CALL FOR PAPERS

International Symposium

'The right to Age'
Citizenship, social inclusion and political participation of older people

Palais des Congrès, Dijon
25 – 26 – 27 January 2012

Organizers:

- Réseau International d’Étude sur l’Age, la Citoyenneté et l’Intégration Socio-économique (REIACTIS) (International Network on Age, Citizenship and Socio-economic Integration)
- Pôle de Gérontologie Interrégional Bourgogne/Franche-Comté (PGI) (Bourgogne / Franche-Comté Inter-Regional Gerontology Centre)

I/ THEMES

This multidisciplinary symposium aims to bring together a wide range of perspectives from the sociology of ageing and the social and legal sciences to shed scientific light on the themes of this international conference.

The three main themes covered are:

- Social and political rights: from social participation to political action;
- From formal rights to social relations: inclusion and capability approaches adopted by health and social organizations, professionals and civil society;
- Ageing at different stages of the life cycle and decision-making capacities: an ethical approach to the right to freedom and dignity
Theme I

Older people's social and political rights: from social participation to political action

1. Rights

The first issue for discussion is the formulation, implementation and respect of the social and political rights that apply to older people. To what extent are these rights equal to those enjoyed by other age groups? In training, employment, access to housing, health care or other social and political rights, in what ways are age and ageing relevant criteria for analysing inequality and discrimination? In certain national contexts, does a legal basis exist for any forms of discrimination? In the context of the current debate on setting up an international charter of older people's rights, what is the relevance of adopting a specific 'older people's rights' approach to this question, as was done with children's rights. Do seniors have specific rights or are they the embodiment of universal rights?

2. Active citizenship through social organizations, voluntary work and social and political participation

In what ways can older people, on an individual or collective basis, have an influence on the exercise of their social and political rights in the public arena? The issue of the formal power of this social group is part of the study of democratic processes in various countries in terms of the different traditions which shape the structure of social and democratic systems. When it comes to concepts of health, social or participatory democracy, how are the elderly involved in decision-making systems?

How do older people and those who defend their tangible and intangible interests participate in decision-making processes and what kinds of action do they take to influence the decision-makers responsible for social and political rights? Does the individual and collective political power of seniors threaten the balancing of social and political interests?

Adopting a broad approach to the issue of citizenship, we shall also focus on older people's ability to change the socio-economic environment through direct involvement – in particular, though voluntary work – in associations working on various contemporary issues (the environment, fair trade, human rights, anti-poverty and anti-exclusion campaigns, etc.). In what ways does social participation also reflect a form of active citizenship, highlighting a form of power that older people may have over major contemporary issues through direct involvement and the mobilization of their resources in volunteer work. This sub-theme illustrates, in the same way as for protest campaigns, an accepted form of active citizenship.
| Theme II |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| **From formal rights to social relations: inclusion and capability approaches adopted by health and social organizations, professionals and civil society** |
| The issue here, from a meso-sociological perspective, is to understand how formal rights translate into actual rights through the development of institutional systems and the functioning of health and social organizations. |
| Going beyond the question of formal rights, in what ways, in terms of attitudes and social practices, is age an exclusion factor? |
| It is important here to consider the social, economic and cultural conditions that facilitate access to and use of services, where these exist, and to examine how the internal dynamics of organizations offering these services encourage them to be taken up. This second theme will focus broadly on the analysis of professional practices and mechanisms aimed at facilitating the relationship between older people and professionals through capability approaches and inclusion initiatives. |
| It is also essential to gain an understanding of the dynamic approaches that include new capabilities, in particular those focusing on the experience or new social positions that may be acquired by the elderly. Importance will accordingly also be given to maintaining decision-making powers through the preservation, renewal or creation of new capacities and social status or roles. |
| Special attention will be paid to information programmes on the rights of older citizens as well as access to education programmes that help the elderly gain access to services, enlarge their choices and develop their capacity for action as citizens, users, patients and consumers. |
| The roles and responsibilities of various professionals will be explored in detail in terms of their own power and social – or indeed emotional – proximity to the elderly, especially their advisory role on strategies for managing their lives. |
| Finally, the role of civil society in its various forms (voluntary associations, collectives, trade unions, etc.) will be analysed in order to understand how action models can be developed outside institutional systems to encourage older people to maintain and develop their power over their lives and their environment, both individually and collectively. |
Theme III

Ageing at different stages of the life cycle and decision-making capacities: an ethical approach to the right to freedom and dignity.

