

INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY: OLD AND NEW SCENARIOS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

■ PIERPAOLO DONATI

1. The issue of intergenerational solidarity: a representation of the situation at the turn of the year 2000

This contribution is about solidarity between generations, and not equality between them. The two topics are quite often conflated in the public discourse, so it is useful to underline the specific focus adopted here.

The topic of equality (usually meant as equality of opportunities in the access to physical and non-physical resources, in particular educational, economic and social opportunities) is not the same as the topic of solidarity. The former is a typical expression of the ideology of opportunities within a political lib/lab configuration of society, while the latter refers to exchanges, attitudes, expectations, engagements, relations, transactions between the different generations as such. Of course, solidarity implies opportunities in the access to goods, but it is a different matter: it is about the ways in which each generation relates to the others, both synchronically and diachronically.

In this conference, many scholars have referred to the distribution of goods as physical entities (water, air, forests, climate and so on), while I am interested in *social* goods, which consist in social relations or depend on social relations, in particular those that are called 'relational goods'. As a social scientist, I am looking at what I could call 'society warming', which, in a sense, parallels what is commonly called 'global warming' in the physical environment.

The study of intergenerational solidarity has been a priority since the initial intentions of the PASS. At the end of 2000 it was decided to open a program which should have been extended over several years. In particular three topics were identified. a) The need to delineate the contours of the family problems which PASS ought to tackle within the new program. b) A number of aspects which definitely belong to the field of intergenerational solidarity and to which social scientists might usefully contribute: the role of families in the education of children and teenagers, in the support of parents and old-age members, in the provision of a better safety net than may be publicly provided, and last but not least, in contributing to building the cultural environment in which future generations will live. c) The problems posed by the crisis and reform of the welfare state to intergenerational issues. The results of the academic works de-

voted to these issues were intended to contribute to the advancement of the social doctrine of the Church.

In the first Plenary Meeting on Intergenerational Solidarity (PASS 2002, editor Edmond Malinvaud), the Academicians were like explorers slowly making our way into a new territory, clearing away obstacles, and charting the main features of the terrain. Building on our earlier, preliminary expeditions, we chose to concentrate in this phase of our project on the implications of changes in inter-generational relations for 'welfare' (broadly understood as encompassing all the networks and institutions upon which the very young, the frail elderly, the sick, and the incapacitated depend for support and security). The speakers and commentators confirmed the existence of a sobering array of challenges for social science, social policy and the Church's social teaching.

Two papers served as a starting reference framework: *Intergenerational solidarity: a sociological and social policy issue*, and *Equity between generations: a new social norm*. The contributions were focused primarily on the increasing strain that changing relations between generations, during the last decades, had placed on every society's capacity to provide for the needs of the very young, the frail elderly, and the severely ill or disabled.

The analyses cast light on the economic transitions and the demographic earthquakes that have shaken all of the four pillars upon which most individuals rely for support, security and social standing: the family, market work, governmental assistance, and the broad array of associations that are known collectively in Catholic social thought as the mediating structures of civil society. The participants underlined the repercussions of the huge changes in the socio-demographic trends (birth rates, longevity, marriage behaviour, etc.), in women's roles, geographic mobility, traditional cultures of reciprocity and filial piety (and in many other factors) on the 'load-bearing capacity' of each of these pillars to sustain viable and sound relations between generations. These changes have affected affluent and developing nations alike, in differing ways, and to varying degrees. They have jeopardized the wellbeing of the very young, the frail elderly, and other dependents, both in welfare states and in countries where government's role in providing social services is minimal or non-existent. No society has been unaffected, and no society has fully faced up to the unprecedented challenges posed by these changes in a world where dependency remains a stubborn fact of human existence.

The second step of this endeavour has been to put the intergenerational issues within the 'human ecology' framework (PASS 2004, editor Mary Ann Glendon). Five topics were given particular attention: the socio-demo-

graphic changes, the dependency welfare crisis, the breakdown in social norms, the new ‘woman question’, and blind spots in social policy and the social sciences.

1. *The socio-demographic changes*

One point upon which all participants agreed is that the latter 20th century was a time of extraordinary upheavals in generational relations. The speakers and commentators at the Academy’s 2004 Plenary Session presented a sobering picture of the demographic upheavals – the aging of populations, changes in sexual and family behaviour, the migrations of peoples – that have transformed and are transforming the social landscape. The participants pondered the implications of these changes, both for the most vulnerable members of the human family and for the institutions to which people turn in times of need. There was some speculation about whether economic, political and cultural causes led to changes in generational relations or the other way around. But discussion of that question remained inconclusive, for economies, politics, cultures, and family structures are mutually conditioning systems whose effects on one another are hard to isolate. Although there were divergences about the analysis of the causal chains, the speakers were in accord on the seriousness of their consequences. If one asks what those upheavals have meant and are likely to mean for the world’s dependent population, probably the most striking fact is that, with declining birth rates and improved longevity, that population now includes a much smaller proportion of children and a much larger proportion of disabled and elderly persons than it did a century ago. This is so even in developing countries where dependent children still outnumber the dependent elderly, but where the relatively high birth rates are declining. The changes were widespread, profound, and sudden: widespread, because all developed nations were affected to varying degrees; profound, because the changes involved increases or decreases of more than fifty per cent; and sudden, because the changes took place in less than twenty years. Perhaps not sufficiently explored in our discussions was the fact that those changes in family behaviour were both driving and driven by less quantifiable but equally momentous *shifts in attitudes*, that is, in the *meanings* that men and women attribute to sex and procreation, marriage, gender, parenthood, and relations among the generations. The tremors of the demographic earthquake subsided, but the social landscape of the developed countries was irrevocably changed. The full extent of the damage, however, was not immediately apparent because, for a time, it was widely accepted as a kind of liberal dogma that actions and decisions in the highly personal areas of sex and marriage

were of no concern to anyone other than the ‘consenting adults’ involved. It took time and sad experience for the understanding to sink in: that individual actions *in the aggregate* exert a profound influence on what kind of society we are bringing into being. When large numbers of people begin acting with regard primarily to self-fulfilment, the entire culture is transformed. We can now see that the cumulative effects of the changes in family behaviour that took rise in the 1960s have been especially detrimental to children and thus have cast a cloud over the futures of the societies involved. The modern freedom of divorce and of unmarried parentage have increased the scope of expression for parents without necessarily recognizing the implications for the welfare of children.

2. *The dependency welfare crisis*

The demographic upheavals of the late twentieth century have impaired the carrying capacity of all of the social systems upon which individuals depend for support and security, producing the growing dependency-welfare crisis. By human dependency, it was meant not only the composition of the dependent population at any given time, but the dependency that is an inescapable fact of the human condition for all men and women at various stages of their lives, including the dependency of the human race on its natural and social environments. Today, as the dependent elderly population expands and the cohort of active workers contracts, all welfare states are coming under severe strain. Overly ambitious welfare states have contributed to dependency and fostered a certain loss of individual initiative and responsibility. Even modest proposals to relieve pressures on welfare systems through limiting benefits or raising the age of retirement, have thus far proved politically divisive. It was noted a ‘free rider’ problem: childless individuals (who as a group enjoy a higher standard of living than child-raising persons as a group) expect to be cared for in old age through benefits financed by a labour force to which they did not contribute. If political deliberation continues within a framework based on the idea of competition for scarce resources, the outlook for children and child-raising families is troubling. With the declining birth rate, children are less visible in many societies: adults are less likely to be living with children; and neighbourhoods less likely to contain children. As the proportion of childless households grows, many societies are becoming ever more adult-centred, and the general level of societal concern for children declines. Families in subsistence economies are acutely aware of the importance of the human capital represented by children, while modern welfare states typically favour the elderly over the young where social spending is concerned.

Needless to say, most people consider it one of the blessings of modern social security and health care systems that they have made elders more independent, relieving families of much of the burden of eldercare. At the same time, however, the bulk of the poverty population in modern welfare states, as in the rest of the world, is composed of mothers and children. Thus, no small part of the impending dependency-welfare crisis is the prospect of divisive competition for resources, and of conflict rather than solidarity among generations. Many of the deficiencies of the welfare state have derived from an inadequate comprehension of its competencies, limits and duties, most concretely the forgetting of the principle of subsidiarity, which requires supporting the competence of those the state aids, wherever possible, rather than reducing them to passivity.

Concerns have been expressed about attempts to address work-force deficits through the importation of workers from other countries, since this can be a factor of impoverishment of the countries of origin.

