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CULTURAL DIVERSITY, MULTICULTURALISM, AND THE CHALLENGE OF THE AGEING POPULATION

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One of the most important challenges for development in the early 21st century is the unprecedented scale of population ageing. For a long time, this issue was mainly discussed regarding the countries of the Global North. However, people are ageing everywhere around the world and providing a high quality of social and health services for older adults in the Global South will be even more challenging because the pace of ageing is there much faster than it was in the Global North. Having said that, we need to focus more and more on constructing the solutions that will be fighting ageism, stopping negative age stereotypes, and limiting negative risk related to intergenerational tensions and conflicts.

Moreover, one of the most significant changes in studies related to ageing that is happening in recent years is that scholars are more and more aware of the increasing social and cultural diversity of older adults. This diversity includes various criteria of old age such as biological age, demographic age, mental age, social age, economic age and social age. Each of these notions refers to various characteristics of older adults that are related to variables such as gender, age, education, place of residence and source of income. It is also possible to analyze seniors' disparities regarding social inequalities and opinions and attitudes concerning, for example, origin, interests, areas of social activity, and political views. Also, the wealth of images and visual materials that affect stereotypes of old age is the important area of research.

While the studies on the topic of cultural diversity and multiculturalism of older adults are still limited, we observe increasing interest in the new subdisciplines such as geographical gerontology, ethnogerontology, and minority ageing research as well as the development of organizations dedicated to these topics. For example, the American Society on Aging underlines diversity as one of its most critical areas of work, and there is the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing in Australia. Scholars of mentioned fields are focusing on topics such as how globalization and cultural and ethnic factors are affecting ageing; the problems of migrants, representatives of religious, regional, national, ethnic and sexual minorities in old age; migrations of older adults; and adaptation of social work and social services to needs of ageing and diversified communities.

At the global level, the most important document related to the public policy on ageing is the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) of the United Nations. This plan is promoting the concepts of "active ageing" and "society for all ages." The first of these ideas is directly based on the rights-oriented perspective that supports the quality of life, the normative foundation of the welfare state, and need to take into account moral issues of an ageing population. From this perspective, the economic, financial, health and other matters

related to ageing are dependent on the level of assurance of political and social rights of older citizens, and thus the human rights with principles such as independence, participation, dignity, care, and self-fulfillment. These distinguishing features have been described as the three fundamental pillars of active ageing: health, participation, and security. In this context diversity of culture and ethnicity is necessary for the coresidency of older and younger generations, health-seeking behavior, and values, attitudes and traditions that may persist outdated stereotypes and misinformation. The second of mentioned concepts, that is, the idea of a “society for all ages” underlines the need to focus on ageing over a whole life course and on intergenerational approach, which underlines that each generation should be treated fairly throughout their life and reinvest resources and various forms of the capital. In the future described above ideas may be supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older People that will ensure the setting up of sanctions, for example, in the case of age discrimination, not acting in accordance with accountability mechanisms, or not implementing of expected service standards.

Moreover, the idea of a “society for all ages” justify the use of diversity management and creativity policies to reduce age discrimination and better use contributions of older adults in all areas of public life. As a result, such interventions may lead to caring and tolerant societies, learning pluralism, and combining tradition with innovation.

Diversity management is based on the premise that communities are made up of people belonging to a number of groups that differ in both visible characteristics (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, disability) as well as invisible (e.g., religious, nationality, experience, political views, lifestyle, sexual orientation), including deep hidden components of identity (e.g., beliefs, values, norms, attitudes). It is acknowledged that, based on the existence of differences, it is necessary to create collaborative spaces where everyone will feel appreciated and that their skills and abilities will be appropriately utilized. At the same time, the concept of diversity management contradicts the ideas of “melting pot” and “cultural assimilation.” Diversity management also goes beyond the implementation of the principle of “equal opportunities,” which mainly emphasizes the need to reduce discrimination of women, ethnic minorities and the people with disabilities, and puts less emphasis on changing organizational cultures.

With regard to population ageing, diversity management is also a broader concept than: (1) age management, through which the position and prospects of older workers in the labour market are improved; (2) age diversity management, that is, creating mechanisms that will enable all employees, regardless of age, to make a full contribution to the organizations and societies and its development on the basis of perfect work performance; (3) generational management, that is, diversifying approaches to specific age groups while creating conditions for acceptance and understanding of the need for such an approach; and (4) the management of disadvantaged workers, that is, people with lower employment attractiveness, including employees aged 45/50 years or older.

The use of diversity by organizations and societies can take place through the many techniques and stages such as completion of qualifications and skills, elimination of discrimination and prejudice, and intercultural communication training. These solutions are conducive to achieving the competitive advantage of the organizations and societies, among others, by leading to an increase in innovation and an increase in the number of

points of view needed to search for new ideas, but can also increase the risk of conflict by communication errors.

The politics of creativity can be considered as an extension of diversity management, which is broadly based on building conditions conducive to the development of creative processes in all areas of economic and public life also with participation of all generations. These activities lead to the emergence of a creative economy involving processes of “economization of culture,” which refers to the economic use of the potential of artistic creation and the “culturalization of economy,” that is, the application of artistic creation in industrial goods and services in order to obtain innovation.