratorium, is beginning to manifest itself as a permanent challenge, which makes it ever more difficult to understand when the crisis of identity of youth comes to an end and when the transition to adulthood is brought to completion.

For people who are approaching retirement age, or who have already reached it, the changes taking place are creating the conditions for bringing into question the inevitability of the *disengagement* normally associated with that circumstance. Amongst these conditions there is, in the first place, the fact that today people grow old better and later than in the past: psycho-physical decline begins to become a handicap for active life well beyond the age of 60-65. In the second place, Western culture is beginning to accept the idea that the elderly, as well as being a problem, can also be a resource for society, because they have time, energy and capacities to devote to activities of various kinds: professional activity, voluntary work and caring for the family. In the third place, the growing instability in sexual relationships and, in general, the transformations in equilibriums within the family that to a varying degree characterise all western societies are modifying the definition of roles both at the level of the couple and in terms of the parent-child relationship.

So far as the couple is concerned, on the one hand, there is an increasing risk of losing one's partner, given that in addition to the possibility of his/her death there is now the possibility of separation or divorce as well. On the other hand, there is also the possibility of legitimately seeking a new beginning either with one's original partner, when the children leave home, or with another partner, in the case that the previous tie breaks down. The novelty is that all this now takes place at an age which in the past seemed to preclude any propensity towards a revitalisation of the relationship of the couple and, in particular, a full development of one's sexuality.

As far as the parent-child relationship is concerned, after the age of 60 there opens up a phase, of variable length, in which there is an overlapping of various roles. The subjects in question remain for a long time children of parents who live to a very old age. At the same time they continue to be actively present as parents in the life of their own children, who struggle to conquer autonomy as adults. The consequence is that it is necessary for them to oscillate between expectations about their role that are not only very different but that

evolve in ways and at temporal rhythms that are difficult to foresee. This increases the uncertainty about one's collocation within the family and can generate ambivalent effects in the experience of late-adults/young elderly. On the one hand, there is an increase in the difficulty of managing everyday life, because it is necessary to constantly negotiate the boundaries of one's own role with other family members. On the other hand, one postpones the moment in which one's collocation within the family corresponds to that which is "typical" of an elderly person: increasingly less active and therefore progressively marginalised.

Obviously these changes do not invest all over 60 year-olds to the same extent and they do not produce the same effects on the experience of all the subjects in question.

⌘ **Could you indicate more precisely what the effects of this new dimension of uncertainty are?**

As I have said, we are dealing with varied effects because they depend on the characteristics of the social system in which the subjects in question are collocated, on their personal resources and on the type of biographical course that they have behind them.

So far as the characteristics of the social system are concerned, uncertainty tends to manifest itself above all in terms of personal insecurity in contexts where the labour market has been more extensively invested by precarisation and where the welfare system offers limited protection against the risks of unemployment and poverty. It is necessary, however, to also keep in mind the risk of affective precarity and loneliness, which is particularly high in countries in which the process of the deconstruction of traditional family ties is more marked. These characteristics impact above all on the type of certainties offered to young people, but they also impact on the less young, who can be directly hit by the dismantling of institutional protection and by the precarisation of family relations. The certainties of the elderly, however, can also be undermined indirectly, when their condition is in some way influenced by the difficulties that the younger generations have in conquering independence and stability. To point to this phenomenon we have coined the term "reflected uncertainty".

The level of reflected uncertainty is particularly high in countries where there continue to be strong ties of intergenerational solidarity,

supported by a family-based type of welfare system. As Carla Facchini has noted, in many countries the direction of solidarity between generations is undergoing a reversal of direction *vis-à-vis* the past, at least in respect of the type of help that young people expect from adults and from the elderly. This means for example, that in the absence of effective policies in support of economic independence and housing for the young, recourse is made to the resources of the respective parents and grandparents. In this way parents and grandparents risk losing substantial economic resources and having to subordinate the use of their own time and energies to the needs of children and grandchildren. The instability of young people's family lives can also impact on the life of the older generations. It's enough to think of those young people that leave home at an increasingly advanced age and then sometimes return home to seek further support when they remain single, not infrequently in a precarious economic situation and/or with young children to look after. This can prevent parents for long periods of time from divesting themselves of responsibility in relation to the need for psychological support and care expressed by their children. One consequence of this, for example, is that the parents of these young people are not able to predict whether or when they will become grandparents, whether or when they will be able to reconsider their relationship with their own partner or whether or when they will be able to cease to worry about the happiness of their children so as to be able to concentrate primarily upon themselves.

For the current lot of late-adults/young elderly, however, reflected uncertainty can also depend on the type of solidarity that ties them to their own parents, still living and often no longer self-sufficient on account of their advanced age. In contexts where welfare systems do not guarantee adequate home-based and rest-home services for these "old elderly", it is their children, especially their daughters, often over the age of sixty themselves, that have to take charge of the caring tasks, which are extremely onerous both in economic terms and in terms of time, effort and emotional stress. The weight of this commitment can translate into a deterioration in the material and relational resources of these care-givers even up to the point that their relationships with their partners and children are jeopardised.

Systemic factors, however, do not completely account for the different ways in which uncertainty manifests itself in the biographies of the different categories of the elderly. As we have said, the differences also depend on the personal histories of the subjects in question. These

histories are the product partly of the capacities of each person, partly of the resources and constraints connected to his/her original social class and partly of the manner in which he/she has been exposed to the transformations that Western societies have undergone in the course of the twentieth-century. As Carla Facchini has already underlined, the generic label of “the elderly” conceals a number of age cohorts and a number of generations. Membership of particular age cohorts impacts on people’s psycho-physical resources and on their collocation in the system of family roles. Membership of a generation, interacting with economic and cultural status, influences the type of certainties a person enjoys and the way in which he/she interprets the new propensity towards uncertainty that is manifesting itself today.

In other words, having guarantees in terms of health and economic wellbeing is a necessary but insufficient condition for managing to identify chances of biographical construction once one has reached the age of full adulthood. It is also necessary to have adequate cultural resources and a propensity towards the reflective construction of oneself, developed in the preceding phases of one’s life. In this way, for example, considering various generations of Italians over the age of sixty, we have noted that such a propensity is greater in those who, as well as enjoying a medium to medium-to-high socio-cultural status, belong to the post-war generation. These subjects underwent a kind of pre-socialisation to the culture of uncertainty. As young people, in the years between the sixties and seventies, they experienced the questioning of the system of certainties typical of modern industrial societies. As adults, they witnessed the progressive deconstruction of this system, which has led to the individualisation of life courses. In the face of old age, they know that they will be able to remain active for a long time, in good health and in reasonably secure economic conditions. This allows them to think that there still remain some chances for personal becoming. The future remains open, even though they do not always know with certainty if and how these chances will take concrete form, whether they themselves will be capable of exploiting them and, if so, how long they will be able to do so.

⌘ **You speak of a possible openness towards the future. Could you explain exactly what form the relationship between the elderly and time takes today?**

For the reasons that I gave before, I do not think that it is possible to speak in general terms about a particular relationship between the

elderly and time. What one can do, is consider the different temporal horizon that is opening up for subjects no longer young, collocated in various contexts and with different resources and variegated histories behind them. Within this multiplicity of situations we can identify a certain number of typical-ideal models which, nonetheless, do not exhaust the wide array of cases that are present on the scene today.

The first model re-proposes the temporality implicit in the traditional logic of a project that gives rhythm to the various phases of life. This is the logic that, as I have already indicated, lies behind the idea of disengagement, once adult life has come to an end: in the present there is nothing more to construct, because the project, for better or worse, has been brought to completion. One's identity resides in the past, which at times projects itself into the present to the point of engulfing it. The future does not exist, other than in the form of the certainty of decline, which one prefers not to think about. The dimension of uncertainty, when it is present, for the most part assumes the semblance of insecurity, above all in the case of the "old elderly" and, in general, of those who are exposed to a greater extent to the risk of poverty, invalidity and loneliness.

This type of orientation can also be encountered in some late-adults or young elderly, who currently enjoy a series of certainties about their economic, physical and affective well-being. What is involved here are people who, although they have interiorised the traditional logic of disengagement, are experiencing a sort of temporal interval, freed from adult responsibilities, on the one hand, and from the constrictions of old age, on the other. In this interval the present does not constitute itself just as empty time, to be filled in in some way, but rather manifests itself as a reserve of *free time* to take advantage of. It is a time of programmes aimed at leisure and/or caring in the framework of relationships with partners, family members and friends. The idea is not so much one of personal construction as one of reaping the fruits of what one has become thanks to the life course one has completed.

One could say that for these people the dominant dimension is that of certainty, if it were not for the fact that a certain number of them are to varying degrees exposed to reflected uncertainty. The level of uncertainty in this case depends on the type of solidarity that the subjects in question believe is necessary to show towards their own children, now adults, at grips with the growing risks of precarity in employment and affective instability. It needs to be kept in mind,

moreover, that for women especially reflected uncertainty has a potentially twofold origin: the difficulties of their children, on the one hand, and, on the other, the precarity of their parents, by now old elderly. The consequence of this is substantial limitations on the possibility to freely manage their own economic, temporal and relational resources. These limitations result in the transformation of the potential free time that they could enjoy into an excess of bounded time, in the service of family solidarity.

Alongside these various manifestations of the “traditional” temporal model we can also find a second, more innovative model. This manifests itself in some categories of late-adults or the almost-elderly who, as I have indicated, have been pre-socialised to the new forms of uncertainty and who, as well as enjoying good economic and health prospects, also have substantial cultural resources.

This set of conditions makes it possible for such subjects to live out the long transition towards the phase of old age as a period to dedicate to self-discovery. The past is behind them and the future constitutes a further segment, more or less extensive, of biographical life course open to construction. What’s involved is a brief future, or an extended present, similar to that which characterises the temporal perspective of many young people. The physiognomy of this future is defined as one goes along: it depends on the capacity of subjects to take advantage of novelties, to exploit the unexpected events that lie hidden within everyday life. It might be possible, for example, to take up projects that one put aside in the past because of work or family problems, at times effecting an out-and-out restructuration of one’s biography. Or one might undertake new activities, of a professional nature or in the field of voluntary work. One might even discover hitherto unknown artistic capacities or plan a whole new beginning to one’s sentimental life.

But within this innovative orientation too, the phenomenon of reflected uncertainty can produce interferences in the two forms indicated above. Here too there arise more or less severe restrictions on the liberty of late-adults/the almost-elderly. It is very common for there to emerge a contradiction between the aspiration to explore new courses and the need to fulfill responsibilities assumed in the past. For some, this bind is experienced as a lack of control over their life and it can translate into an experience of insecurity. For others, reflected uncertainty is a further manifestation of non-automaticity, to be managed by seeking a

temporary balance between aspirations and reality in the expectation that sooner or later the situation could change.