This theme focuses on the occasions - from retirement to the end of life - when individuals face the issues of freedom, dignity and respect for choices made. Throughout the ageing process, what ethical questions arise during moments of sometimes brutal change such as the transition from work to retirement, change of residence or no longer having the right to one's own home, which can have a detrimental effect on the integration of older people as both human beings and fully-fledged citizens? This third theme will cover the various turning points in the life cycle and highlight potentially vulnerable situations as well as the stigma that may be associated with old age.

What status, then, and what roles characterize the different points in the life cycle such as the shift from work to retirement, change of residence, choice of health care or type of support, or changes in family relationships?

We shall examine the individual and collective initiatives taken by older people when dealing with institutions, professionals or their family circle as well as studying the strategies used by those working with the elderly in potentially vulnerable situations. The family dimension, in terms of power relations and delegation of authority, will be considered from the multidimensional viewpoints offered by an interactionist perspective; these interrelationships can usefully be studied by taking the views of the family as a starting point (spouse, children, nieces and nephews, sons/daughters-in-law, etc.). Moreover, changes in family structure mean that relationships are reconfigured when the elderly person or one of his or her children divorces or remarries.

On a more general level, this third theme will include reflection on the ethics of social relations with the elderly in their environment (family, professionals, society) in the provision of support at different and potentially vulnerable points in the life cycle.

II/ PROGRAMME AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Programme: Please send your proposals for contributions by 29 April 2011 to the Academic Committee at: symposiumreiactis@gmail.com

If your proposal is accepted, in order to assist the task of the conference moderators, you will be required to write a final abstract (maximum 6 lines) by 20 July 2011, either in the form of a short text which will serve as the basis for your presentation, or as a PowerPoint presentation. These abstracts will be included in the documents the moderators will use to prepare the discussion and may be passed on to the symposium participants.

The round tables will be recorded and may subsequently be transcribed. These documents may be used as a basis for discussion on the REACTIS website in 2012. In the event that you do not agree to your contribution being used in this context, please ensure that you inform the Academic Committee.
Please also note that plenary speakers will be requested to write articles for inclusion in a joint publication which will then be translated.

Proposals which are not accepted may in some cases be turned into Poster presentations.

**Document specifications:** Submissions must not exceed 4000 characters (title and spaces included) and should be single-spaced in Times New Roman 12. They may be written in English, French or Spanish.

**III/ ACADEMIC COMMITTEE**

The international multidisciplinary academic committee is made up of 50 high-level researchers from over 20 countries.

**IV/ ORGANIZERS**

**REIACTIS, the International Network on Age, Citizenship and Socio-economic Integration, (Réseau International d’Étude sur l’Age, la Citoyenneté et l’Intégration Socio-économique) - at the heart of the issue:**

REIACTIS was set up in 2006 by international social science researchers working in the field of ageing. The network's objective is to develop and disseminate work being conducted on the themes of age and citizenship. Over the last four years, during the numerous meetings it has organized, REIACTIS has brought together over 250 contributors from 45 research centres and universities in 29 countries (12 from Latin America, 11 from Europe, 3 from Africa, 2 from North America and 1 from Asia).

**The Bourgogne / Franche-Comté Inter-Regional Gerontology Centre: the first inter-regional gerontology network in France:**

The Bourgogne / Franche-Comté Inter-Regional Gerontology Centre arose from a joint initiative by the two regions to pool their expertise in gerontology and set up a centre of excellence. The centre brings together not only the Universities of Bourgogne and Franche-Comté but also key decision-makers and professionals working in this field.

Its objectives are threefold:
- research / dissemination of research
- training and skills transfer
- exchange of good practices.

Ethical considerations are at the core of this work.

**V/ CONTACTS**

For further information, consult our website: [www.reiactis.org](http://www.reiactis.org)

Academic Committee and responses to the Call for Papers: [symposiumreiactis@gmail.com](mailto:symposiumreiactis@gmail.com)

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