

Call for papers

International Symposium (REIACTIS / Pontifical University of Chile) “Age, citizenship and powers” From Research to Action

Santiago (Chile)
October 26 & 27, 2010

Deadline for the call for papers:

March 25, 2010

Organizers:

- Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile: Centro de Geriátría y Gerontología y Programa Adulto Mayor.
- Réseau International d'Étude sur l'Age, la Citoyenneté et l'Intégration Socio-économique (REIACTIS)

Date: October 26 & 27, 2010

Place: Centro de Extensión P. Universidad Católica de Chile, Av. Libertador Bernardo O'Higgins 390 Santiago de Chile.

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Scientific Council:

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Five Themes:

- ❖ Public policy aimed at involving seniors in decision-making: participatory democracy and civil society actors ;
- ❖ Mobilization and collective action by the elderly: the power to act and to bring about social change ;
- ❖ Decision-making power at different stages of the ageing process ;
- ❖ Professional and family training as a key factor in inclusive practices and the capability approach : Power as a culture of relationship with the elderly ;
- ❖ From the tools of power to the power of (communication) tools ? The issue of information and expertise.

1. Main theme

In 2002, following the reports of the Second UN Assembly on Ageing, the Madrid International Plan of Action called for awareness of worldwide economic, social and political challenges arising from the unprecedented increase in life expectancy. Beyond formal recommendations, the United Nations emphasised the importance of including elderly people in the decision-making process.

2. An international network at the heart of the theme

A first symposium on this theme was held at University Paris V in 2007, organised by REIACTIS and GEPECS (Study Group for Europe of Culture and Solidarity) in partnership with the networks of Association Française de Sociologie and Association Internationale des

Sociologues de Langue Française (AISLF). About a hundred French-speaking researchers analysed this issue in a macro social approach and at national policy level. Papers from the conference are available on line <http://www.reiactis.org>

A second symposium took place in Rouen (France) in 2008, in collaboration with UMR CNRS IDEES, which dealt with the same theme with particular focus on elderly people's inclusion in public policy making at the local level.

In July 2009, during the World Congress of Geriatrics and Gerontology, REIACTIS organised two symposiums on the involvement of seniors and their community groups in the public sphere, and on the public policies and theoretical frameworks that favour this participation at institutional and societal levels.

Subsequently REIACTIS initiated an international meeting at the Sorbonne on 9 July 2009 around the theme: "Seniors as citizens and social and economic actors", with contributions notably from Anne-Marie Guillemard (F), Alan Walker (G-B), Bob butler (USA) and Michèle Charpentier (Can).

In 2010 the international symposium will deal with the issue of empowerment and pensioners and elderly people's social commitment and social inclusion. It will be an opportunity to examine interaction between research, public decision-makers and civil society actors.

This interdisciplinary symposium will combine a variety of perspectives from the sociology of ageing as well as from other subjects of the field of social sciences and humanities (law, economics, ethnology, philosophy, psychology, education science, political science) which are likely to provide relevant insights into the issues examined by the symposium.

Theme I

Public policy aimed at involving seniors in decision-making: participatory democracy and civil society actors

Whether it be at the local, national or international level, how are retired and elderly people included in public decision-making? To what extent are political responses to population ageing anticipated, planned and established on the basis of information, consultation and negotiation with seniors and their representatives?

What are the institutional forms of representation and the mechanisms that enable retired and elderly people, either as individuals or representatives of social groups, to play a role in public decision-making? What kinds of structure (e.g. advisory boards, panels, national or local committees) exist for what kinds of power (e.g. compulsory or advisory consultation, assent procedure, joint decision-making) and in what fields (e.g. pensions, health, transport, town planning).

What kind of resources can these structures or mechanisms draw upon, and what are their fields of activity and jurisdiction? And finally, over and above what they officially set out to do, in what ways have these various forms of participatory democracy involving the elderly influenced local, national or international policies?

Theme II

Mobilization and collective action by the elderly: the power to act and to bring about social change

What is the current state of affairs with regard to 'grey power' and the social and civic commitment of the elderly? Voluntary work and involvement in community groups seem to be a form of social participation that is highly prized by older people. For many, retirement is experienced as an optimum time of life for greater involvement with family, community groups or everyday politics. Indeed, a large number of groups and associations all over the world represent and defend the interests of the elderly at the local, national and international level. The mobilization of seniors, however, goes well beyond defending their own interests and targets other social groups and causes: promoting the arts and culture; social justice; defending the rights of marginal and underprivileged groups, etc. What powers do the elderly exercise within these various groups and associations and in society as a whole? What is their power of collective action and for social change?

Theme III

Decision-making power at different stages of the ageing process

At what stages in the ageing process is the issue of seniors' choices and power over the decisions that directly affect them particularly important? A change in living arrangements, especially the move from home into residential care; the choice of medical care; the need for a guardian to be appointed? To what extent are these decisions that have a fundamental impact on their decision-making powers and living environment the outcome of informed choices by the elderly themselves? To what extent can third parties, such as formal or informal social networks or public bodies, optimize seniors' capacities to make decisions and exercise free choice?

Theme IV

Professional and family training as a key factor in inclusive practices and the capability approach.

Power as a culture of relationship with the elderly

If power is a form of relationship and interaction with others, how do representations of the elderly and of their capacities, rights and needs affect the culture of our relationship with older people? How exactly do approaches such as 'humanitude' or 'validation', for example, foster attitudes in professional practice that translate into behaviour leading to empowerment of the elderly? Over and above these approaches, how can the relational approach be modified by training and consciousness-raising activities on the status and potential of older people?

Theme V

From the tools of power to the power of (communication) tools ? The issue of information and expertise

.Non-professional and professional expertise as power

What different kinds of expertise are involved in decision-making processes when it comes to local policy in the areas of transport, accessibility, town planning and, in some cases, home care services, for example?

How can we define the various ways in which retired people and the organizations that represent them diagnose needs, assess the adequacy of resources and act in an advisory capacity?

What financial resources do retired people and seniors' organizations have at their disposal? Are they well-informed and trained? Do they themselves have the power of expertise – the technical, legal and scientific skills – to enable them to challenge accepted authority? Can they access outside expertise by commissioning studies or surveys? How do local actors enable the elderly to develop these skills and encourage their involvement in sharing the power of expertise when it comes to diagnosing their needs and assessing existing or proposed structures?

. Cultivating and developing self-empowerment

The capability approach developed by professionals, retired people and their families consists in maintaining and expanding the abilities and know-how of retired and elderly people so that they can continue to exert power over themselves and their environment. What role can professional practices and the retired and elderly themselves play in promoting awareness of the various types of power seniors can exert over themselves, their private lives and the public arena. Do the prevention and 'maintenance' initiatives aimed at helping the elderly maintain their physical and mental capacities result in their empowerment?

Which actors and which methods can best inform and train the elderly to enable them to have an impact on themselves and their local, national or international environment?

Written contributions: A summary of the written contribution proposed for the symposium with maximum 4000 words is required.

Proposals will be received until March 25, then sent to the Scientific committee. In the event of acceptance he will be requested from the authors whose summaries were agreed to write a text which will be used as a basis for their presentation. Several months will be left to the authors to write it. This text will be then integrated in the working papers given to the regulators then to the participants in the CR/Rom of the Acts. After examination by the Scientific committee, it could be retained for a collective work which will follow the meetings of Santiago.

For more information, you need to go on the following Website, www.reiactis.org.