3. The breakdown in social norms supporting solidarity between generations

The tendency among 20th century social planners to treat society as a collection of individuals in competition with one another for scarce resources, and, if they focus on the family at all, to regard it as an instrument to remedy failures of state and market, has produced negative outcomes. That tendency to treat the individual as the basic social unit has both obscured and aggravated the underlying problem of intergenerational solidarity: the breakdown of social norms upon which healthy economies, republics, and socially conscious states all ultimately depend. This conference has considered the implications for dependents, especially children, of the dramatic changes in social norms that took place in the affluent countries of Europe and North America in the late 20th century. The consequences for children, upon whom the human future depends, have been drastic: millions of children have been lost to abortion, and an unprecedented proportion of children are spending all or part of their childhoods in fatherless homes, often in poverty. Female-headed families created by divorce, desertion, or single parenthood now constitute the bulk of the world's poverty population. As for intact child-raising families, their standard of living is generally lower than that of childless households, especially if the mother stays home to care for the children.

The conclusion is inescapable that the affluent western nations have been engaged in a massive social experiment – an experiment that has opened many new opportunities and freedoms to adults, but one that has been con-

ducted at the expense of children and future generations.¹ Further, and more radical, experiments, moreover, are already underway in these countries via advances in biotechnology. The haunting question is: what will it mean for the relations between generations if children come to be seen as products of design and manufacture? In sum, the drastic declines in birth and marriage rates that have taken place in the developed nations, together with sharp rises in fatherless households, have cast a cloud over the economic and political futures of those societies. In places where the state once ambitiously took over many roles that formerly belonged to the family, governments are less and less capable of fulfilling their commitments, while the family has lost much of its capacity to care for its own members.

4. The new position of women within generational relations and their rights

The provision of care across any generation has been an almost exclusively female preserve and continues to be so. Perhaps no single development, apart from fatherlessness, has had more impact on the environment of childhood, the care of dependents, or the health of the mediating institutions of civil society than the increased labour force participation by women, including mothers of young children. It is a mark of great progress, and something to celebrate, that we now live in a world where women have more freedoms and opportunities than ever before in history. No society, however, has yet figured out how to assure satisfactory conditions for child-raising when both parents of young children work outside the home. And no society has yet found a substitute for the loss of other types of caregiving labour previously performed mainly by women. For many women, moreover, the picture of progress is ambiguous. Though birth rates are declining, the majority of women still become mothers. When mothers of young children enter the labour force, whether because of necessity or desire, they tend to seek work that is compatible with family roles. That often means jobs with lower pay, fewer benefits, and fewer opportunities for advancement than those available to persons without family responsibilities. Thus, ironically, the more a woman foregoes advancement in the workplace for the sake of caring for her own children, the more she and her children are at risk if the marriage ends in divorce. On the other hand, the more she invests in her work, the greater the likelihood her children will have care that is less than optimal.

¹ That is why, contrary to what some scholars have theorized (for instance Parfit 1982, 1984, 1990), we have to be definitely interested in the next generations even if they are not yet born.

It is not surprising therefore that women in developed countries are hedging against these risks in two ways: by having fewer children than women did in the past, and by seeking types of labour force participation that are compatible with parenting. In so doing, they often sacrifice *both* their child-raising preferences and their chances to have remunerative, satisfying, and secure employment.

Women in developing countries face even heavier burdens. As working age men increasingly commute to jobs in the modern sector or migrate to distant places in search of work, rural life no longer takes the form of the family production community. Today, in addition to performing the traditional tasks of childcare, food preparation, and gathering wood and water, women are increasingly left to take over responsibility for cash-crop farming.

Thus, while enormous economic advances have been made by women without children, mothers face new versions of an old problem: Caregiving, one of the most important forms of human work, receives little respect and reward, whether performed in the family, or in the labour market.

Despite these risks, most women still become mothers. In marriage, they accept primary responsibility for childcare, thereby incurring disadvantages in the labour force. If divorce or separation occurs, they seek and accept primary responsibility for the care of children even when they are not well equipped financially to do so. Indeed, if women did not continue to shoulder these risks and burdens, it is hard to see how any social institution could make up for the services they now provide.

The main solutions proposed by the feminism of the 1970s were the socialization of care-giving and equal childcare responsibilities for fathers and mothers. But those ideas have not had broad appeal. They ignore that for many women, caring for family members is central to identity; sustaining the relationships that make life meaningful. *Who* people are derives from their ultimate concerns which are expressive of their identities and therefore are *not* a means to some further end.

Cost-benefit analysis does, however, expose some peculiarities of social policy in the wake of the demographic revolutions. Despite the fact that those who perform care-taking roles within the family confer important benefits on the whole society, a mother who is left destitute when a family breaks up is often treated by welfare law as a social parasite and by divorce law as a burden to her ex-husband.

5. Blind spots in social policies and the social sciences

A number of blind spots in contemporary thinking about welfare and dependency, as related to intergenerational solidarity, have been identified.

Several speakers pointed to certain flaws in prevailing modes of social, economic, political and legal thought that contribute to many oversights: incomplete concepts of personhood and society, together with a tendency to focus on the individual, the market, and the state to the neglect of families and the mediating structures of civil society. The concepts of the human person that are prominent in social science and social policy both over-emphasize individual self-sufficiency and under-rate individual human agency. The image of the free, self-determining individual exerts such powerful attraction for Western culture that human dependency – which is central to children and elderly people within the context of generational relations – is relegated to the margins of consciousness. It is still a fact that circumstances can catapult anyone at least temporarily from a secure to a dependent position. It is still a fact that almost all persons spend much of their lives either as dependents, or caring for dependents, or financially responsible for dependents. It is still a fact that we all depend on the earth for the resources that make life possible. Every human being depends on common needs and common goods that are served by networks of giving and receiving between generations and by the virtues both of independence and of acknowledged dependence. In order to flourish people need both those virtues that enable them to function as independent and accountable practical reasoners and those virtues that enable them to acknowledge the nature and extent of their dependence on others. Both the acquisition and the exercise of those virtues are possible only insofar as people participate in social relationships of giving and receiving between generations. The over-emphasis on self-sufficiency in contemporary social thought co-exists with an approach to welfare that underrates human capacities. Social policy has been influenced by mind-sets that treat human beings as passive subjects or instrumental rationalists rather than as acting persons whose decisions are influenced not only by calculation of self-interest but by strongly held values in taking part to the production and enjoyment of relational goods. Surely social policy and social science would benefit from more attention to the fact that human beings are *both* able and dependent, with variations over one's life span. Society is not just a collection of individual competitors for scarce resources; it is a fabric of relationships, to a certain extent ambivalent and conflictual, in need of solidarity. There was wide agreement that a number of conceptual adjustments will be needed if policy-makers are to move beyond unpromising proposals based on conflictual models of human relations.

Here perhaps is where Catholic social thought could enter into a mutually beneficial dialogue with the social sciences. Catholic social teachings have long promoted a vision of society where the dignity of the human

person is the highest value; where the family has priority over the state; where all legitimate types of work, paid or unpaid, are respected; and where families, local communities and the mediating structures enjoy an appropriate autonomy. It has long presented a vision of human personhood in which each man and woman is understood as uniquely individual yet inescapably social; as a creature of unruly passions who nevertheless possesses a certain ability to transcend and even transform the passions; as a knower and a chooser who constitutes himself or herself, for better or worse, through his knowing and his choosing. It has elaborated a concept of solidarity, not as a mask for collectivism, but as a moral and social attitude, a virtue based on recognition of the interdependence of the members of the human family (SRS, 38). It has offered the fertile concept of subsidiarity in which an important role for the state is to help set conditions for personal, social and economic flourishing. Subsidiarity, however, is not a mechanical formula or a dogma, but rather a principle whose application depends on the ever-changing relations among state, market, civil society, families and individuals in each society. Whether and how policy-makers in modern states might accommodate a more capacious concept of personhood, an approach to gender equality that makes room for different individual vocations and roles, a deeper appreciation of the dignity of all legitimate human work, or an understanding of the cultural importance of families and the mediating structures upon which they depend have been recognized as fateful questions in need for new answers. In this meeting, PASS did not reach the stage of confident answers, but it was agreed that the first step of asking the right questions was achieved.

The third meeting concerned with intergenerational solidarity was explicitly devoted to the human condition of young people in the new demographic, economic, cultural and political scenario (PASS 2006, editors Mary Ann Glendon and Pierpaolo Donati). Its main contents are here reported within the next section.

2. What PASS has learned and proposed

The most significant achievements of the three aforementioned conferences can be summarized in three topics: the analysis of the worldwide situation, the basic issues to be dealt with, and the first recommendations and proposals.

1. The analysis of the worldwide situation

The participants agreed that, within the modernizing and globalizing processes, youth is fading and quite literally vanishing due to rapidly falling birth rates in the developed world, and extremely high mortality rates

among the young in some parts of the developing world. At the same time, all too many children are being deprived of their youth by being forced to grow up too quickly. One of the most successful features of this conference were the regional reports, each one organized around a single set of guidelines to facilitate comparisons. The analyses showed that, in countries suffering from poverty and disease, the childhood of some is cruelly curtailed by having to take on the responsibilities of adults, while in richer countries, many are pressured to adopt the lifestyles and preoccupations of adults without support or preparation. In the language of economists, children in poor countries are both ‘consumption’ and ‘capital’ goods, whereas in rich countries they are mainly regarded as ‘consumption’ goods (of course, in both types of countries, children are also ‘merit goods’, but the real extent of this recognition depends very much on each culture and country. This historical trend should be questioned, since a society which considers the child as a mere consumption good (and/or a purely instrumental merit good) is bound to become more and more alienated from its own future.