Carla Facchini



Carla Facchini is professor of Sociology of the Family at the University of Milan-Bicocca. Her research interests include the condition of the elderly and changes in family structures and relations.

Marita Rampaz



Marita Rampazi is professor of General Sociology at the University of Pavia. Her research interests include social uncertainty, time and identity in reference to the condition of young people in contemporary societies and the transformation in family relations.

Together they have conducted research on the transition to the condition of being elderly. See in particular:

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AMBIVALENCES, CONFLICTS AND SOLIDARITIES WITHIN THE FAMILY TODAY

An Interview with Ariela Lowenstein

Department of Gerontology / Center for Research & Study of Aging,
Faculty of Welfare and Health Sciences at University of Haifa

[Editorial note: the dimension of intergenerational solidarity plays a crucial role today in social relations and, in particular, in relations within the family: indeed, the family has become the privileged locus of expression for this solidarity. Within the contemporary family there are, in fact, a multiplicity of types and forms of support that manifest themselves between the various generations, young and less young. Nonetheless, it should be kept in mind that these forms of intergenerational solidarity (or their possible absence) can also, in some cases, generate conflicts, a sense of guilt and ambivalences – both in those who offer them and in those who receive them. So far as the particular phenomenon of ambivalence is concerned, which forms the central theme of the following interview with Ariela Lowenstein, it is important to provide a definition beforehand. In the present context the term ambivalence is intended to refer above all to those situations and specific circumstances characterised by oscillation between opposing attitudes and approaches. Because of uncertainty, which goes hand-in-hand with ambivalence, choices and decisions become particularly difficult. We have asked professor Ariela Lowenstein to offer her perspective on these questions.]

⌘ **Can you discuss the concept of intergenerational ambivalence, both from a theoretical and from an empirical perspective?**

The intergenerational ambivalence perspective to the family as a system stems from the modern, or rather postmodern era of the twenty-first-century. This era is characterised by pluralism and multivalency, thus putting the individual in constant existential dilemmas of choosing

between competing meanings. This chaos of meaning causes a psychological experience of ambiguity and ambivalence, characterised by conflicting feelings: the need for liberation on the one hand, and the fear of alienation on the other. Conflicts and contradictions are not only typical of the individual at the micro level, but also characterise society as a whole at the macro level. This assumption is the base of the concept 'sociological ambivalence', first formulated by Merton & Barber (1963). They define sociological ambivalence as incompatible normative expectations of attitudes, beliefs and behaviour.

Family researchers have integrated such perspectives dealing with ambivalence at the personal and interpersonal level with the theories dealing with ambivalence at the larger social scale (sociological ambivalence) to formulate the concept of intergenerational ambivalence. Generally, intergenerational ambivalence can be defined as simultaneously held opposing feelings or emotions that are due in part to countervailing expectations about how individuals should act. More specifically, intergenerational ambivalence is viewed as a concept constructed at two different structural levels: the macro and the micro level. As such, its definition should capture these two levels. Thus, according to Luescher 'intergenerational ambivalence' reflects contradictions in parents' and adults' offspring relationships in two dimensions: "at the level of social structure in roles and norms - the macro level" and "at the subjective level, in terms of cognitions, emotions and motivations - the micro level".

Following these conceptual definitions of intergenerational ambivalence, initial attempts were made to define the concept operationally. Luescher's model captures the two dimensions of ambivalence: the structural (macro) dimension and the inter-subjective (micro) dimension. Each dimension is represented by two poles: the structural dimension is represented by the poles of reproduction versus innovation and the inter-subjective dimension is represented by the poles of convergence versus divergence.

On the macro level, each family system can be seen as a sociological institution, characterised by a specific structure, as well as by norms and procedures, which represent the values and conditions of the larger society in a specific cultural era and geographic place of living. These institutional values and conditions are, on the one hand, reproduced through the acting out of relations (solidarity, captivation) by family members. On the other hand, these values and conditions could also

be modified (emancipation, atomisation), thus leading to innovations. Hence, reproduction and innovation are the two poles in which the family is realised as a social institution. In this model, these two poles represent structural ambivalence. If one scores highly on both poles, then one is viewed as ambivalent in the structural sense, since the two poles represent opposite themes.

On the micro level, each family can be conceived as an emotional, intimate unit, which contains the potential for closeness and subjective identification, thus reinforcing similarity between the children and their parents. Similarity and closeness are psychologically gratifying, on the one hand, but on the other hand they can also be experienced by the family's member as a threat to individuality. Thus, the family members are motivated to keep the unit's cohesion (convergence), but on the other hand they strive for separation and individuality (divergence). Hence, Luescher sees convergence and divergence as two poles representing inter-subjective ambivalence. If one scores highly on both convergence and divergence, then one is viewed as ambivalent on the micro level.

An altogether different way that ambivalence can manifest is using guilty feelings as a key concept representing ambivalence.

⌘ **In this sense, how can we define “guilt” and what’s its role in the theoretical conceptualisation of ambivalence?**

We can view guilt as belonging to what Lazarus & Lazarus outlined as ‘the existential emotions’: “Anxiety-fright, guilt and shame are existential emotions because the threats on which they are based have to do with meanings and ideas about who we are, our place in the world, life and death and the quality of our existence. We have constructed these meanings for ourselves out of our life experience and the values of the culture in which we live and we are committed to preserving them”. They see guilt as an emotion experienced when one feels personal failure, as a result of a moral lapse. They believe that guilt can be regarded as a kind of anxiety.

Their existential view of guilt is especially relevant when relating to guilt that caregivers feel towards their elderly parents. Since the elderly are close to the end of their life, being close to them is certainly bound to induce existential (death) anxiety. The caregiver, thinking about the institutionalisation of his/her parent (or any other close relative) cannot

help but thinking about death, consciously or unconsciously. Other authors, such as Wentzel, even assume that one of the reasons caregivers find the decision to institutionalise their elders so difficult is because it makes the caregivers think of their own death.

Lazarus & Lazarus' view of guilt as connected to morality provides a theoretical explanation as to why caregivers often feel guilty towards their elderly parents, when it seems to them that they are not providing the best care possible. This violates the moral code that one should not neglect his parents when they grow old. Some articles describe this link between guilt feelings and a sense of moral misdeed and show that caregivers indeed feel guilty when they believe they haven't done the right thing morally, using personal stories.

A little different conceptualisation of guilt views it not as an existentialist, but mostly as social and interpersonal dimensions. This way of looking at guilt is concerned with a deed that has violated certain social norms. Another central aspect of guilt is the interpersonal aspect. In guilt, like in other emotions that are typically related to those close to us, our relationship to our intimates is of central importance. People's descriptions of guilt inducing situations often highlight neglect of a partner or a failure to live up to expectations. This view explains why guilt is often experienced in intergenerational family relationships, since these relationships are usually highly close and intimate, and characterised by high expectations of support in situations of sickness and disability.

Empirical data show for example, that guilt feelings are common during the placement of one's parents in a nursing home; it seems that institutionalisation of the elderly includes basically one major emotion on the part of the caregiver: guilt. However, the picture is more complex. Some empirical studies show that the institutionalisation process is actually accompanied by ambivalent feelings on the part of the caregiver: on the one hand, feelings of guilt and grief, but on the other hand feelings of relief, that the burden of the care had been lifted (Riddick, Cohen-Mansfield, Fleshner & Kraft; Ryan & Scullion). In sum, guilt feelings most often go with ambivalence, with moral considerations and contradicting practical considerations. This is one of the reasons that guilt is an emotion to represent ambivalence.

⌘ **Why can guilt be considered a key concept to represent ambivalence?**

On a general level, thinking about the different situations when one feels guilt within the family, one of the main characteristics of all of these situations is a sense of ambivalence, a sense that one is torn between two or more options, without being able to feel he has chosen the correct one. Thus, when one chooses a specific option but he does not feel he has done the right thing, many times guilt arises. When speaking about family relations, guilt is bound to arise in some specific situations, which can be shown using the heuristic model:

- when a family member uses atomisation, and separates conflictually from other family members, he is likely to feel guilty, since in every family there is a side that wishes for solidarity and closeness, and wishes to please other family members;
- there are times when a family member uses captivation and does what most family members want, although he may think the right or moral decision should have been different. This is another situation which may well give rise to guilt feelings.

Generally, modes of divergence are likely to increase feelings of guilt, as opposed to modes of convergence. Thus, feelings of guilt may represent one aspect of the inter-subjective dimension of ambivalence.

⌘ **Can you give us an example of “ambivalence” on an empirical level?**

A study conducted with Rachman, more than a decade ago, was designed to examine the reasons for the decision making to institutionalise an older parent, comparing the city and the kibbutz in Israel, and to analyse its impact on intergenerational family relationships. The hypothesis was that the following four factors would be the main causes for institutionalisation: 1. the burden of care; 2. the exchange relationships between adult children and older parents; 3. the role of children; 4. the role of the formal support systems. The research aimed to find out how these four factors influenced the decision to institutionalise and the relationship between the family members.

It was assumed that this process would generate more conflict in the city, since the care-giving burden (economical, physical, emotional) is higher and multifaceted there, while in the kibbutz the burden is much

easier and mostly emotional. Another difference between the city and the kibbutz, which makes the institutionalisation in the kibbutz a somewhat smoother process, is the formal service system, which was at the time much more readily available in the kibbutz than in the city. Since formal support systems were found to contribute greatly to an effective placement of an elderly in an institution it is reasonable to accept that the support system in the kibbutz would significantly ease significantly the process of institutionalisation compared to the city, where it is much less accessible and provides less formal help and support. This was confirmed. The main idea of this study was to show how the kibbutz's norms support institutionalisation, especially since in the kibbutzim studied, the nursing homes were part of the kibbutz making it legitimate, thus diminishing guilt and feeling of ambivalence, while the picture in the city is reversed.

The theories and findings concerning the role of children and the role of the formal support systems are most relevant to analysis of the norms and expectations concerning institutionalisation in the city versus the kibbutz. The social norms governing children's behaviour towards their elderly parents in the city are based on the concept of "filial responsibility". This concept means that children feel personal obligations to take care of their elderly parents' well being, trying to protect them and care for them. These views and attitudes are expressed in certain behaviours towards the elderly, such as: shared household arrangements, helping with tasks, keeping in touch and providing emotional support. These norms have an impact on the decision to institutionalise an elderly parent. Although in the city the instrumental and emotional burden is high, more than 40% of the caregivers doubted and speculated more than half a year before starting to check possibilities of placement in an institution. This confirms the children's high feelings of obligation and responsibility towards their parents. Seventy percent of the children in the city said that the institutionalisation took place when they had no other choice, since there were not enough supportive services.