We should therefore rethink what can be called the ‘culture of childhood’. Such an endeavour will be more fruitful if it will be put in relation to the social ethics of reciprocity between generations, in the light of the following considerations: 1) there is a ‘natural’ obligation in the parent–child relation, which is automatically recognized by the parent; 2) the action of giving birth to a child creates an obligation, since otherwise the child wouldn’t exist (this is different from point 1); 3) society has the right (and perhaps the obligation) to enforce the parental obligation, though usually enforcement will be unnecessary; 4) the parental obligation implies also power to the parents, not only for the sake of efficiency in discharging the obligation, but also as a reward to the parents. We should develop new social policies in favour of children by relying upon a deeper consideration of the above mentioned four points in order to go beyond the strictures of utilitarianism and contractarian views. The concept of ‘obligation’ is not widely spread in ethical and economic discourse about social arrangements and should be made a subject of a new focus. Mainstream economics talks about the achievement of happiness or, as we frequently say, ‘utility’, or even, as with A. Sen, ‘functionings and capabilities’. Another language talks of ‘rights’. We should recognize that there is a category of ‘obligations’, which cannot easily be reduced to either utilities or rights. There is a need to enforce the trusteeship obligations of parents. A question was posed: ‘Who is subject to the law of intergenerationality?’, and the answer was: everybody, as a human being, irrespective of his/her age, sex, ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, social status. But parents should be seen as primary agents.

The topic of solidarity is intertwined with the issue of generational equity in terms of the struggle against the huge social debt that impinges upon the new generations. This debt has two dimensions. In the *intra-generational* dimension, it is the solidarity debt that some have with fellow contemporaneous countrymen. Rulers and political, economic and social leaders, as well as those who are better off, are the carriers of a social debt with those unprotected in their same generation. To this debt another one is added, the *intergenerational debt*, i.e. the debt of the generation in a productive age with the several generations in an unproductive age: the elderly, minors and those still to be born. In many countries (in particular Latin America) public debt is so vast, so demanding, that great efforts are needed to reduce it in order to give more chances to the next generations.

On the basis of the analyses provided in regional Reports, several important issues emerged regarding the situation of children and young people vis-à-vis the other generations on our planet. In particular, the serious breakdown of the current efforts of Catholics to transmit their faith to their children in many countries was underlined.

2. Basic issues to be dealt with

In terms of general trends, the most basic challenges concerning the new generations were depicted as follows. From the socio-demographic point of view: ratios of infant mortality still too high in many countries, the regressions in life expectancies, the gender inequalities in life expectancies, a certain refusal of the future in the countries afflicted by the ‘demographic winter’, the increasing importance of one-child families, the abnormality of gender-specific demographic indicators, and the fact that a decreasing number of children are benefiting from a two-parent family. From the cultural point of view: excesses of culture that make nature vanish in the name of ephemeral cultural fashions and global narratives of development that simultaneously put all relations to nature and society at risk. All the speakers stressed the fact that the flourishing of children and youth is severely threatened by the weakening of the family almost everywhere. In conclusion, it was agreed that it is time for civil society to do its own, to assume its human ecological responsibility. As all other ecological problems it demands from us to raise the view from the short term toward the medium and long term.

3. First recommendations and proposals

The utilitarian and contractarian perspectives that have dominated the issue of intergenerational equity so far have proved to be misleading. In examining our values, and thus our lives, we need to ask if the destruction of

an entire species-habitat for some immediate gratification is something we can live with comfortably. The mistake is to see procreation and ecological preservation as matters of personal and political morality. It is at least as much a matter of personal and political ethics. Perhaps the time has come to realise that children are capital and merit goods not only in poor countries, but also in rich countries, although in different ways. We must extend – rather than reduce – welfare state practices to include the reduction of ill health generated not only by the self-contaminating products and hazards of global industrialism, but also by its dereliction of civic well-being. This is the broader framework of any adequate concept of well-being with respect to the world's children and their families. It is possible that this global framework of risk may induce a certain solidarity between adults, children, and youth. For whereas in class terms *some* are never afflicted by the risks of poverty, *no one* escapes the afflictions of globalized risks to our air, water, food chain, forests, and heavens. We still have to rework our cognitive and moral maps to rethink civic sustainability rather than continue to rely upon scarcity-thinking to ration out the unequal risks of the emerging global economy of industrialized hazards. We are obliged to *globalize our moral map* since it is increasingly impossible to set up national and class walls to protect privileged moral environments. It follows that the moral environment of children can no longer be isolated. We can no longer imagine childhood as a pre-political or pre-economic realm safe from the hazards of the adult world without indulging a fantasy of child-immunity that is constantly violated through the intrusions of generation, class, race, and nation. But we must be aware that the welfare state should be understood and managed according to the principle of subsidiarity in order to promote the active citizenship of all intermediary bodies of civil society, first of all the family, as actors (producers) of intergenerational solidarity.

If it is true that many children, in many countries, nowadays are the children of fragmented and individualized families, then the *intergenerational family* may serve as a regulative notion in the derivation of social policies whose task is to sustain families in difficulties of one kind or another, but for which we need some benchmark of viability. The increase in life expectancies means a remarkable rise of many intergenerational families where the great-grandparents are present and active. In order to appreciate the value of multigenerational families it is important to maintain the implicit institutional concerns inscribed in the term *pro-*(on behalf of)*creation*, which cannot be substituted by the word *re-*(again)*production* which refers to the pure biological sense of sexual reproduction. If we undermine the distinction between the sociocultural responsibility for life and the biological re-

production of life, we lose the civic assurance that goes with childhood and youth as intergenerational passages. We must re-shape the world narrative, if we wish to give room to the new generations.

Five recommendations were stated: 1) the need to improve the measuring of demographic realities keeping in mind their great geographical diversity, 2) the need to promote a better understanding of the educational mission of society vis-à-vis the new generations, 3) the need to give priority to sanitary progress and the fight against poverty, 4) the need to improve equity between genders, particularly from the point of view of health and educational policies and 5) the need to adapt family policies to reality, keeping in mind, specially, the consideration of parents as their children's educators. Policy makers and professionals have the potential to have a comprehensive understanding of the issue of 'vanishing or flourishing youth' and should be able to form their values and organizing principles of life, train themselves in skills/arts, and processes of caring for the survival of intergenerational solidarity.

We should think of the future society as a function of the youth of today, their attributes, attitudes, knowledge, preferences and ultimately their capacities, abilities and commitment to this mission. We must recognize the preoccupation of youth that moves them towards the highest ideals. We must accept their lack of conformity with injustice, with ineffectiveness and with phariseisms and we must direct all that energy so that they can satisfy their legitimate aspirations and achieve a better society through social reform. We cannot be amongst those who disappoint. Instead, we must be amongst those who accept the preoccupation and have the strength to act. John Paul II expressed his thoughts on this matter in the following terms: 'It is the nature of human beings, and especially youth, to seek the Absolute, the meaning and fullness of life'. This is the true understanding of youth and its potential. Our solidarity must be aimed in this direction. It must be a solidarity that awakens and not one that anaesthetises. It should open the path to knowledge of what is substantial. It should focus on the distinction between what is permanent and what is transitory, what is material and what is spiritual. It should be a solidarity that gives youth security in its ideals and hope with respect to the final result of its aspirations. The Church is in need of expressing new programs to evangelize the young and, in the process, to aid in the revitalization of the faith of adult Catholics.

In dealing with the issue of children's rights, an assessment of what has been achieved so far in international charters is needed. Although the UNO *Convention* of 1989 on the Rights of the Child can be considered a milestone, since it is no longer a mere exhortation but binds signatory States

and compels them to introduce all the legal measures required in order to enforce it, many deficiencies and shortcomings can be noticed. For example, the Convention is silent on the subject of the rights of parents, the definition of family, and the protection of prenatal life; and vague on the concept of the best interests of the child. As it stands, the Convention's emphasis on the individual rights of children can come into conflict with, and be detrimental to, the rights of parents and more generally the rights of the child's family. It is worthwhile noticing that this conflict does not appear in other international charters (such as the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*, adopted on 11 July 1990). Although the juridical perspective is in itself limited, a new cultural effort should be made in order to achieve a universal agreement on the rights of minors that can overcome these deficiencies. We must look for a sounder balance between the rights of the individual child, according to more accurate criteria of respect of the integrity of his/her personality, and the rights of the 'significant others' (primarily his/her family) in order to pursue the interests of the child within the framework of the common good.

We must always remember that, notwithstanding the international protection, in most countries children today live in a social context that experiences difficulties in relating to children and understanding their needs and rights. This is especially so when the family is unstable or missing, and when the child is subject to an accelerated process of growth. He/she is involved in the so-called 'adultization' process, by which he/she runs the risk of being deprived of the right to grow up according to the natural rhythms of life. On the other hand, the proliferation of single and fragmented rights poses the risk of loosening the connections between rights and duties. Individual and social rights of any generation should be configured in terms of the nexus between freedom and responsibility.

Neither in the UN Charters nor in the European ones is the child explicitly recalled to his/her duties towards his/her family. Without accusing the UN *Convention* of putting children against parents, one may say that it would be wise, in the future, to be more explicit on the duties that children have towards their family. In the African Charters this is stated more clearly. In the Arabic Charters the constraints of the *Sharia* provide limiting principles.

We must take a new look at the fact that the fragility of the child faces increasing difficulties in rich countries as well as in poor countries, but for different reasons.

The major worries concern the denial of rights where prenatal life is concerned: abortion, disposal of frozen embryos, experiments on embryonic stem cells. UNICEF does not mention them. It is a deafening silence, and

a worrisome one, broken only by the voices of the Churches. Yet everyone should understand that no investment in protecting prenatal life, as well as no investment in children, means no future for a country, in addition to despising humanity's most precious resources.

In the end, it is urgent to realize that that much of our contemporary youth, although cared for by nation-states and the international community, seems to vanish even before it can be born. Surely, generalizations are risky. Despite negative events, comforting news is reported every day of young people involved in their families and societies and enabled to live in a positive way the rights that the international Charters grant to them. But in order to improve the outlook everywhere, it is necessary to find a remedy for the many educational inadequacies, the commercialization of society, the socio-economic problems of the poor countries, and the alienating lifestyles of the rich countries.

Moreover, rights must be enforced by amending, if necessary, the relevant legal instruments at appropriate levels, from international to regional, national and local. The question is not just to make justiciable those rights guaranteed to children but also to better define the competence of the entities currently established. For instance, a question to be solved, once and for all, is whether it is lawful or not that a technical body devoid of any political legitimation like the Committee established for the control of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child may by means of interpretation endanger the right to life, giving such an endangerment the same dignity as that of inviolable rights. The impact of this practice on domestic law tends to modify the correct institutional design, according to which each norm is a product of democratic consent expressed by through the bodies politically established for that purpose.

It is a duty to go on proclaiming children's rights in the international settings as well as within single States. But this is no longer enough. It is mandatory to clarify as soon as possible the ambiguities still present in matter of the right to life, parent-child relationships, the family model, and the role of the family in social life. This is primarily a political and cultural endeavour.

However, we cannot fall into the trap of a 'legalistic' perspective. We must be aware that the difficulties in caring for children and young people are much more complex than the proclamation of legal rights and therefore the solutions must be sought by going beyond the perspective of mere legal protections.

More research is needed in order to clarify the most significant difficulties 1) the extraordinary complexity of the real and normative contexts in which children live and grow up; 2) the extreme uniqueness through which that complexity in ethnic or religious communities, in social classes, in local,

regional or national units reduces itself to concrete real and normative conditions; 3) the maximum diversity and instability of the individual situations and developments which occur in spite or on account of the ethnic, religious, social, local, regional or national specifications; 4) the fractures, which may result at any time if the borders separating communities, classes, regions etc. from each other, are crossed, a fact which, however, especially comes true if children, parents, families or comparable groups cross-national borders together or separately. The growing transnationality of human life gives that aspect special topicality.

Solidarity with children and young people requires us to envisage a 'human ecology', as defined in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*. That in turn requires a leap into a new generation of human endeavours relating to children and young people. Such endeavours can be better understood by referring to what we have come to know as *relational rights*, in particular those rights which link people through the generations. These rights (not merely legalistic) concern those relationships that meet the most basic needs of the child as a relational being who cannot develop without relying upon an adequate family and a nurturing environment surrounding him/her. The child needs, first of all, human love, and can achieve authentic human growth only through relations of reciprocity, solidarity and freedom, first of all in the context of the chain of the generations in which he/she has been generated.

In order to understand the novelty of children's needs and rights, we must see them as a new frontier, coming after the various waves of rights that have emerged in modern society. The first generation of human rights referred to civil and political rights derived from the modern liberal revolutions. The second generation of rights was concerned with rights to education and culture, to work, to social welfare, derived from the nineteenth century movements that struggled to build up the institutional national welfare state. This second generation of rights has proved to be too bureaucratic and standardized to meet the needs of young people. That is why some thinkers and activists have begun to talk about a third generation of rights, such as the so-called 'rights to differences' (in gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.). However, if we want to achieve a true intergenerational solidarity, within a framework of a sound human ecology, we must search for a further generation of rights, i.e. those rights which refer not to the individual child *qua talis*, but to his/her personal being in relation to the 'significant others' in his/her lifeworld. First of all his/her parents, and secondly his/her kin, friends, neighbours, all the people linked to him/her in the web of the local community. These are the *relational rights*.

Of course, the concept of ‘relational right’ has to be studied and articulated in more detail, in order to make it less vague and more operative. A possible task of the Academy could be to reflect on this issue in the future, in order to give its own contribution to the social sciences in the light of the idea that ‘generational human rights’ (what must be expected by every generation and who is in charge) must be understood, first of all, as norms which foster human virtues and make them feasible in concrete relational contexts.

At present in many countries, only a few (and sometimes none) of these generations of rights are really implemented. Let us think of the *favelas* in Latin America, child soldiers in sub-Saharan Africa, child prostitution in some Asian countries, poor single-parent and underclass children in North America and Europe. Our hope is that a perspective that takes relational rights into account can give professionals, educators, policy-makers a new impetus and a new direction to struggle for a better intergenerational solidarity.

It is advisable to promote a new *Pact in Favour of Youth*, but we must be very clear on the contents (ethics and goals) of such a Pact. The guidelines of a *European Pact for Youth* launched in 2005 by some countries (initially a joint initiative of France, Germany, Spain and Sweden) are strictly materialistic: the Pact has been thought of as a means for the implementation of an economic target, namely the ambition of the EU to become the most competitive and knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion (objectives set out in the Lisbon Strategy). Although these goals can be good and legitimate, it is evident that the issue of intergenerational solidarity cannot be reduced to the pursuit of a more competitive economy and higher standards of material welfare. The Intergenerational Pact, if it is to be set out, should go well beyond all that. It should imply a different view of what is most worthy to be pursued for our children and young people: i.e. a more humane society, opened to the transcendental world.

It was respectfully recommended to the Holy See that an inter-dicasterial working group be constituted with the object of integrating all the efforts of solidarity with young people in the framework of the intergenerational issues. It is clear that the issue of intergenerational solidarity concerns different dicasteries, notably, the Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Evangelization of Peoples, Catholic Education, the Institutes of Consecrated Life, etc., as well as the Pontifical Councils for the Family, the Laity, Justice and Peace, Health, the Pontifical Academy for Life, etc. In itself, such a working group would already be a witness of internal solidarity within the Church, but completely oriented toward the human community.

The Catholic Church possesses a network of agencies that is the most highly developed in the world. No public or private organization has such a worldwide network of universities, schools, youth movements and Catholic Action, new movements endowed with an emerging spirituality, family movements, charitable institutions, hospitals, means of communication, etc. Impressive directories exist. No organization possesses such a large body of members ready to freely commit themselves to projects of solidarity.

In sum, the Academy has offered many fresh data, insights and proposals to be passed on to the Church, the national and international organizations and institutions, and all the people of good will who take care of intergenerational solidarity as a relational good to be promoted. This perspective is particularly meaningful when we consider that, to the extent that the issues of intergenerational relations are coming to public attention, they are typically presented in terms of conflict, rather than solidarity, among the generations, in all continents.

In this Report, I can only mention the workshop organized by the PASS on the topic of *Trafficking in Human Beings* (November 2-3, 2013)² which touched upon many relevant issues concerning the troubles of children, women and families as victims of new forms of slavery. These issues deserve special attention and cannot be included in this report.

3. What PASS might have done better in order to focus concepts, causal chains, policy regimes, impact assessments, and cultural changes

3.1. The work done by the PASS has highlighted with accuracy the context of the problems affecting the question of intergenerational solidarity at the turn of the 21st century. Nevertheless much remain to be done not only in order to get an updated knowledge of what is happening, but above all to cope with the novelty of the rapid economic, political and cultural changes that are radically modifying the terms of the question.

Topics that deserve a new focus have to do with: (I) the fundamental concepts that we use; (II) the reading of the demographic transition from a generational standpoint; (III) the evaluation of the impact of legislation and welfare systems on the generations; (IV) how intergenerational cultural transmission is changing and the study of generations as agents of cultural change. In all of these areas there are significant implications for Catholic social doctrine.