In sum, children in the city find themselves in a complicated situation concerning norms about institutionalisation: on the one hand, they feel responsible towards their parents, and therefore they try to keep them at home for as long as possible: on the other hand, the instrumental and emotional burden as well as the lack of formal support systems makes it - in certain situations - almost impossible to do so. Thus, they

find themselves in an emotional and practical conflict, exhibiting feelings of ambivalence.

The Israeli kibbutz was still at the time of the study a unique kind of community, characterised by a full partnership of its members in all areas of life: economics, health, education, housing, etc. Each member of the kibbutz emotionally experiences the kibbutz's society as his extended family. Thus, in the ideological-social structure of the kibbutz, obligations to the community are equal to obligation to one's family. This makes the children less personally obligated to provide instrumental support to their parents. They tend to take less responsibility for their elders, since they know the kibbutz will do so. In many of the veteran kibbutzim, for example, nursing homes were built within their grounds to serve their elderly members "at home".

This is one difference between the institutionalisation in the kibbutz versus the city: the elderly moving to a nursing home in the city have to adjust to a basic change of environment, moving from home to a 'total' institution. Contrary to that, in the kibbutz the elderly move from their home to a nursing home in the same environment, a move which is less traumatic. Another difference between the institutionalisation in the city versus the kibbutz is the decision itself. In the city, the decision to institutionalise is taken by the close family, and many times it causes conflicts between siblings and between them and the elderly parent. This way, responsibility for the decision rests on the whole family. In the kibbutz, the situation is totally different. The family is not alone in its decision, but the kibbutz's formal support system takes much of the responsibility. When the functional situation of the elderly requires constant formal help, the kibbutz's support system decides that the elderly individual has to move to a nursing home. This is an economic decision, because in this way there is no need for a private nurse in the elders' house and the children can go back to their productive function in the kibbutz. Thus, in the kibbutz the family has much more opportunity to share the decision with others, thus diminishing feeling of responsibility and guilt. Badgwell found that sharing the decision with other family members helped to reduce guilt feelings, as does involvement in local support groups. *De facto*, the kibbutz is sort of a local informal support group, helping the members ease the emotional burden, which is part of the institutionalisation process.

⌘ **According to the studies and research you carried out, how different are the patterns of intergenerational solidarity, conflict and ambivalence observed across several societies that differ in welfare provision and family traditions?**

The data related to the OASIS⁴ project suggest that the majority of respondents in all the five countries considered - Norway, England, Germany, Spain and Israel - reported strong and positive emotional solidarity (affective-cognitive solidarity) between adult children and their old parents whereas the negative emotional feelings (conflict and ambivalence) were low. These findings confirm, in cross-cultural contexts, that the extended family today has maintained cross-generational cohesion with some conflict as well as some ambivalent feelings (Luescher & Pillemer). The data thus support the more recent perspective of the solidarity-conflict model. Further study of the balance between solidarity and conflict is therefore needed and a further exploration of ambivalence is also warranted, focusing on how it emerges in family relationships.

The similarities as well as the differences found between the countries on the various dimensions of solidarity-conflict and ambivalence may reflect variations in family norms and behaviour patterns, as well as traditions of social policy in the participating countries. This heterogeneity can be attributed to historical trends over the last century. In linking the testing of solidarity-conflict and ambivalence on the micro level of individuals and families to the macro perspective of the cross-national study, unique idiosyncratic historical and familial developments in the context of the countries involved must be considered. The higher rates of close parent-child relationships found in Israel may be closely related to the country's recent history and geopolitical situation. However, the higher rates of conflict might reflect a culture where open communication between generations is encouraged. Similarly, the apparent generation gap between current cohorts of older parents and their adult children in Germany may be related to the polarisation along generational lines of traditional/radical attitudes that occurred in the 1960s. In Spain, findings of relatively low rates of close parent-child relationships, contrary to expectations, may be due to rapid

⁴ The OASIS (Old Age and Autonomy: the Role of Service System and Intergenerational Family Solidarity) research project was funded within the 5th Framework Programme of the European Community. The general goal was to learn how family cultures and service systems support autonomy and delay dependency in old age, to promote quality of life, and improve the basis for policy and planning. See <http://www.oasis-project.eu/>

modernisation (reflected, e.g., in low fertility rates). Younger generations are more exposed to this process, and are better educated and better off than their parents. This could result in the emergence of a significant generation gap.

Participating OASIS-countries also represent different contexts and opportunity structures for family life and elder care. They are confronted by similar challenges in this area, but are inclined toward different solutions. Of particular interest is that Germany and Spain are welfare states that tend to favour family responsibility and play a subsidiary role (Germany) or even a residual (Spain) role. Both countries lay down legal obligations between generations but have relatively low levels of social care services although they may have high levels of medical services. By comparison, England and Norway have individualist social policies, no legal obligations between generations, and higher levels of social care services. Younger generations there find it more possible to combine work with family obligations than in Germany or Spain. The mixed Israeli model is illustrated by legal family obligations, as in Spain and Germany, with high service levels, as in Norway. The solidarity-conflict model was especially useful in evaluating the strength of family relationships in the different societies. However, conceptually, the model does not claim to capture the entire complex and diverse picture of late-life family relations, as acknowledged by Bengtson *et al.* This is especially true at points of transition along the life course, such as the failing health of older parents or the changing needs of working caregivers, when more negative and/or ambivalent feelings may surface. The 'operationalisation' of ambivalence was in its infancy when the OASIS study started and we used what was suggested by their originators – Luescher and Pillemer. Actually in OASIS, ambivalence was best captured through the qualitative data. Solidarity-conflict was measured mainly by quantitative data over the years but as Giarrusso, Silverstein, Gans and Bengtson indicate there is an on-going effort to refine the items measuring solidarity and conflict which in the years since the study started makes the measuring instrument a 'gold standard' for studying and assessing intergenerational family relations. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and the triangulation of data bases is recommended in order to further address and examine these different concepts.

Recent research attempting to operationalise ambivalence and validate it by capturing its individual and structural dimensions in central life course transitions was published (Pillemer & Luescher). The

accumulation of additional empirical evidence would facilitate further theorising and identify the ways in which it emerges in family relationships. In this respect, some answers are given, but new, intriguing questions and issues arise: does ambivalence complement solidarity and conflict as a form of family relationship, especially during periods of transition? Is there a need to further explore the three concepts - solidarity, conflict and ambivalence - in additional cross-national and cultural idiosyncrasies to better validate their accuracy in explaining parent-child relations in adulthood?

Ariela Lowenstein



Ariela Lowenstein is full professor at the Department of Gerontology, and Director of the Center for Research & Study of Aging at the Faculty of Welfare and Health Sciences at University of Haifa; within the Center she collaborates closely with scholars from Israel, and internationally. She is also Head of the Department of Health Services Management and Head of Research at the Max Stern Yezreel Academic College in Israel, and Chair of a National Advisory Committee to the Israeli Ministry of Senior Citizens.

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INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND EU CITIZEN'S OPINIONS: SOME INDICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKING

Francesco Belletti

Forum delle Associazioni Familiari / Centro Internazionale Studi
Famiglia

1. Generations in Society and Family

Intergenerational solidarity has always been one of the main responsibilities of family life, but it is also one of the fundamental dimensions for social cohesion as well. Under this doublefold perspective, solidarity between generations has been crucial in building the welfare systems at national and local level, and today a new balance between the specific contribution by families and state intervention seems necessary, especially in front of the so-called “demographic transition” of the last decades.

“Through its Green Paper *Confronting demographic change* published in March 2005, the Commission initiated a debate on the need to strengthen solidarity between the generations. [...] The debate which then started in Europe on the subject of demographic ageing has added to this perspective. It has become clear that the balance in European societies rests on a set of inter-generational solidarity relationships which are more complex than in the past. Young adults live under their parents' roof for longer, while, increasingly often, the parents have to support dependent elderly people (*First European Quality of Life Survey 2003, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions*). The resulting burdens are borne mainly by the young or intermediate generations, and generally by women. Equality between men and women, and equal opportunities more generally, would therefore appear to be key conditions for the establishing of a new solidarity relationship between the generations” (*Introduction of the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, “Promoting Solidarity between the Generations”, Brussels, 10.05.2007*).

This formal and official declaration from EU resulted from a slowly growing scientific awareness of the importance of the intergenerational

dimensions of public and private solidarity, such as the foresightful warning from Pierpaolo Donati, issued in the 1991 CISF Report on the Italian Family (for more details, see <http://www.cisf.it>):

“In order to handle the consequences of the demographic transition we need more than a mere ‘pact between generations’, considered as age groups confronting each other on the public arena and competing for a present or future share of resources (i.e. working opportunities or financial resources for pensions); it is rather necessary to define which criteria are linking the different age groups and connecting the decisions about the present and the near future, not only in society, but also in the families as well. This general framework - the linking criteria -, preliminary to the specific intergenerational pact, can be defined as an *alliance between family and society* [...] since families - and generations - are *relational goods*” (Donati, 1991: 404).

In other words, Donati was stressing the importance of the intergenerational dimension of family relations and in society as one of the main elements necessary to build social cohesion and solidarity in families and in society.

2. Ageing Society and Intergenerational Solidarity

The relevance of intergenerational solidarity in European societies is strongly stressed also by NGOs lobbying for elderly people, avoiding, in such a way, a sort of intergenerational competition for public - scarce - resources.

“In our view, enhanced solidarity between generations can play a key role in developing fairer and more sustainable responses to the major economic and social challenges that the EU is facing today. Our society needs to become more inclusive to allow everyone to get involved whatever their age, gender, ethnic origin, skills and ability. Action is also urgently needed to ensure a fairer re-distribution of resources, responsibility and participation and to develop greater cooperation between generations in all social and economic spheres. It is important in today’s context to maintain a high level of solidarity in our social protection systems given its proven shock absorber effect during economic crisis. Public authorities should develop holistic and sustainable policies supporting all generations, facilitate access to adequate income and to affordable and quality services, particularly housing, education and health for people of all ages, and foster exchange of good practice and mutual learning between different generations. Engaging migrant and minority communities in intergenerational solidarity initiatives together with majority communities is crucial to break down harmful stereotypes, to bring communities closer together, dispel myths and create public space for

dialogue. Awareness raising on creative initiatives of social solidarity developed by migrant and minority communities, including women's organisations, is particularly important" (*AGE Platform Europe, 2010*)⁵.