² See the Proceedings of the working group and the subsequent *Statement* (November 2013), available online <http://www.pass.va/content/scienze-sociali/en/events/2009-13/trafficking/traffickingstatement.html>

3.2. (I) Clarifying fundamental concepts: generation, solidarity, intergenerational relations

The central concepts of the discussion need to be examined in depth and refined.

a) The first area has to do with the concept of 'generation'. This has been used mainly in the demographic sense of *cohort* (the statistical set of individuals born in a certain year or time interval). This concept is neutral from every point of view. It lacks cultural and relational contents. It is simply a statistical aggregate of those people who are of the same age.

Then there is the concept of generation as '*age group*' in the *cultural-historical sense* (derived from K. Mannheim): for example, the 'Vietnam generation', the 'generation of 1968', the 'fall of the Berlin Wall generation'. This concept has to do with the problem of intergenerational solidarity only indirectly and marginally.

Then, there is *generation as 'parental-familial lineage'*. This way of understanding the generations does not reason with the categories of 'youth, adults, old people' (cohorts), but with those of 'children, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents'. The two perspectives are substantially different.

If we continue with this line of interpretation, we arrive at the observation that 'generations' in the *real sense of the word* cannot be defined apart from the family; rather, they find in family relations (of filiation and kinship) their *distinctive criterion* as compared to the more extensive concept of generation as age group, in a demographic (cohort) or cultural-historical sense (which could also include parents and children as witnesses or actors of historical events experienced together). Nevertheless, this line of reasoning does not turn out to be completely satisfying, in my opinion. It excessively limits the concept of generation to within family lineage. With the processes of modernization, the generations are increasingly influenced by what happens in the public sphere – in particular, by technological and communicative changes and by social policies (the welfare state) – in defining what is peculiar to every age of life (Donati 2002). We need to revisit the concept of generation in light of these 'interferences'.

The need for a new (relational) definition becomes evident: *generation is familial lineage (ancestors and descendants) mediated by social relationships outside the family*. In other words: *generation becomes the totality of persons who share a relation: the one that links one's position in one's lineage in the familial-kinship sphere (that is: child, parent, grandparent, etc.) with the position defined in the societal sphere on the basis of 'social age' (that is: according to age groups: youth, adults, the elderly, etc.)*. We have to speak about young children, adult children, old children. We have to speak about young parents, adult parents, old parents. We

have to speak about young grandparents, adult grandparents, old grandparents. These are the ‘new generations’ (Donati and Colozzi 1997) that hide behind the ‘complicated intertwinement’ between the generations, which, for the first time in history, has been created by our society. Intergenerational intertwinement becomes problematical when family status connected to lineage begins to fluctuate, and, thus, also the social status attributed to individuals as members of an age group in society begins to fluctuate.

b) *The concept of solidarity* has been used in a generic way. In theory, this term can take on various meanings.

A first meaning, used in the past, is that of *organicity*. Solidarity is conceived as of a body constituted by members that exist in solidarity – that is, functionally – in a reciprocal, organic relationship. This conception can no longer be practiced in a naive and immediate way because society is no longer conceivable nor governable as an ‘organism’. A second conception of solidarity is that of benevolent action, *charity*, caring for the other. This conception also has an important aspect, but it does not get at the point. A third conception understands solidarity as the *sharing of ideals or interests*. It is particularly problematic if applied to the generations. A fourth meaning of solidarity makes it a synonym of *justice* or *equity* in the distribution of goods. It is an important concept, but is not specific to intergenerational relationships.

In the PASS Proceedings, the meaning of solidarity as ‘interdependence directed toward the common good’ appears to prevail. However, neither the concept of interdependence nor that of the common good has been analysed in depth as specifically regards intergenerational relationships.

c) *The concept of ‘intergenerational relation’* as synonym of the parent–child relation has been taken to be implicit and accepted as a matter of course, but the ‘generative’ qualities and characteristics of this relation have not been explored. A generation is a generation because it *feels that it was generated*, for good or bad, in one way or another. If this feeling is missing, a generation is something else, and the inter-generational relation takes on other connotations. It is not enough to use a generic concept of relations as the reciprocal positioning or exchange between individuals of different ages. The concept of intergenerational relation, if it is to contain the generative sense between the generator and the generated, has to be clarified in terms of its structure, dynamic, and effects over time.

In short, the traditional definitions of generation, solidarity, and intergenerational relations have to be redefined because they can no longer capture what the postmodern society of globalization is producing. The reason for these shortcomings resides in the fact that traditional definitions are deficient when it comes to exploring the changes in the relationality that

characterizes the emergence of social phenomena. It is necessary to move beyond the traditional view because hyper-modern society is in the process of developing a relationality without historical precedents, generating relations that were previously 'unknown'.

These new scenarios are such that they also overturn old stereotypes: for instance, the claim for the existence of widespread familism in Mediterranean countries, in contrast with the countries of northern Europe. Dykstra and Fokkema (2010) have refuted the traditional argument, which has dominated the literature, that family solidarity patterns are divided between an individualistic north and a familistic south. The authors have challenged this view and addressed the variability in intergenerational family solidarity within and across countries. Using multiple dimensions of intergenerational solidarity drawn from the *Survey of Health, Aging, and Retirement in Europe*, they have developed a typology of late-life families which is robust across northern, central, and southern regions. The four types are: (a) descending familism: living nearby, frequent contact, endorsement of family obligation norms, and primarily help in kind from parents to children; (b) ascending familism: living nearby, frequent contact, endorsement of family obligation norms, and primarily help in kind from children to parents; (c) supportive-at-distance: not living nearby, frequent contact, refutation of family obligation norms, and primarily financial transfers from parents to adult children; (d) autonomous: not living nearby, little contact, refutation of family obligation norms, and few support exchanges. The authors have found that these four types are common in each European country, though the distributions differ. The findings suggest that scholars should abandon the idea that a particular country can be characterized by a single dominant type of late-life family. Socio-demographic differentials in family type follow predictable patterns, underscoring the validity of the developed typology.

3.3. (II) The so-called 'demographic transition' and its causal concatenations

The statistical definition in use today of 'demographic transition' appears to be of little use in addressing the problem of intergenerational solidarity for various reasons: (a) first of all, because the comparison between birth rates and mortality rates says very little about the qualities and properties of the generations and their relations; (b) moreover, because it says little or nothing about the structure of the families upon which the characteristics of the generations depend. Behind the theory of demographic transition one finds, in reality, the presupposition of the collapse of the nuclear family (and not only of the extended family) as the most prevalent family model. Beyond variations in the relationship between birth and mortality rates, there is the fact that the

changes induced in family structures no longer generate generations, in a historical-cultural sense, which are clearly distinct from one another. Rather, they generate confused generations, which are variously intertwined with one another and where differences in identity and the rules of exchange have blurred contours, becoming uncertain and risky.

Behind the theory of demographic transition, we need to see a theory of change in intergenerational relations. The concatenations of causal factors that induce changes remain to be clarified. Moreover, the effects following from the supposed transition are not at all about ‘balancing’ populations, but consist instead in major imbalances between generations. It is thus imperative to redefine the theory of demographic transition from a generational point of view (Donati 1991).

3.4. (III) Evaluating the impact of legislation and welfare systems (or welfare regimes) on the generations and intergenerational solidarity

Social legislation and welfare systems use a certain definition of ‘generation’ and contribute to changing it. For example, provisions for supporting work among the young sometimes refer to youth in the 18–25 year cohort, sometimes in the 18–29 year cohort, and more recently, to even higher age groups (up to 35 years and beyond), meaning by this that entry into adulthood is being constantly pushed forward. The same thing is happening with regard to the elderly: until a few years ago one became ‘old’ at 58 or 60 years of age; then entry into old age was moved up to around 65 years, and today the tendency toward increasing the age for entry into the ‘old’ generation is continuing due to the increase in projected longevity.

This phenomenon indicates that social legislation continually alters the definitions of a generation. The transitions between one generation and another have become opaque – almost indeterminate, indeed. The fact is that *the correlation between age and generational position has been loosened*. Age is becoming less predictive of generational condition. One can be parents and children over a broader spectrum of ages. Variability is growing. For instance, the phenomenon of the NEET generation (not in education, employment, or training) is spreading.

Can we delineate a welfare regime typology that addresses intergenerational solidarity differently?

3.5. (IV) How intergenerational cultural transmission is changing and generations as agents of cultural change

The loss of intergenerational cultural continuity (between the different social spheres in which we live) is connected to declining continuity in

life contexts between the different generations (see Archer 2007, 2012). The loss of intergenerational contextual continuity has serious consequences for the life courses of young people, a topic that deserves considerable attention.

The most important consequence is the loss of continuity in the culture of the gift and reciprocity. Traditionally, intergenerational cultural transmission occurred based on the fact that one generation gave its cultural and material patrimony to the following one and expected that it, in turn, would do the same for the succeeding generation. This chain has been broken and no longer functions. Each generation must start its life course from square one.