This approach can also support a positive social representation of elderly people ('Active Ageing'), fighting against negative stereotypes of dependency and economic and social burdens:

"Demographic ageing is strongly affecting the relationships among generations and the way European societies function. Rather than focusing on the negative challenges of ageing, such as its impact on the increased pension and health care expenditure or on the shrinking labour force, demographic reality should be looked at as an opportunity, which can bring solutions to many current economic and social challenges, but therefore requires a new assessment and reworking of several economic and social policies within society" (*www.age-platform.org, under the heading "solidarity"*).

3. Elderly People as a Resource: Information from Eurobarometer

Social and family policies at local and national levels are trying to promote intergenerational solidarity among generations as social groups, in the public area, but the most intense flow of mutual help among generations is found - in most nations - within the family. So it is important to consider how people actually perceive the relationships among generations, and the role of elderly people in this reciprocal and bidirectional exchange of resources. A recent survey can give information on social orientations about intergenerational solidarity and the role of elderly generations. The *Flash Eurobarometer* "Intergenerational Solidarity" (Flash No 269) fieldwork was conducted between 20 and 24 March 2009. Over 27,000 randomly-selected citizens aged fifteen or over were interviewed in the 27 EU Member States. Interviews were predominantly carried out via fixed-line telephone, reaching ca. 1,000 EU citizens in each country. Parts of interviews in Austria, Finland, Italy, Portugal and Spain were conducted over mobile telephones. Due to the relatively low fixed-line telephone

⁵ "Intergenerational Solidarity: the Way forward NGOs coalition calls for 2012 to become European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity", from the Joint Press Release in preparation of the Second European Day on Solidarity between Generations, 29th April 2010, Logrono, Spain. See <http://www.age-platform.org>: AGE Platform Europe is a European network of around 150 organisations of and for people aged 50+ which aims to voice and promote the interests of the 150 million senior citizens in the European Union and to raise awareness on the issues that concern them most).

coverage in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, 300 individuals were sampled and interviewed on a face-to-face basis. To correct for sampling disparities, a post-stratification weighting of the results was implemented, based on key socio-demographic variables⁶.

The *Flash Eurobarometer* Intergenerational solidarity was conducted in order to examine EU citizens' opinions about:

- existing relations between the younger and older generations;
- costs of an ageing population – particularly in terms of pensions and elderly care;
- the need for pension and social security reforms;
- ways in which older people contribute to society – financially and more broadly;
- existing possibilities for autonomous living for elderly EU citizens;
- the provision of elderly care and support by social services;
- the role of public authorities in promoting intergenerational solidarity.

Amongst this vast data, the paper focussed a few questions that were more specifically devoted to the social representation of elderly people (as a resource, rather than a social burden), considering how citizens' attitudes vary between countries and according to social categories (such as age, sex, education, urbanisation, occupation). The questions considered are:

- *“Are older people are a burden for society?”*
- *“Are the media exaggerating the risk of a conflict between generations?”*
- *“In [our country], are there sufficient social services to support frail older people so that they can stay in their own home?”*
- *“Are people who have to care for older family members at home receiving good support from social services in [our country]?”*
- *“In the coming decades, will governments no longer be able to pay for pensions and care for older people?”*
- *“Is the financial help of parents and grandparents important for young adults who establish their own households and families?”*
- *“Do older people make a major contribution as volunteers in charitable and community organisations in [our country]?”*

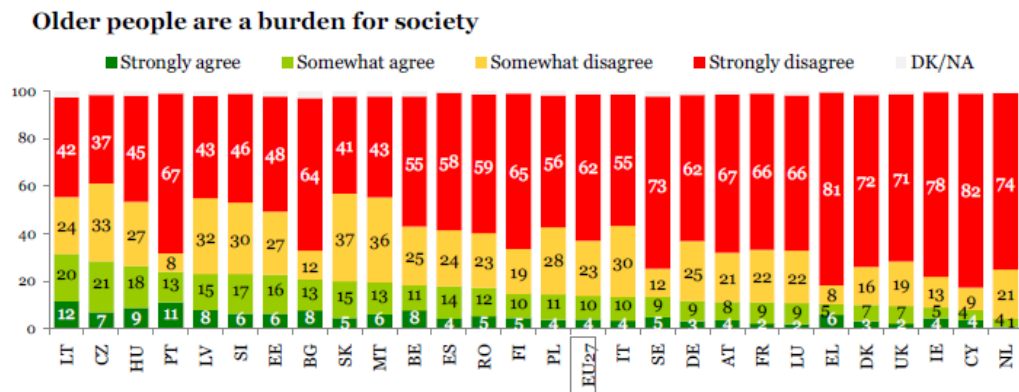
⁶ See http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_269_en.pdf.

- “Is the contribution of older people who care for family or other relatives not appreciated enough in [our country]?”

From the information it is possible to evaluate how elderly people are considered in the public opinion, how public services can support independent living for elderly people and family care givers, how sustainable people feel an ageing society is, and the extent to which elderly people support younger generations in family and social life⁷.

a) Older people are a burden for society.

In all Member States, at least two-thirds of EU citizens *somewhat* or *strongly* disagreed that older people are a burden on society: the total level of disagreement ranged from 66% in Lithuania to 95% in the Netherlands. Furthermore, a majority of respondents in 19 Member States, and a relative majority in a further eight, *strongly disagreed* that older people are a burden on society. Respondents in Cyprus and Greece were the most likely to *strongly disagree* (together with Ireland, while those in the Czech Republic were the least likely to do so (82% and 81%, respectively, vs. 37%). This more negative attitude towards elderly condition seems to be more perceived in the Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Latvia, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovenia and Slovakia), but also in Portugal and in Malta.



Q1. I am going to read out a number of statements about relations between younger and older people. For each one, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree. Base: all respondents, % by country

Younger respondents did not necessarily see *older people as a burden on society*; the oldest respondents (over 64) and retirees were the most likely to agree with this statement (25% and 22%, respectively,

⁷ Data description is mostly quoted from the Report

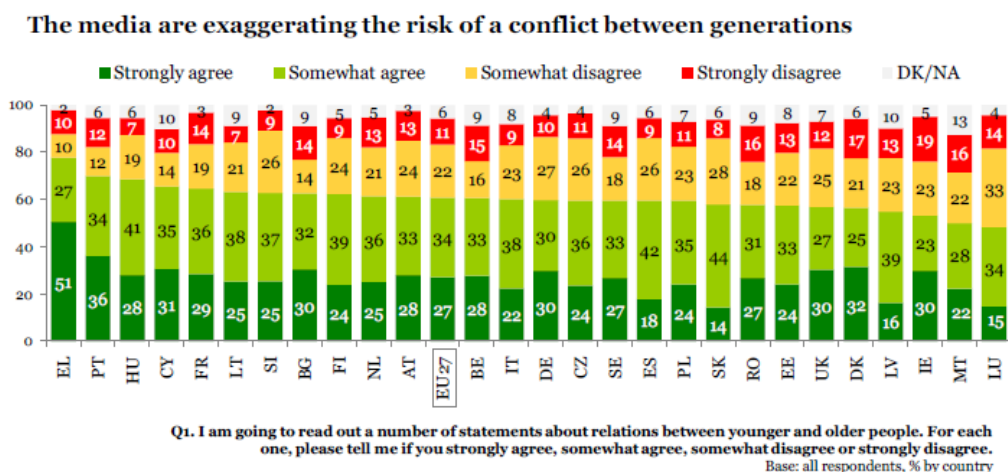
compared to, for example, 12% of 15-24 year-olds and 16% of 55-64 year-olds).

b) The media are exaggerating the risk of a conflict between generations.

Slightly more than 6 in 10 EU citizens thought that the media exaggerates the risk of a conflict between generations: 27% *strongly* agreed and 34% somewhat agreed with this proposition.

Greek and Portuguese respondents were also the most likely to think that *the media exaggerates the risk of a conflict between generations*: 78% of Greek and 70% of Portuguese respondents *somewhat* or *strongly agreed* that this is the case. Although the total level of agreement was rather similar in Hungary and Portugal (69% and 70% respectively); only 28% of Hungarians *strongly agreed* that the media exaggerates the risk of a conflict between generations – compared to 36% of Portuguese respondents. Greek respondents were - once again - the most likely to strongly agree with this proposition (51%).

In Luxembourg, on the other hand, only 49% of respondents *somewhat* or *strongly agreed* - and a similar proportion (47%) disagreed - that the media exaggerates the risk of a conflict between generations. In all other countries (except for Ireland), less than 4 in 10 respondents *somewhat* or *strongly disagreed* that this is the case and the proportion ranged from 20% in Greece to 38% in Malta and Denmark. In Ireland, in total, 42% of interviewees disagreed with this statement.

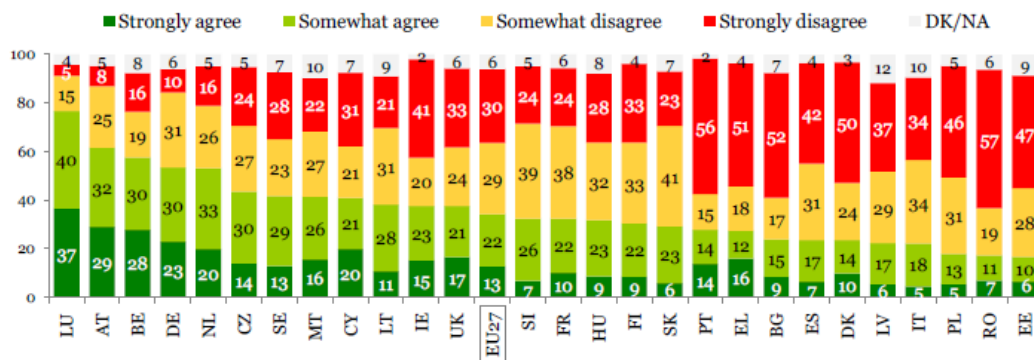


c) In [our country], there are sufficient social services to support frail older people so that they can stay in their own home.

Only slightly more than a third of EU citizens in total *agreed* - and 59% *disagreed* - that there are sufficient social services in their country to support frail older people so that they can stay living in their own home.

Respondents in Luxembourg were the most likely to feel that *there are sufficient social services in Luxembourg to allow frail older people to stay in their own homes*: 37% of Luxembourgers *strongly agreed* and 40% *somewhat agreed*. In four other countries, a slim majority, at least, *somewhat* or *strongly agreed* with this statement: Austria (61%), Belgium (58%), Germany and the Netherlands (both 53%). In Estonia, Romania and Poland, on the other hand, at least three-quarters of interviewees *disagreed* that there are sufficient social services to support frail older people so that they can stay in their own homes (between 75% and 77% *strongly* and *somewhat disagree* responses). Furthermore, almost half of Estonians (47%) and Poles (46%) *strongly disagreed* that this was the situation in their country; in Romania, almost 6 in 10 (57%) interviewees *strongly disagreed*. Other countries where at least half of interviewees *strongly disagreed* were: Portugal (56%), Bulgaria (52%), Greece (51%) and Denmark (50%).