But one could ask: is it really true that continuity in transmitting the culture of the gift and reciprocity from one generation to the next has broken down? There is ambiguous evidence in this regard (Komter 2005).

The protagonists of these changes are young people who remain for a longer time in educational institutions or in the training that precedes work and starting a family. At the start of the 21st century, and especially after September 2008, young people have had to cope with such negative contingencies as increased uncertainty, risks, disorientation, and the loss of opportunities enjoyed by previous generations (for example, certain welfare benefits, jobs, the security deriving from one's family of origin).

There are no significant studies on the processes that have led from the predominance of hedonistic youth cultures to the emergence of youth cultures that have to face resource restrictions and conditions of relative deprivation, from which new protest movements and lifestyles have arisen. Sociological, psychological, and anthropological research still has to explain the processes and reasons for these upheavals, which cannot be explained in terms of changes in society's productive bases and the political arrangements for the distribution of resources.

3.6. To conclude this section, we can affirm that the analysis and proposals on the topic of intergenerational solidarity require a new, relational vision of the problems facing us. We must better understand: 1) the structure (the generative character) of the relations between generations, 2) the dynamic of the relations (how the reasons for exchange are changing, the symbolic meanings of belonging to one generation or another, what it means to be, respectively, children, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, what it means to be a multi-generational family, and so on), 3) the effects of changes, and, finally, 4) how to assess all of this in relationship to Catholic social doctrine, which can no longer make reference to the society of the past or to a purely abstract idea of society.

Two questions deserve particular attention. (a) Modernizing culture glorifies individualism and the call for ever more individual freedoms, but, on the other hand, these pressures produce a growing precariousness in the lives of all the generations: the contradiction between one's need for individual self-realization and, then, finding oneself in conditions of loneliness and poverty with few or no exchanges between generations must be addressed and the question asked: where does this contradiction lead us? (b) Do these processes produce only the hollowing out of the meaning of relations of intergenerational interdependence, or do they also generate a new meaning for such interdependences?

4. What needs to be done in the near future: coping with the challenges of a radically changing scenario

4.1. The tendency that is gaining ground in the most modernized societies and is influencing every continent is that of distancing the generations from one another, treating them separately with specific measures aimed at each.

Certainly, everyone today underscores the precariousness of youth and the conflicts in the distribution of resources (work, welfare, and pensions) among youth and the elderly. But, overall, the topic of solidarity is sidelined and pushed underground for a variety of reasons that we can synthesize as follows: (i) the spread of new ICTs is creating new gaps between generations in that ICTs socialize the young while bypassing the mediating functions of both the family and school systems; (ii) market globalization is increasing social and geographic mobility and incentivizing migratory processes, tearing young people away from their families of origin and local contexts; (iii) the welfare state is experiencing growing difficulties and is unable to effectuate compensation and solidarity between the generations.

These tendencies are due to the new scenario of social morphogenesis (Archer ed. 2013), which redefines the context in which the generations define themselves and requires more highly differentiated interventions for each of them. On the other hand, however, the tendency to functionally differentiate and specialize ways of addressing the needs of youth as opposed to the other generations entails huge problems of social integration. Let us now consider which are the principal causes of these phenomena, what remains to be clarified, and which initiatives could be undertaken.

(i) The increasing cultural generation gap

Until the beginning of the 21st century, most empirical studies showed that young people's cultural values were not very different from those of

their parents. But in recent years it has become evident that the processes of modernization are increasing the generation gap, understood as differences of opinions, tastes, beliefs, and other social and cultural norms that exist between older and younger age groups. We are dealing with a veritable *fracture générationnelle*, defined as an absence of transmission between the older generations and their descendants.

The phenomenon that has radically changed the situation has been the advent of the new ICTs, which have transformed the *cultural gap* into the *digital divide*. It is still not clear how ICTs are influencing solidarity between generations. This is an area of research that deserves to be explored with some urgency.

For example, while some investigations underscore that ICTs are creating new social networks of acquaintances and friendships, other studies highlight the isolation produced among young people who use social networks (Turkle 2011). All of this creates new challenges for the processes of raising and socializing the young.

In particular, as regards the Catholic Church, colossal problems arise in assessing the use of new technologies aimed at evangelization and religious education. Religious education requires a culture based on the conversation between past and present generations (Laslett 1979). The need for a *new human ecology* (Bronfenbrenner 1991, 1996, 2004) requires a transcendent inspiration vis-à-vis a globalizing world.

(ii) The new economic scenario

The globalization of markets is causing a rupture in the continuity between generations in the family, distancing them and leading to fewer exchanges of solidarity. At the same time, it is accentuating migration, with family members separating from one another in order to find work and survive. Once again, we see here the fact that economic, political, and cultural systems are pushing toward an increasingly strong individualism, which acts to the detriment of solidarity between the generations.

(iv) The crisis States are facing regarding intergenerational policies

The welfare state's social policies are experiencing great difficulties in redefining the criteria for the intergenerational distribution of resources. In recent years many places have seen the growth of an *objective* conflict (even if external manifestations are lacking) between the 'gray power' (*pouvoir gris*) of the older generations, who hold power and resources,

and the relative deprivation of the young, especially as regards the lack of work, places to live, and adequate life opportunities in general.³

Although the UN's official reports deny this conflict and predict substantial continuity in intergenerational solidarity,⁴ the economic and social facts of recent years seem to be moving in the opposite direction, not so much as a reduction of micro solidarity (on the family level) as on the level of national and supranational economic and political macro-systems. For example, UNICEF reports underscore the growth of child poverty in many parts of the world (Ortiz, Moreira Daniels, and Engilbertsdóttir 2012).

Scholars have insisted for a long time on the need for the State to increase its efforts to guarantee equity and collective solidarity *in opposition to* intergenerational familial solidarity (see, for example, the approach by Sgritta 1997). Recently, authors such as Blome, Keck, and Alber (2009) continue to assert that social policies have the goal of supporting each generation's *autonomy from family solidarity*. Today we must recognize that the welfare state has shown major failures in this area. Indeed, we can say that welfare policies have not operated from an intergenerational perspective and have not activated new circuits of reciprocity between the generations, so that one could make the argument that the welfare state has eroded solidarity between generations rather than increase it. In other words, the welfare state has completely ignored the criteria of subsidiarity and, thus, has also undermined the principle of solidarity (Archer and Donati 2008).

In Europe this tendency has taken the name of *de-familiarization*, which consists in making social policies that aim to make the family irrelevant to the effects of young people's life courses. This tendency, far from realizing equality of opportunity for the young, has instead often had the effect of leaving the problem of intergenerational solidarity in the private sphere of families.

We must recognize that the State is not able to produce more generational equity for the very reason that it opposes the logic of solidarity and

³ An analysis conducted by Bradshaw and Holmes (2013) recently raised doubts on this tendency, showing that in the 1980-2007 period, the shift of resources toward the elderly took place to a lesser degree in some countries (such as the Scandinavian countries and Italy) but not in others (the US and the UK). Nevertheless, the analysis of these authors is not convincing.

⁴ For example, Bengtson and Oyama (2007) argue that 'on the basis of the evidence reviewed, it does *not* appear that there will be marked generational conflict in the future, and it is likely that intergenerational solidarity and altruism will remain present at high levels'.

compensation inside the family. On the contrary, we need: i) balance between direct reciprocity (in the family and kinship network) and indirect reciprocity (mediated by the State and by other social systems outside the family) between the generations; ii) a personalization of interventions directed at the generations, that is, addressing their needs in a way that is consistent with the requirements of each life cycle phase, which has a decisive variable in the structure of the family in which one lives (owing to the number of family members and their characteristics).

In the past, a great many scholars and politicians proposed a new social intergenerational contract (Bengtson and Achenbaum 1993; Etzioni and Brodbeck 1995; Williamson *et al.* 1999; Barry 2000). Yet, these proposals always failed, in part because they did not identify the sociological premises and conditions necessary for a social pact of such scope; for example, the idea of a company contract that allowed for the passage of an occupation from parent to child never worked.

The fact is that our society is based on ‘institutionalized individualism’ that makes intergenerational contractual solutions impossible (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). At the bottom of processes that work against solidarity between the generations is a culture of so-called ‘emancipatory individualism’ (Dumont, 1983; Corcuff, Ion and De Singly 2006; de Singly 2000), which erodes social bonds and ‘de-socializes’ the relations between generations (Fforde 2000). Primary agents are not able to oppose these tendencies, which can be situated in what has been called unbound morphogenesis (Archer ed. 2013). It is unlikely that individualism can create social bonds, not to mention solidarity, even if it is precisely individualism that is causing the emergence of new needs for sociality.

To address these processes, it becomes necessary to configure new social institutions and new corporate actors that work to oppose the separation and conflicts between young and old and to build new, positive (co-operative) solutions for both (*win-win solutions*: Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker 1994). In this connection, the role of family associations needs to be explored (Donati 1992/93) and, more generally, that of Third Sector non-profit organizations that work on intergenerational relations. In effect, both in scientific research and in economic and political programs, the role played by these organizations, both formal and informal, is almost always overlooked, given that social studies and policies usually privilege only three actors: families, the market, and the State (an example of an investigation that ignores the role of civil associations and organizations in influencing intergenerational relationships is the paper by Van Bavel *et al.* (2010).