In [our country], there are sufficient social services to support frail older people so that they can stay in their own home



Q4. Let me read a few statements about problems related to elderly care. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.
Base: all respondents, % by country

Both the youngest (under 25) and the oldest respondents (over 64) were more likely than respondents in the other age categories to think that there are *sufficient social services in their country to support frail older people so that they can stay living in their own home*. In

accordance with the above findings, it was also noted that full-time students, retired respondents and those with the lowest level of education were more likely to agree that there was sufficient support from social services. For example, while 40% of retirees agreed that there are sufficient social services in their country to support frail older people so that they can stay in their own home, roughly only a third of respondents in the other occupational groups agreed that this is the case: 32% of employees, 33% of “other” non-working respondents, 34% of self-employed respondents and 35% of manual workers.

d) People who have to care for older family members at home receive good support from social services in [our country].

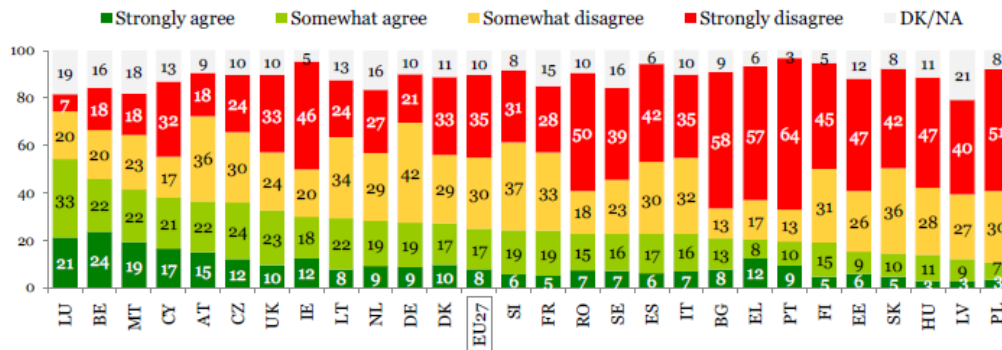
Two-thirds of interviewees *disagreed* that people with caring responsibilities for older family members at home receive good support from their country’s social services (35% *strongly disagreed* and 30% *somewhat disagreed*).

Similar to results obtained for the EU overall, respondents in almost all Member States were even less likely to agree that *people who have a responsibility of care for older family members at home receive good support from social services* than they were to agree to that there are sufficient social services for elderly people living on their own. In only one country - Luxembourg (54%) - did more than half of respondents *somewhat* or *strongly agree* that there is enough support for family members with caring responsibilities for older family members, while in more than half of the EU Member States more than 6 in 10 respondents *disagreed* that this is the case.

Focusing on those respondents choosing the more extreme negative response - i.e. *strongly disagree* - it was noted that while only a minority (7%) of Luxembourgish respondents chose this possibility, in Portugal, Bulgaria and Greece approximately 6 in 10 respondents *strongly disagreed* (between 57% and 64%). Respondents in the latter group of countries were not only among the most dissatisfied with support from social services for elderly people living on their own (as seen above), they were also the most dissatisfied with social services support for individuals who have a responsibility of care for older family members at home. Finally, a significant number of respondents in most Member States found it difficult to answer this question; the proportion of *don’t know* responses ranged from roughly 1 in 20 respondents in Portugal,

Finland, Ireland, Spain and Greece to at least one-sixth in Latvia (21%), Luxembourg (19%) and Malta (18%).

People who have to care for older family members at home receive good support from social services in [our country]



Q4. Let me read a few statement about problems related to elderly care. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree .
Base: all respondents, % by country

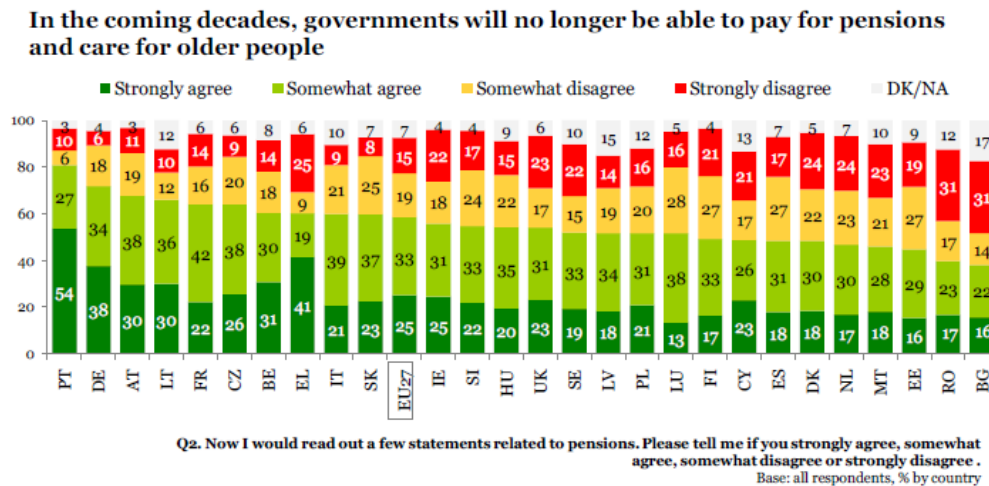
Both the youngest (under 25) and the oldest respondents (over 64) were more likely than other age categories to think that *people caring for older family members at home receive good support from social services* in their country. For example, while 28% of the over 64 year-olds and 30% of 15-24 year-olds agreed that people caring for older family members at home receive good support from social services in their country, only between 22% and 24% in the other age categories agreed with this statement.

e) In the coming decades, governments will no longer be able to pay for pensions and care for older people.

Almost 6 in 10 respondents recognised that, in the coming decades, governments will no longer be able to pay for pensions and elderly care (25% *strongly agreed* and 33% *somewhat agreed*).

The statement received a total level of agreement ranging from approximately 4 in 10 interviewees in Bulgaria and Romania (38% and 40%, respectively) to twice as many in Portugal (81%). Other countries at the higher end of the distribution - with more than two-thirds of interviewees doubting about the affordability of pensions and elderly care - were Germany (72% *somewhat* or *strongly agreed*) and Austria (68%). Portuguese respondents were also the most likely to *strongly agree* with this proposition (54%), followed by Greek and German respondents (41% and 38%, respectively). In all other countries, not

more than 3 in 10 respondents *strongly agreed*. Focusing on those choosing the more extreme negative response - i.e. *strongly disagree* - it was noted that less than 1 in 10 Germans, Slovaks, Czechs and Italians chose this possibility, while in Romania and Bulgaria the proportion was more than three times higher (31% in both countries).



Respondents aged between 25 and 54, those with higher levels of education and a higher occupational status were the most concerned about the affordability of pensions: roughly 6 in 10 of these respondents *somewhat* or *strongly agreed* that, *in coming decades, governments will no longer be able to pay for pensions and care for older people*, compared to, for example, a slim majority of retirees or respondents with the lowest level of education (both 53%).

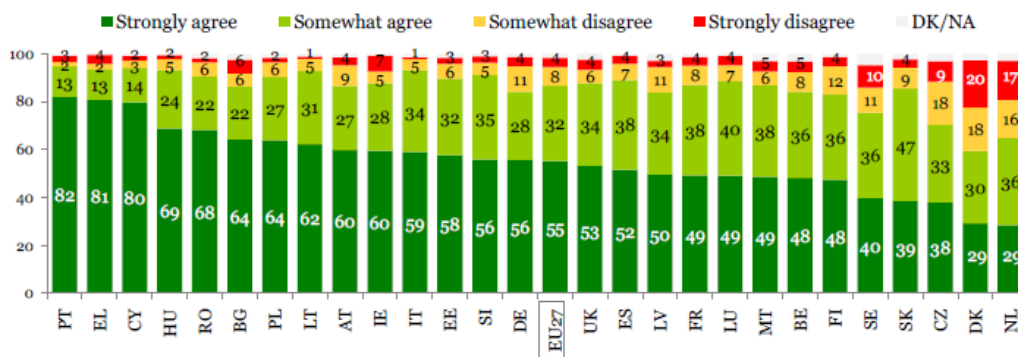
f) The financial help of parents and grandparents is important for young adults who establish their own households and families.

In total, almost 9 in 10 EU citizens *agreed* - and a slim majority (55%) *strongly agreed* - that financial help from parents and grandparents is important when young adults are starting to establish their own households and families.

In almost all Member States, there was almost no doubt that *financial help from parents and grandparents is important for young adults establishing their own households and families*: more than 8 in 10 respondents in 23 Member States *somewhat* or *strongly agreed* with this statement. The total level of agreement, however, was considerably

lower in Denmark (59%), the Netherlands (65%), the Czech Republic (71%) and Sweden (76%). Furthermore, while at least 8 in 10 Portuguese, Greek and Cypriot interviewees *strongly agreed* that parents' and grandparents' financial help is important for young adults forming their own households and families, only half as many, or less, interviewees in the last-named countries - and Slovakia - *strongly agreed* that such financial support is important (29% in the Netherlands and Denmark and between 38% and 40% in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Sweden).

The financial help of parents and grandparents is important for young adults who establish their own households and families



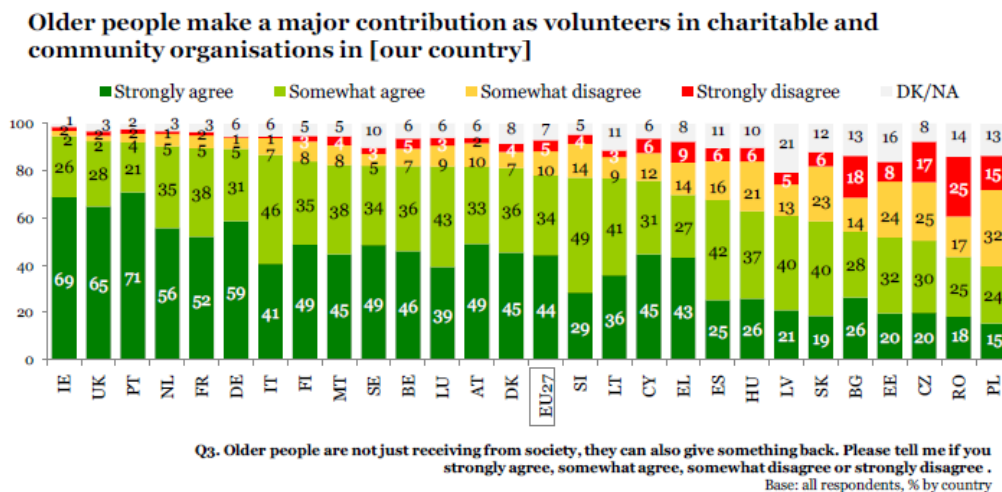
Q3. Older people are not just receiving from society, they can also give something back. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree. Base: all respondents, % by country

The results for the statement that *financial help from parents and grandparents is important when young adults are establishing their own households and families* showed significantly less variation across socio-demographic groups. It did appear, however, that the over 54 year-olds and retired respondents were more likely than their counterparts to express *strong agreement* (58%-60% compared to, for example, 51% of 15-24 year-olds and 54% of 25-39 year-olds).

g) Older people make a major contribution as volunteers in charitable and community organisations in [our country].