All the social actors, from families to intermediate communities to the State, must recognize that intergenerational solidarity is a (relational) good that only emerges through the exercise of a personal and relational reflexivity in a context of structures and institutions that nourish the common good.

4.3. Can the future that awaits us do without a vision of society that takes into account the generations and deals with the problem of their solidarity?

Notwithstanding the official proclamations of international and supranational organisms that claim to support intergenerational solidarity, social, economic, and political realities are moving in the opposite direction. An example can be found in reports of the OECD, which define the family as a simple aggregate of individuals that will be determined by technologies and economic market conditions (OECD 2012) and whose well-being should be evaluated with methodologies that are inspired by individualism. In fact, an OECD report⁵ proposes a formula for calculating families' well-being that excludes intergenerational transfers, even if it admits that these could exist. This small detail reveals that the OECD reasons *as if* the relations of intergenerational exchange could become irrelevant and rendered null and void.

Some years ago the EU launched several programs for intergenerational solidarity. In the first report (EC Commission 1999) and then in a series of studies and documents (Moor and Komter 2008), the EU forced itself to support ideas and programs of intergenerational solidarity, but little was done and little accomplished due to the lack of an appropriate relational approach: governments do not support relations between generations, but concern themselves with meeting the needs of each generation. The EU is lacking in relational thinking. In order to manage the effects of the demographic transfer, it is not enough to create a 'pact between the generations' merely understood as age groups that confront one another in the public sphere over the distribution of resources (for example, work or pensions) in the present and near future. It is necessary to define with which criteria, with which coordinates, we are connecting the *relations* between the age groups, in the present and immediate future, not only within society, but

⁵ *Inter-generational wealth transfers*. The formula given above assumes that no wealth transfer occurs between generations, i.e. none of the wealth of the household remains at the end of the period. This does not imply that no wealth transfer between generations will occur in reality, as the measure proposed is a notional concept developed to better indicate economic resources currently available to a household. For some analyses, the formula could be amended to assume that some wealth does remain at the end of the annuity period' (OECD 2013: 182-183).

also within the family and through it. The EU cannot do this because it is contemporaneously pursuing policies of defamiliarization.

This condition, or pre-contractual framework, of the intergenerational pact is called *alliance between the family and society*: that is, the full recognition of one vis-à-vis the other that values reciprocal specificity in terms of spheres, organizational modalities, and forms of intertwining between generations. Precisely when, in society, generations seem to be differentiating themselves to the point that their connections are breaking down, there emerges the necessity to respond to the time frames and lifecycles specific to each generation by means of a conceptual and operative framework that defines generation, every generation, as the connection between family and society. A relational point of view is called for. In the end, recognizing generations means observing society as a 'society of families', and not only as a 'society of individuals'.

From this perspective, it is important to underscore the need to move beyond the model of the 'patriarchal family', which was used as the best exemplar for governance in past centuries.

5. Some suggestions from the social sciences for Catholic social doctrine

The analysis presented here shows that the problem of intergenerational solidarity is becoming increasingly more acute and consists in the growing lack of a relational vision of the relationships between generations inside the new family structures and in society at large. This lack is cultural (a weakening of the gift culture and of reciprocity), social (the fragmentation of primary social networks and the family's diminished mediatory role), economic (the globalization of market economies excluding intergenerational exchanges), and political (the crisis of the welfare state entailing new inequalities in the distribution of resources to the generations, poverty traps, and a reduced role of compensation in transfers of welfare benefits to the different generations).

Catholic social doctrine could address these topics with a precise objective: to oppose the tendency to solve the problems of the relationships between the young generations and other generations (the elderly, in particular) as if they were social subjects that are independent from one another. Since the relations connecting the various generations are not visible, economic, political, and cultural systems sometimes address youth, sometimes adults, and sometimes the elderly as if they were separate social collectivities, increasingly isolated and independent from one another. This also leads to pitting the generations against one another. In this way, the problems of resource distribution are reduced to a zero sum game (what is given to some is taken from others), while what are needed are games that add up

to more than zero (where all generations gain advantages from their exchanges and can create relational goods, for instance job sharing between generations, programs to exchange houses between families at different stages of their life course, etc.). In order to achieve new solidarity between generations we need new principles and new strategies that meet the following demands:

1) on a *micro* level: how can the family be supported as a social citizen-subject [I mean: as a subject of citizenship endowed with its own rights and obligations that are added – not subtracted – to the complex of rights and duties pertaining fully to individual persons] that mediates the relations between the generations;

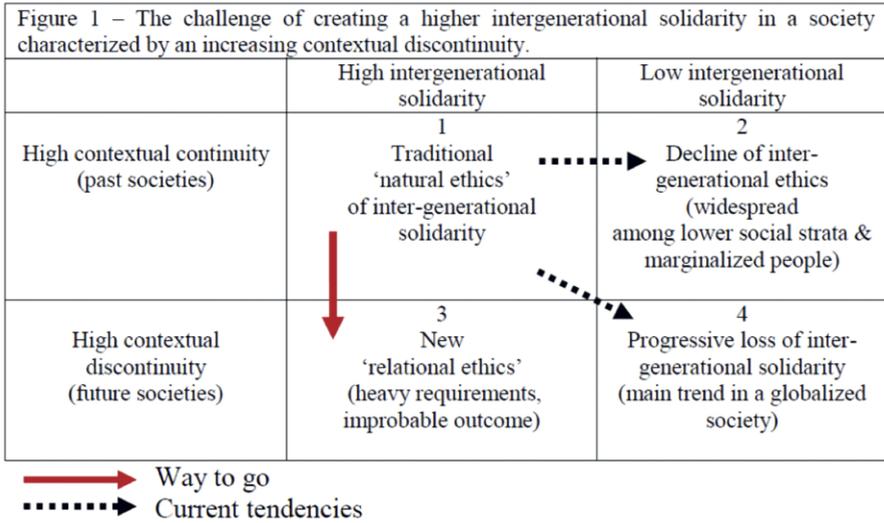
2) on a *meso* level: how can institutions and organizations of civil society – those in intermediate positions between families and the political system and which care for intergenerational relations – be promoted;

3) on a *macro* level: how can the role of political-administrative systems (States and supranational political systems) be redefined so that they support relations of solidarity between the different generations when distributing public resources, regulate economic and social exchanges when they create inequities between one generation and another, and determine entitlement to social rights on the part of, respectively, the young and the elderly?

The traditional ethics of intergenerational solidarity, entrusted for the most part to the family and primary social networks, is no longer sufficient in that it is in decline, and its dwindling importance is inevitable. On the other hand, intergenerational solidarity can no longer be entrusted solely to the welfare state and to transfers from the administrative-political system either. New ethical, political, and economic criteria are needed on a societal level and within the framework of globalization processes. The novelty of an ethics of intergenerational solidarity must be two-fold: a) it must invest all spheres of society; b) it must be elaborated taking into account the fact that networking characterizes the emerging society: in other words, it must be an ethics of relations in a social context marked by increasing morphogenesis of relations between the generations.

The challenge is how to avoid the deterioration of the traditional ethics of intergenerational solidarity in those contexts that conserve a strong socializing continuity (which are increasingly marginalized), as well as in contexts of market globalization. Social doctrine is called upon to rethink the ethics of intergenerational relations in contexts that are highly discordant with one another as regards the socialization of young people and the life courses of people (figure 1). The challenge is to elaborate a new 'relational ethics' (cell 3) which, confronted with the crisis of natural ethics (cell 1),

can avoid the tendencies towards the decline or the loss of intergenerational solidarity (cells 2 and 4). This new relational ethics should combine high intergenerational solidarity with the high contextual discontinuities of our future society.



In conclusion, what I am suggesting is to endorse an *all-generations approach* to public policy that does the following:⁶

- helps counter the negative impacts of the insular ‘silo’ approach to policy making,⁷ and works to attract wider public support for policies and programs addressing needs across the life course.
- views the increasing older population as a resource to be enlisted on behalf of the common good, not as a problem that will divide the nation along generational lines.
- stresses intergenerational sharing of opportunities and responsibilities in the families, educational system, labour market, and welfare services.

⁶ On this track see Cornman, Kingson, and Butts (2009).

⁷ That is, an insular management system incapable of reciprocal operation with other, related information systems, lacking collaboration between units, which reduces efficiency and can be a contributing factor to a failing corporate culture.

- encourages those who design, evaluate, and implement social policies and programs to seek and strengthen links among a range of institutions, departments, and programs to develop new collaborations between generations.
- calls for policies and programmes that engage and affect more than one generation through the building of social contexts endowed with a high level of sociability (or ‘social capital’ defined in terms of relations of trust, cooperation, reciprocity).

It is essential, when following this path, to combine the objective of inter-generational solidarity with the pursuit of family mainstreaming policies, which have been heavily penalized in almost all countries in favour of ideologies inspired by ‘institutionalized individualism’. In my opinion (Donati 2013), it is a matter of replacing the principle of individualism with a principle of relationality. The current debate in the US about the rising American generation, the so-called ‘millennials’,⁸ postpatriotic, postfamilial, disaffiliated, indicates the great challenge in front of us.

⁸ ‘In the future, it seems, there will be only one ‘ism’ – Individualism – and its rule will never end. As for religion, it shall decline; as for marriage, it shall be postponed; as for ideologies, they shall be rejected; as for patriotism, it shall be abandoned; as for strangers, they shall be distrusted. Only pot, selfies and Facebook will abide – and the greatest of these will probably be Facebook. That’s the implication, at least, of what the polling industry keeps telling us about the rising American generation, the so-called millennials. A new Pew survey, the latest dispatch from the land of young adulthood, describes a generation that’s socially liberal on issues like immigration and marijuana and same-sex marriage, proudly independent of either political party, less likely to be married and religious than earlier generations, less likely to identify as patriotic and less likely – by a striking margin – to say that one’s fellow human beings can be trusted. (...) The common denominator is individualism, not left-wing politics: it explains both the personal optimism and the social mistrust, the passion about causes like gay marriage and the declining interest in collective-action crusades like environmentalism, even the fact that religious affiliation has declined but personal belief is still widespread. So the really interesting question about the millennials (is) whether this level of individualism – postpatriotic, postfamilial, disaffiliated – is actually sustainable across the life cycle, and whether it can become a culture’s dominant way of life’. (Douthat 2014).

References

- Archer, M.S. (2007). *Making Our Way Through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Archer, M.S. (2012). *The Reflexive Imperative in Late Modernity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Archer, M.S. (ed.) (2013). *Social Morphogenesis*. Springer, New York.
- Archer, M.S. and Donati, P. (eds.) (2008). *Pursuing the Common Good: How Solidarity and Subsidiarity Can Work Together*, Proceedings of the XIV Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Vatican Press, Vatican City. Available online <http://www.pass.va/content/scienze-sociali/en/publications/acta/common-good.html>
- Barry, B. (2000). Sustainability and Intergenerational Justice. In A. Dobson (ed.), *Fairness and Futurity. Essays on Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 93-117.
- Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002). *Individualization. Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*. London, Sage.
- Bengtson, V.L. and Achenbaum, W.A. (eds.) (1993). *The changing contract across generations*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Bengtson, V.L. and Oyama, P.S. (2007). Intergenerational Solidarity and Conflict. In V.L. Bengtson and P.S. Oyama (eds). *Intergenerational Solidarity: Strengthening Economic and Social Ties*, Expert Group Meeting, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNO, New York.
- Blome, A., Keck, W. and Alber, J. (2009). *Family and the welfare state in Europe. Intergenerational relations in ageing societies*. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham.
- Bradshaw, J. and Holmes, J. (2013). An Analysis of Equity in Redistribution to the Retired and Children over Recent Decades in the OECD and UK. *Journal of Social Policy*, 42: 39-56.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1991). *Intergenerational Relationships and Cross-National Development: An Ecological Perspective*. Konstanz: University of Konstanz.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1996). *The State of Americans: This Generation and the Next*. New York: Free Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2004). *Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development*. New York: Sage.
- Corcuff, Ph., Ion J. and de Singly, F. (2006). *Politiques de l'individualisme entre sociologie et philosophie*. Ed. Textuel, Paris.
- Cornman J.M., Kingdon E.R., Butts D.M. (2009). Time for an All-Generations. Approach to Public Policy. *Generation*, 33, 3: 86-88.
- Donati, P. (1991). Equità generazionale: un nuovo confronto sulla qualità familiare. In: P. Donati (ed.), *Secondo Rapporto sulla famiglia in Italia*, Milano: Edizione Paoline: 31-108
- Donati, P. (1992/93). Family Movements and Social Policy in Europe Today: The Issue of Intergenerational Equity. *The Annals of the International Institute of Sociology*. New Series vol. 3: 205-220.
- Donati, P. (2002). *Inter-generational solidarity: a sociological and social policy issue*. In: E. Malinvaud (ed.), *Intergenerational Solidarity*, The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Vatican City: 57-81. Available online <http://www.pass.va/content/scienze-sociali/en/publications/acta/intergenerationalsolidarity.html>
- Donati, P. (2013). *Sociologia relazionale. Come cambia la società*, Editrice La Scuola, Brescia.
- Donati, P. and Colozzi I. (eds.) (1997). *Giovani e generazioni. Quando si cresce in una società eticamente neutra*. il Mulino, Bologna.
- Douthat, R. (2014). 'The Age of Individualism', *The New York Times*, March 16, p. sr12.
- Dumont, L. (1983). *Essais sur l'individualisme. Un perspective anthropologique sur l'idéologie*

- moderne*. Seuil, Paris.
- Dykstra, P.A. and Fokkema, T. (2010). Relationships between parents and their adult children: a West European typology of late-life families. *Ageing and Society*, 2: 1-25.
- Etzioni, A. and Brodbeck, L. (1995). *The Intergenerational Covenant: Rights and Responsibilities*. Washington, D.C.: The Communitarian Network.
- EC Commission (1999), *Towards a Europe for All Ages. Promoting Prosperity and Intergenerational Solidarity*, Communication from the Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, COM (1999) 221, May 21.
- Fforde M. (2000). *Desocialization the crisis of the post-modern*. Aracne, Roma.
- Izuhara, M. (2012). *Ageing and intergenerational relations: Family reciprocity from a global perspective*, Policy Press Scholarship Online: March (DOI: 10.1332/policy-press/9781847422057.001.0001)
- Jong Gierveld, J. de (1998). Intergenerational Relationships and Solidarity Within the Family. In K. Matthijs (ed.), *The Family. Contemporary Perspectives and Challenges*, Leuven University Press, Leuven.
- Komter, A.E. (2005). *Social Solidarity and the Gift*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Laslett, P. (1979). The Conversation Between Generations. In P. Laslett, J. Fishkin (eds.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press: 36-56.
- Moor, N. and Komter, A. (2008). *Demographic changes, intergenerational solidarity and well-being in Europe: a comparative approach*. Multilinks position paper, April.
- OECD (2012), *The Future of Families to 2030*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2013), *OECD Framework for Statistics on the Distribution of Household Income, Consumption and Wealth*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Ortiz I., Moreira Daniels L., Engilbertsdóttir S. (eds) (2012). *Child Poverty and Inequality: New Perspectives*. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Division of Policy and Practice, New York.
- Ostrom, E., Gardner, R. and Walker, J. (1994). *Rules, games, and common-pool resources*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Parfit, D. (1982). Future Generations: Further Problems. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. vol. 11 (2): 113-172.
- Parfit, D. (1984). *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford, Oxford, University Press.
- Parfit, D. (1990). Overpopulation and the Quality of Life. In J. Glover (ed.), *Utilitarianism and its Critics*, London, Macmillan.
- PASS (2002). *Intergenerational Solidarity*. Editor E. Malinvaud, The Proceedings of the Eighth Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (8-13 April 2002), Acta 8, Vatican City. Available online <http://www.pass.va/content/scienze-sociali/en/publications/acta/intergenerational-solidarity.html>
- PASS (2004). *Intergenerational Solidarity, Welfare and Human Ecology*. Editor Mary Ann Glendon, The Proceedings of the Tenth Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (29 April-3 May 2003), Acta 10, Vatican City. Available online <http://www.pass.va/content/scienze-sociali/en/publications/acta/solidarity.html>
- PASS (2006). *Vanishing Youth? Solidarity with Children and Young People in an Age of Turbulence*. Editors Mary Ann Glendon and Pierpaolo Donati, The Proceedings of the Twelfth Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (28 April-2 May 2006), Acta 12, Vatican City. Available online <http://www.pass.va/content/scienze-sociali/en/publications/acta/vanishingyouth.html>
- Sgritta, G.B. (1997). The Generation Question: State Solidarity versus Family Solidarity. In J. Commaille and F. de Singly (eds.), *The European Family*, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers: 151-166.

- Singly, F. de (2000). *Libres ensembles. L'individualisme dans la vie commune*. Nathan, Paris.
- Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone Together. Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York: Basic Books.
- Van Bavel, J., Dykstra, P.A., Wijckmans, B. and Liefbroer, A.C. (2010). *Demographic change and family obligations*, Multilinks deliverable 4.2, March (<http://www.vub.ac.be/SOCO/demo/papersonline/ID-WP2010-1.pdf>).
- Williamson, J.B., Watts-Roy, D.M. and Kingson, E.R. (eds.) (1999). *The Generational Equity Debate*. New York: Columbia University Press.