A large majority of EU citizens also agreed that older people make a major contribution to society via voluntary work in charitable and community organisations in their country (44% *strongly agreed* and 34% *somewhat agreed*). The total level of agreement with this statement ranged from around 4 in 10 respondents in Poland (39%) and Romania (43%) to more than 9 in 10 of the Irish, British, Portuguese and Dutch interviewees (between 91% and 95%).

The eight Member States where respondents were the least likely to agree with this all belong to the group of countries that joined the EU in 2004 or later; the eight countries where respondents most frequently agreed were all pre-2004 enlargement countries. In almost all countries of the latter group, at least half of respondents *strongly agreed* - and less than one-tenth somewhat or *strongly disagreed* - that older people's voluntary work contributes to society in important ways. Portuguese, Irish and British respondents were the most likely to *strongly agree* with the statement (71%, 69% and 65%, respectively). In the former group of countries (except for Latvia), only between 15% and 26% *strongly agreed* that there is a major contribution from older people performing voluntary work, while between 27% and 47% *somewhat* or *strongly disagreed* that this is the case. Romanian respondents were the most likely to *strongly disagree* (25%), followed by Bulgarian and Czech respondents (18% and 17%, respectively). In Latvia, however, only 18% in total disagreed with the statement and 21% provided a *don't know* response.

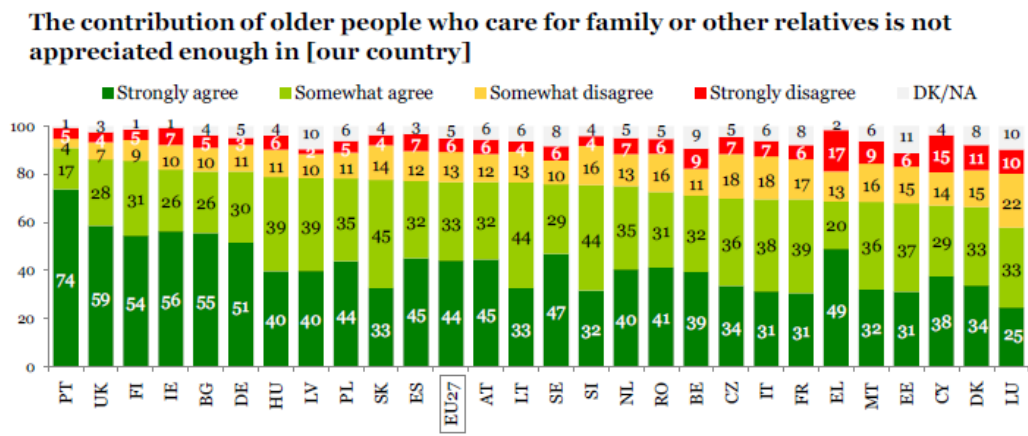


Only 7 in 10 of the 15-24 year-olds and full-time students *somewhat* or *strongly agreed* that older people make a major contribution to society via voluntary work in charitable and community organisations in their country. The total level of agreement increased to more than 80% for the over 54 year-olds, retirees and those with the lowest level of education. Rural residents were more likely than city dwellers to *somewhat* or *strongly agree* that older people's voluntary work makes an important contribution to society (80% vs. 74% in metropolitan areas), Finally, men and women held relatively similar views about the contribution of older people to society.

h) The contribution of older people who care for family or other relatives is not appreciated enough in [our country].

Slightly more than three-quarters of interviewees thought that the contribution of older people who care for family members or relatives is not sufficiently appreciated in their country (44% strongly agreed and 33% somewhat agreed).

Respondents in Portugal (91%), the UK (87%) and Finland (85%) were the most apt to somewhat or strongly agree with this proposition, while respondents in Luxembourg were the least likely to do so (58%). Luxembourg was the only country where more than 3 in 10 (32%) respondents somewhat or strongly disagreed that older people’s contribution in this respect was not being sufficiently appreciated. Portuguese respondents stood out from the pack somewhat as roughly three-quarters (74%) strongly agreed that the contribution to society by older people, who have a responsibility of care for family members or relatives, is not appreciated enough in their country. In Germany, Finland, Bulgaria, Ireland and the UK, between 5 and 6 in 10 respondents expressed their strong agreement, while in Luxembourg, Estonia, France, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Lithuania and Slovakia, only between a quarter and a third strongly agreed.



Q3. Older people are not just receiving from society, they can also give something back. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree .
Base: all respondents, % by country

Respondents between 40 and 64 years-of-age were the most apt to somewhat or strongly agree that the contribution of older people who have a responsibility of care for family members or relatives is not sufficiently appreciated in their country, while 15-24 year-olds (and full-time students) were the least likely to do so (80% vs. 71%-72%). The

results by occupational status showed that employees were the most likely to somewhat or strongly agree with the above statement (80% compared to 74%-76% in the other occupational groups); however, when looking at those who strongly agreed with the statement, it appears that retirees were just as likely as employees to select this possibility (47% strongly agreed vs. 46% of employees).

4. Final remarks

According to the perceptions of the majority of EU citizens, the social representation of elderly people and their role in intergenerational solidarity is rather good:

- elderly people are not considered a burden for society by two third or respondents and about 60% of people believe that media are exaggerating the risk of an intergenerational conflict;
- conversely, the positive role of public intervention supporting elderly people is not so strongly shared by respondents: only one third of interviewees believes that social services are sufficient to maintain frail older people at home or believe that people who care for elderly relatives is adequately supported by them; only about 40% of respondents believe that in the future governments will be able to pay for pensions and care for elderly people; not surprisingly, differences among countries are here very high;
- the vast majority of respondents believes that elderly people are a very important resource for other generations, in family relations and in society; almost 90% believe that parents and grandparents are financially helping generations to set up new families, and almost 80% believe that voluntary action of elderly people in society is very important;
- finally, and rather controversially, more than 70% of respondents believe that the contribution of elderly people in family relations is under appreciated.

Moreover, national responses vary significantly from one country to another (in some questions the distance between the higher and the lower percentage is more than 50%), while fewer differences can be found according to sex, working conditions, urbanisation; only age seems to cause slight differences in attitudes, but sometimes elderly people and younger generations give/show similar responses, while adult people significantly differ. In other words, it can be said that variations in opinions appear to be more determined by the social

general environment (cultural, social welfare systems) than by individual personal condition (including a possible corporative plea for the protection of a single generation against other generations' interests).

European citizens seem to clearly acknowledge the existence and the importance of intergenerational solidarity, inside family relationships but also in social life (through voluntary action and through public redistribution of resources and services by the welfare state). Policy makers therefore have to carefully consider the intergenerational dimension of social and family policies, promoting the existing reciprocal exchange of resources inside family networks, and shaping their national and local policies and services in an intergenerational relational approach. This could be a powerful tool to cope in a positive way with the actual demographic transition, supporting young generations together with the older ones, and supporting older generations in alliance with the younger ones, so preventive a possible - and dangerous - social and economic conflict among generations. This is potentially one of the most innovative perspectives that European welfare systems could take in the twenty-first-century.

Francesco Belletti



Francesco Belletti is a sociologist and is currently President of Forum delle Associazioni Familiari (FDAF), an Italian umbrella ONG representing 49 family associations and 20 regional forums (www.forumfamiglie.org). He is also Director at CISF – Centro Internazionale Studi Famiglia (International Center for Family Studies - www.cisf.it), a research centre based in Milan and editor of a bi-annual report on Italian Families. He has published many articles and books on family life and local family policies projects.

Email: direzione@forumfamiglie.org

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INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY: RE-BUILDING THE TEXTURE OF THE CITIES

Lorenza Rebuzzini

Forum delle Associazioni Familiari

Everybody experiences in his/her life intergenerational relationships and solidarity, but only in recent years has it become a policy issue, particularly in urban areas. The mix of people isolation and ageing has become a critical point, especially where the young and the old are competing for resources, public space and attention.

As previously noticed

“This has been further exacerbated by the way policies and services are normally developed around targeted groups or issues that are by their nature disjointed and discriminatory. The aim of intergenerational work is to find ways to develop and strengthen these relationships and consequently become an agent of social change with benefits to the whole of society” (Municipality of Manchester, *Looking Backward, Looking Forward*).

Combating isolation, rebuilding the social texture, reconstructing relationships of the “good neighbourhood”, and promoting practices of active ageing is today a necessity felt in many cities, especially the ones in which ageing population, migration and high level of unemployment among young people are mixed together. Therefore, policies to enhance intergenerational solidarity are strictly linked to the wellbeing of society, and therefore to the wellbeing of families who are a part of society.

In this article two good practices, two projects developed in Turin (Italy) and Manchester (UK), will be analysed, in order to understand the main characteristics for intergenerational policies to be effective. Both Turin and Manchester are mid-sized cities with large metropolitan/suburban areas (Turin has 865,263 inhabitants, Manchester 464,200, but if we take into consideration the whole Metropolitan area, they both have

almost 2,000,000 resident). They both developed as industrial cities, although at different times, and their industries underwent severe crises; they both have been invested in by processes of internal and external migration, ageing of the migrant population and high level of unemployment among young and disadvantaged people. In addition, in the nineties they both experienced strong urban regeneration programmes and commercial revitalisation, changing their productive and economic assets.

The contents of this article are based on interviews with Renato Bergamin (Director of the Project Cascina Roccafranca, Turin), and Paul McGarry (Senior Strategy Manager, Manchester Generations Together programme). Both projects have been developed by the municipalities of Turin and Manchester and are based on strong alliances with local stakeholders (foundations, voluntary or family associations, universities), although they have been built in two different (sometimes opposite) ways and according to different goals: while Manchester Together Programme specifically targets intergenerational solidarity, Cascina Roccafranca has been developed as a project of urban development. Nevertheless, in both cases, the outcome was an intergenerational approach to tackle isolation and to rebuild the urban texture.

Manchester Generations Together

Manchester Generations Together is a programme started in 2009 with funding due to end at the end of March 2011 (though the municipality of Manchester is putting in place plans to continue it). This programme is part of a greater project, the *Valuing Older People* (VOP) Project, launched in 2003 by Manchester City Council, the three Manchester Primary Care Trusts and community and voluntary organisations. The partners' aim was to improve the quality of life of Manchester's older adults by working together.

Valuing Older People represents a commitment to improve services and opportunities for the city's older population. It also challenges Manchester's public agencies, businesses and communities to place older people at the centre of the extensive plans for the regeneration and reshaping of the city. Soon, VOP developed its interest in Intergenerational Practice (IP), and in 2006 stated its close collaboration with the Beth Johnson Foundation, a UK charity, which convenes the UK Centre for Intergenerational Practice. The first phase

of VOP Project, before Generations Together, was based on a report commissioned from the Beth Johnson Foundation, *Looking Backward, Looking Forward*, which included the following elements:

- training in intergenerational practice for over 100 front-line staff;
- stakeholder interviews and analysis;
- funding to a small number of demonstrator projects;
- establishment of a learning network;
- an Intergenerational Practice e-bulletin;
- strategy and policy development (how 'intergenerational practice' adds value to Manchester City Council's corporate, departmental and partnership priorities and how it will improve the lives of residents).

One of the strongest messages that came through from the report was that there was a real need to establish opportunities to connect people across the generations to build understanding and respect. A large proportion of interviewees described age segmentation as an increasing part of our society, manifesting itself in decreased contact between younger and older people. In looking at community cohesion, it is important to begin to explore and understand the different world views of the different generations. It is also necessary to acknowledge that tensions between generations is not a new phenomenon as each new generation strives to develop its own identity and place in society; it is the way these relationships are negotiated and established that is key.

It is also important to recognise the role of the extended family where this still exists. In this respect, the use of storytelling techniques of group learning across ethnic groups has proved to be effective. In the Netherlands, for example, a programme called *A Neighbourhood Full of Stories* has been developed. The Netherlands Institute of Care and Welfare (NIZW) has developed a new method for promoting the integration of generations and cultures: 'neighbourhood-remembrance'. This method uses memories and stories of neighbourhood residents in order to promote exchanges, mutual understanding and respect between different age and cultural groups. Neighbourhood-

reminiscence is community development, based on the local neighbourhood level⁸.

The “Intergenerational Programme is therefore about building generational relationships within community settings between people. It is also a way of addressing social exclusion of older and younger people and making places friendly for people of all ages”, says Paul McGarry; “Intergenerational approaches are an effective way to address a number of issues - many of them key government priorities - such as building active communities, promoting citizenship, regenerating neighbourhoods and addressing inequality and social exclusion”.

Interest in IP has developed in the context of a number social policy concerns often linked to community cohesion and social exclusion in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This has included concerns about levels of anti-social behaviour and worklessness, in particular involving young men, and addressing issues that affect older people, such as loneliness and depression: “This has led us to seeing IP as a tool for improving the quality of life for older and younger people in Manchester and informed our work developing Manchester as an ‘Age Friendly City’. We have recently being accepted into the WHO Age Friendly City network”⁹.

The Valuing Older People team co-ordinates Manchester’s Generation Together programme. The team is located in the Manchester Joint Health Unit, a public health team based in Manchester City Council, coordinated by a Programme Manager (Patrick Hanfling), a Programme Officer (Rachel York) a Community Engagement Officer (Tracey Annette) and the leader of the IP demonstrator work (Programme Manager Sally Chandler). Progress is reported to the Senior Strategy Manager (Paul McGarry) and a wider Steering Group of senior managers in the Council. The programme is therefore delivered through Manchester City Council, the voluntary and community sector and the academic sector, through Manchester Metropolitan University and the Manchester School of Architecture.

⁸ For more details, Merken C., Neighbourhood-Reminiscence. Integrating Generations and Cultures in the Netherlands (see References).

⁹ For more information see

http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2010/age_friendly_cities_20100628/en/index.html

Manchester Generation Together was funded by the previous Labour Government: £5.5 million was allocated for the programme, which local authorities could apply to (up to £400,000 each). Nearly all Local Authorities (132) in England applied and Manchester was one of the 12 successful bids. Manchester's bid involves 13 projects based around four themes: shared spaces, shared skills and learning, health and wellbeing, families.

Five of the Manchester projects will be run through Manchester City Council, six through the voluntary sector and two by academic bodies.

1. *ALL FM community radio project* (in the district of Levenshulme), is built on the results of past projects, which challenged the negative perceptions that different generations have of each other. This project will target multi-cultural neighbourhoods to identify older and younger volunteers to learn all aspects of broadcasting.
2. *Food Futures cookery classes* (city-wide) involves young people not in employment, education or training and isolated older people producing healthy meals together.
3. *Manchester City Council Youth Service's Intergenerational Volunteers in Schools* develops sustainable school volunteering programme, involving grandparents and parents in skill sharing.
4. *Manchester School of Architecture*, architectures of intergenerational engagement raises awareness of the design implications of shared spaces.
5. *Home Improvement Agencies' maintenance skills exchange* involves Do-It-Yourself (DIY¹⁰) skills taster days, DIY training and a makeover of a community building by an intergenerational team.
6. *Manchester Adult Education Service Adult Education Intergenerational Buddy Exchange* uses Adult Learner volunteers to help vulnerable families by offering support to young mothers and learning support to children and young people.
7. *Generation Games* involves extended families in games and interactive activities to facilitate better communication between family members. It helps them to develop mechanisms that boost families' capacity to support children while supporting the adults

¹⁰ “a term used to describe building, modifying, or repairing of something without the aid of experts or professionals” (<https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/DIY>).

to become further engaged in volunteering, learning or employment.

8. The project between *Community Service Volunteers* (CSV) and the *Powerhouse Library*, 'Young and Older Voices' focuses on Moss Side, one of the most culturally diverse areas in the city. The project develops more hands on intergenerational volunteering opportunities that sees older and younger people becoming active citizens and advocates for social change.
9. The *Multicultural cookbook & Community Allotment* and *Inspired Sisters* projects provides opportunities for children and young people to learn about food growing and sustainable living, develop cooking skills and experience preparing and sharing food from other cultures. All participants benefit from physical activity on allotments.
10. *The Roby Mental Health Project* aims to equip groups of older and younger people with advocacy and advice-giving skills as tools to address mental health issues within their communities.
11. *Common Ground* involves a Big Brother-style café conversation, which teases out attitudes towards people from different generations. Participants then work together on shared tasks and the process is recorded through video diaries to monitor and record changing attitudes as bridges are built.
12. *Intergenerational Evaluators* involves training up younger and older people to be able to carry out evaluation of intergenerational projects and programmes. This projects aims at enabling people to work together and start social and no-profit enterprises.

The last project has been developed by a gay and lesbian association. All of these projects will be evaluated and monitored by a specially appointed national agency. Moreover, an independent research organisation called York Consulting has been appointed to evaluate the Generations Together programme. York Consulting has developed different approaches to collect information about each project, including an online management information tool and telephone interviews. Manchester is one of six local authorities to have been chosen as a case study site, where more in depth evaluation of some projects will be done.

“Plans for the future involve the development of IP influenced policy with our partners, cities and districts, a partnership with BJS and Leeds local authority to develop a tool kit on IP, a specific programme

involving Age Friendly Cities, the development of new skills by community development workers, exploration of UK and European research opportunities in collaboration with partners”, concludes Paul McGarry.

Cascina Roccafranca, “The Art of Building a common Space”

Cascina Roccafranca was an abandoned farm-building in Mirafiori district, in the North of Turin, where a factory of Fiat was established in 1939 and is still operating. In 2007, thanks to funds granted by the EU project Urban 2, the farm building was restructured and transformed into a cultural and recreational centre.

The restructuring was brought on by a team of architects in strict collaboration with the team of social workers appointed to the project by the Municipality of Turin. “The multidisciplinary approach and the possibility of projecting together revealed as an essential element in building a common space, a ‘home for the district’”, says Renato Bergamini. This was an uncommon and challenging, but very promising, approach to the conceptual work of restructuring the building in order to create ‘a place for the district’. Therefore, from the very beginning, Cascina Roccafranca was meant to become an *aesthetically valuable* and at the same time a *functional place*: large windows, empty but cosy and interchangeable spaces in which many different activities can be developed and many different age groups can meet.

Cascina Roccafranca is run and managed by a Foundation in which the Municipality of Turin constitutes the Founder, while associations and realities of the district (parishes, schools, informal groups) constitute the Main Partner. The Executive Board is composed by three persons nominated by the Mayor, and three persons representing the associative realities of the district, among which the association “Gruppo Abele” (www.gruppoabele.it) plays a prominent role. The Foundation has five main goals: to build citizenship, to enhance the wellbeing of the community, to promote a mainstreaming culture based on solidarity and linked to the territory, to experiment in social partnership between public and private sector, and to promote a culture of respect for different people. The two keywords to understand the project”, says Riccardo Bergamini, “are ‘Welcoming’ and ‘Participation’”.

Cascina Roccafranca intends to be a free and welcoming space where the staff shares and promotes a bottom-up approach, according to the following guidelines:

- *Creating synergies among stakeholders*: “Experience has taught us that contents are important, but are not fundamental. The methodology you follow, instead, is essential and must foresee the participation of stakeholders, informal groups, and local associations. Social workers have to give room to interests brought by the people, even if they think such content are irrelevant. The social workers’ point of view is one point of view, it is not *the* point of view. We propose a dialogic method in projecting events, actions and initiatives”. According to this methodology, Cascina Roccafranca’s staff tries to create synergies among the different stakeholders that share similar interests, ideas and projects.
- *Using a plurality of languages*: “Many different forms of communications are used to convey messages: music, dance, theatre, etc. The storytelling technique has also been developed in an intergenerational project, I Nonni raccontano (‘grandparents telling stories’), in which older people share their memories with younger people on how the district was in past times.
- *Increasing competencies*: “Groups, associations, persons who come to Cascina Roccafranca show one preminent need: being listened to”, says Riccardo Bergamin. In Cascina Roccafranca calls are launched to fund and support micro-projecting and working groups. Riccardo Bergamini notices that “in these years we have realised that the management of Cascina Roccafranca, in terms of schedules, deadlines, communication, is a complex and necessary job, nevertheless we have realised that it is much more necessary to have a greater capacity to listen to the ideas and interests of people, and to enhance competences that are already present. Acknowledging the role and the competences of others, especially when they are non-professional, is a difficult but necessary step”.
- *Building formal and informal networks*: The Cascina Roccafranca staff tries to promote formal and informal networks based on common interests, maintaining them open to new people which want to join and bring new ideas.

In this very de-structured and open approach, the encounter between different age groups is left to the freedom of people getting together in

this space and building formal or informal networks, based on common interests and projects. The aim is therefore to build the setting where intergenerational solidarity can be developed. Services and activities steadily delivered at Cascina Roccafranca are:

1. *Info Point*: information on all activities in the centre and the district.
2. *Counselling Services*: legal advice, trade unions services, information on the wellbeing of the over-sixties, support for foster and adoptive families, counselling for parents, help for victims of violence, information and counselling for the ill people and their right to be assisted, information for animals' owners; all of these counselling services are run in collaboration with voluntary associations or groups.
3. *Restaurant La Piola dell'Incontro* and *Café ¿Algomas?*: biological and fair trade products and products from local micro-breweries.
4. *Centre for families "The enchanted Fortress"*: with playing activities and parental counselling.
5. *The Ecomuseum*: with a large section dedicated to the history and development of Mirafiori District.
6. *Play, Move, Become Friends*: dedicated to children and families, run by Agape Foundation, on Saturday mornings and Sundays.
7. *Critical Consumers' Shop*: organised by the group of 150 families that have associated in the Cascina Roccafranca Solidal Purchasing Group. The Project is meant to spread new lifestyles and pays special attention to the quality of life. The group plays also attention to the issue of responsible tourism and has opened an info point on it, inside the shop.
8. *Women's Espace*: run by an informal group of women, focusing on the following themes: generational solidarity, work, health, history of women, culture and arts.
9. *Wellbeing Espace*: run by a group of associations already interested in the theme; gym courses and conferences are organised.
10. *Cascina Together*: a project dedicated to people who have free-time during the day (e.g. pensioners, stay-at-home mums, unemployed people, etc.). Activities and self-run courses are organised.
11. *Incubator of Ideas*: an activity in which proposals for new projects are gathered together, examined and finally promoted. A number of projects have been developed as a result – time bank, a social platform based on Internet (www.laperquisa.it), Roccafranca Film

(*cineforum*), free software developing and organisation of a Linux Day, activities based on intercultural exchange with Arab migrants.

12. *Cultural Events*; each month, cultural events are organised.

This list shows that there is “room for every generation”. Nevertheless there is a missing age group: adolescents. This is partly due, according to Bergamin, to the fact that near Cascina Roccafranca a centre for young people has just opened. But it is also due to the specific age and the “impossibilities” for adolescents to participate in such a context. The presence of young adults’ (20-35 years old) should as well be strengthened: this age is participating on very specific projects (e.g. the creation of open source software), while a daily, more integrated and plural experience is still missing. The presence of families is massive, and this is of course a “natural place” in which intergenerational relations can be built.

Nevertheless, 30% of the regulars going to Cascina Roccafranca are aged 60 or over. They represent the majority of the one hundred volunteers working there, with different levels of involvement and participation. There are almost forty volunteers steadily linked to the management of Cascina Roccafranca (scheduling, gardening, coordinating groups, managing activities) and they are involved in coordination and periodical meetings. Moreover, there are sixty volunteers linked to specific projects and activities, belonging to associations or informal networks. “The over sixties,” says Riccardo Bergamin, “are a great richness in our work. They have two precious characteristics: they have time, and they have competences. They have time, because they don’t have to work anymore and don’t have to look for elderly parents or small children (or, if they do, it’s not a full-time and every-day activity), and they have strong competences, acquired at work or indeed over their whole lives. They are proud and willing to share competences and we try to emphasise and enhance this attitude: for example a judge, now retired, is running a course in history of music, open to anyone who is interested in this subject”.

In three years of activity Cascina Roccafranca has therefore become an open space, respected by all the people in the district: since opening, the building has never been vandalized, and there have been no thefts. In this open laboratory, policies to build intergenerational solidarity have been put to test and singles, as well as families, have been “got off the ground” with the explicit intention to revitalise the district. The mix of

public and private actors is intended to stress shared responsibility and participation, but also to enhance the fact that this project has to join economic sustainability. Projects and activities must be self-financed for the 30% of the total cost. The evaluation of the first two years of activity has been done. Single activities have been evaluated according to two parameters: self-efficacy, and efficacy related to the strategic objectives of Cascina Roccafranca.

Conclusions

Turin and Manchester have developed two very different projects as regards the target, the approach and the methodology followed. Manchester has developed an explicit and coherent set of policies on intergenerational practice, while the Municipality of Turin has developed micro-projects based to participation and solidarity. These two experiences can be considered complementary in showing how the local and the micro-level can be considered fundamental in building intergenerational solidarity policies, as each urban reality holds its own peculiarity as regards the age composition of inhabitants.

Both projects show the great importance of re-thinking and re-building social policies, as well as urban contexts, from an intergenerational point of view: where the pact among generations is recognised and enabled, and spaces are projected and built from an intergenerational and participatory point of view, the wellbeing of families and communities is reinforced. In addition, thanks to this approach, families can be greatly helped in recognising their inner - intergenerational (in essence) - structure. Working at local level means also facing a transformation of the welfare system and being more in touch with the "living spaces" of families. This leads us to a further consideration: intergenerational solidarity can be generated and promoted in the family when the family is considered the basic and prominent cell of the society, and is therefore supported and promoted as such. This also means that the alliance between family and society is built in contexts in which the mutual recognition and acknowledgment among generations is promoted and recognised.

Re-thinking social policies and urban development starting from the intergenerational approach with an open point of view will therefore be an interesting, and nevertheless necessary, challenge for the future of social policies. As demonstrated in Existential Field 4b of the FAMILYPLATFORM Report on *Major Trends Local Politics* –

*Programmes and Best Practice Models*¹¹ in regards to family policies, local policies and the management of community development can be a great occasion, in order to develop intergenerational solidarity policies.

Lorenza Rebuzzini



Lorenza Rebuzzini is working for Forum delle Associazioni Familiari, one of the partners of the Family Platform Project. She graduated in Philosophy and she collaborates as researcher with CISF – Centro Internazionale Studi Famiglia, International Center for Family Studies (www.cisf.it) in Italy. She has published, in collaboration with Francesco Belletti, a research on widowhood in Italy and also writes for the Italian review Famiglia Oggi.

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EUROPE AND LARGE FAMILIES' SOLIDARITY

Raul Sanchez

Institut d'Estudis Superiors de la Família

Solidarity between generations is a reality experienced by many European large families on a daily basis. But the European social model that we are building does not seem to be well adapted this reality. Two true stories from Spain, my country, can be used as examples.

The first is about a young couple who got a "mini apartment" from the City Council in a populous and distant neighbourhood from the city centre. It was the only affordable housing they could get to start their family life. They were between temporary contracts and unstable jobs and these impeded them to obtain a simple mortgage. After a year they had a beautiful baby and the next, twins! Thirty-five square meters, a couple and three children. They asked the City Council to provide them other house. It was impossible: the contract mandated that for eight years so they could not sell or rent this tiny apartment. They had to wait six more years. Of course, they were outraged and, above all, desperate, because in addition - as they are a bit revolutionary - they would like to have a new child.

The second: a large family recently moved to Spain from Belgium. The father is from there, the mother is from Spain. They have six children. The Belgian government transferred 1,200 Euros to the parents every month without any income status. It's a universal benefit for children in this country. But after a while they had to adjust to the Spanish social system. Result: zero Euros - yes, nothing! - from the Spanish Social Security and 175 Euros per month from the regional government: 1,025 Euros less per month than before. The mother had to leave her job to take care their children and, of course, they are already looking for new employment in the south of France, a country far more generous than Spain with the large families.

These are two real examples of a social model that is being built ignoring, if not contrary, the families that wish to have and bring up something as human, intimate and necessary as children are. Despite small steps in recent years, all experts agree - and experiences show - that the distance to a family-friendly society is still very long.

The general European framework, related to the family issues, has been characterised for many years by a very low birth rate, always below the required number to guarantee the replacement of generations; by the progressive incorporation of women working outside the house with related social and economic transformations, and by a labour market that forgets this phenomenon and is not adapted to the family dimension of workers. A globalised and competitive market leads to longer years of study, and also generates highly volatile employment among young people, and a greater geographical mobility for everybody, separating them from their closest family network. Furthermore, there is a very high cost of housing. For these reasons people are delaying the age of marriage and also having a first child. We experience a rapid increase in divorce and in the number of births outside marriage and abortions. In addition, there are very large differences in measures of public family support among the member countries of the European Union.

By this quick review it seems clear that the family has become one of the most overlooked European social structures, and we are beginning to suffer the consequences. We have forgotten that the family is the largest NGO, the one that takes the best care of the sick, the elderly, the unemployed, especially in the time of crisis. So, when the family network is missing, the social costs increase in an incredible way. We have ignored the supportive role that families with children play in maintaining the famous European welfare system, also as provider of human capital. That is why now the focus is placed on how to reduce pensions or how to extend working life or how to introduce the co-payment in health, social or educational services. In short, we are now reducing the quality of life of a system which has been kept up till now thanks to the brave men and women who have chosen to have kids in a society that is taking them less and less into consideration.

With all of this in mind, it seems increasingly difficult to have children, and especially difficult to have several. How have we been able to ignore such an important factor for the maintenance of the envied European social model?

Each survey held in European countries show that women want to have more children than they actually are having¹². As womens' responses show in these surveys, it would be enough to facilitate families in exercising their own functions; supporting them to have the children desired, and giving them the possibilities and the necessary time to care and educate the children well.

To achieve this goal it's very important to avoid all kinds of social and economic penalisations or discriminations due to the family size, and support them with a series of compensations, either monetary or in services. This should be supported by the governments at all his levels, especially with a "courageous budget", devoting considerable resources in long term, under the consideration of an investment, not an expenditure, since future benefits are obvious to everyone. It's not enough to invest money but to create a new mentality, to promote a social contract for the family - and for the children as a social good - in every country and at the European level, involving not only politicians but also the economic, educational, cultural and mass media world. This could be the beginning of a real family-friendly society, and the first intergenerational European solidarity.

Without families and children there is no welfare, there is no future, there will be no Europe. It seems natural that we may ask: *"If we have already got an economic, monetary and labour market unity, why can't we experience the social convergence on this issue?"* Families of Europe hope that their instances will be listened to and promoted as priorities in the European Agenda.

Raul Sanchez



Raul Sanchez is Director of the "Institut d'Estudis Superiors de la Família" (IESF) (Institute of Advanced Family Studies), Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (Barcelona) and General Secretary of the "European Large Families Confederation" (ELFAC).

¹² See, for example, the *Eurobarometer* 2006 on fertility and childbearing preferences (http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_253_en.pdf).

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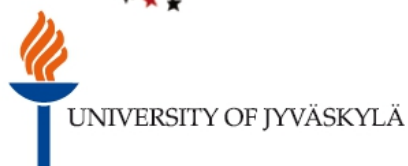
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