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A model for an

Intergenerational Learning Center

GE&iN

Generations in Interaction.
Intergenerational Learning ad
a Constructor of Identity and Culture

The following document constitutes one of the intellectual outputs of the European Union-financed (via the Finnish National Agency for Education) project, GE&IN – Generations in Interaction: Intergenerational Learning as a Constructor of Identity and Culture, under the umbrella of the Erasmus+ programme.
The aim of the project was to map the primary intergenerational learning experiences of participating countries (Finland, Romania, Slovenia, Poland and Italy) as well as in other European countries, with the end goal of creating an intergenerational learning centre model. The project falls under the scope of Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices).
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1. Intergenerational Learning: Theoretical Framework and Sustainability of the Method

1.1 Introduction: what is Intergenerational Learning

As human experiences, education and learning have always rested on a meeting between generations: the most readily-available examples (which often risk straying into the realm of stereotype) of the amazing process through which a child learns new things with the assistance of someone older or wiser include a grandfather taking his grandson by the hand, a parent teaching their child how to tie their shoelaces, or a teacher explaining to a pupil how to complete a task.

Over time, these images have solidified and formed genuine models. The most common of these is almost certainly the process that translates the learning process into one of transmission of knowledge from an "adult" (expert) subject to a subject in a "developmental phase" (less expert). This model is equally prevalent in family dynamics and academic environments, despite the existence of valid alternatives. It is based on the idea of an intergenerational relationship which is almost always unidirectional: one imparts, educates, teaches, while the other receives, takes in, learns.

The GE&IN project takes a completely different view on the term "intergenerational", in some cases dismantling accepted paradigms of learning and proposing others to take their place.

A review of the relevant literature reveals that a learning process becomes "intergenerational" when it brings together different generations and enables them to share experiences to their mutual benefit and with a view to social promotion and development, in any phase of life and not only in cases where there are familial ties.

A core aspect of such an interpretation is the nature of intergenerational ties: the focus expands from parental, familial or otherwise personal dynamics to include the entire social space. The hypothesis here is that an intergenerational encounter can take place between strangers (at least in the primary phase) as part of a deliberate approach and as part of specific educational projects taking place in dedicated spaces. While deliberate or planned measures require a significant level of organisation, intergenerational learning/education programmes are primarily developed through non-formal and informal channels; they are a counterweight to the excessively abstract nature of the formal education system, designed primarily to develop the more tangible and social elements of learning. The key word in this regard is "experience", as understood in the experiential learning approach: that learning, rather than being an executive act, takes place in a situation of active participation and involvement by the subject, with no separation between the cognitive and the emotional, sensory and social. In the words of John Dewey, one of the leading proponents of this theory, there is no distinction between learning and life, because the act of building relationships (with objects, with problems, with others) is perhaps the most representative expression of our sense of "being in the world".

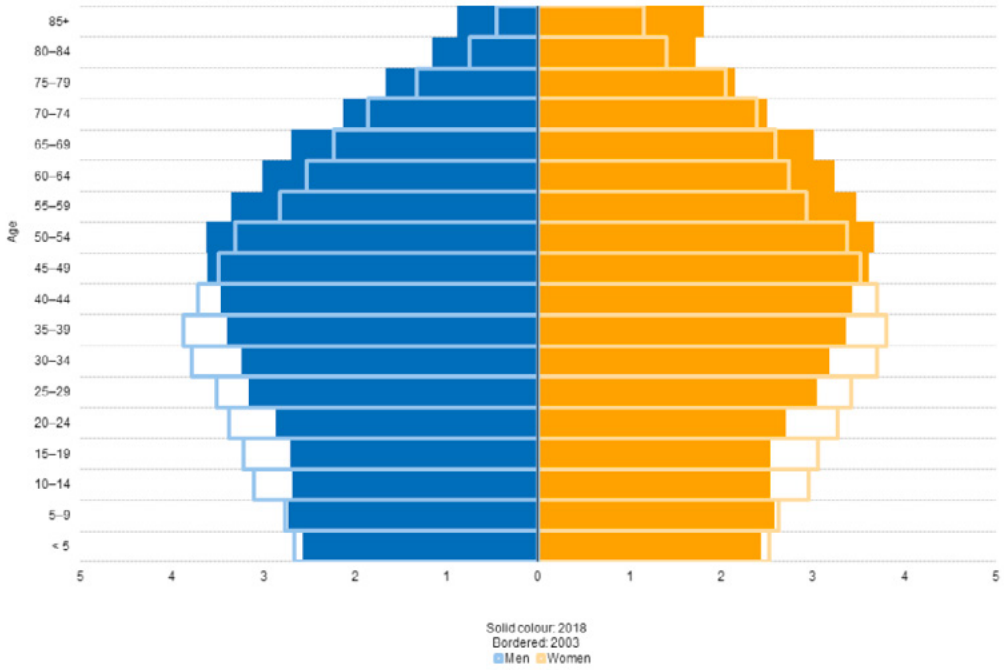
Another element that characterises intergenerational education programmes is the way in which they bring together generations that are more often "at a distance". It should be noted that while the definition provided, as well as the wider literature, refers to any interaction between individuals of different ages (without specifying further), in practice, the theoretical framework

almost always examines the clichéd example of the “extremes” of the human life-cycle: children and senior citizens. A previous Erasmus+ project dedicated to intergenerational learning, to which we owe many of the suggestions that inspired “GE&IN”, also focused primarily on intergenerational dialogue between the 0-8 and 70+ age groups. “The purpose of the Programme,” states the presentation of the project, “is to promote intergenerational learning and create new possibilities for older adults and young children to learn together and benefit each other’s company.” And then again, a few lines later: “The project brought together the two ends of the lifelong spectrum – early childhood education and activities for older adults”; even the title of the project, Together Old and Young (TOY), perfectly captures the predetermined focus. The fact that this is the widely accepted interpretation is a consequence of the fact that early childhood and old age are overwhelmingly seen as ages of vulnerability. As a consequence, the logic goes, they are in the greatest need of these measures of “care and protection”. The classic welfare state approach holds that only the middle segments of the population, and the most productive, are able to provide this. None of this should take away from the fact that those in the intermediary ages may also benefit from positive interactions with people from other generations, giving full meaning to the concept of lifelong learning. This paper approaches the issue from the angle of expanding the intergenerational perspective to its fullest, until it incorporates every stage of the human life cycle.
The final point worth mentioning relates to the reciprocity of intergenerational interactions: in intergenerational education programmes, all subjects involved would ideally gain something, as opposed to the “classic” models of learning in which only the “non-expert” subject benefits from interacting with the “expert” subject. This does not necessarily mean that all participants start in the same place – it is understandable and inevitable that some of them may be more vulnerable or weaker than others. An experience can be said to be fully intergenerational at the point where all the generations involved can be said to be both the vehicle and the recipient, simultaneously transmitting and acquiring knowledge, as part of a social and communal approach, as opposed to an individual or segment-specific one.

1.2 The political dimension: why propose Intergenerational Learning programmes

Intergenerational bonds have always characterised the education process, and yet there are clear demographic, social and epistemological explanations as to why the concept of intergenerational learning, as explained above, can be considered contemporary and highly topical.
The demographic explanation is clear, backed up by a large corpus of data that unequivocally highlights the progressive aging of the European population. Here are only a few, sourced from EuroStat reports: at the moment, the EU population includes four people of working age for every person over 65; according to the projections, this number is expected to be halved by 2060, with only two people of working age for every person over 65. Over the same period, it is estimated that the proportion of people over 65 will increase from 17.1% today to 30%, while the proportion of those over 80 will increase from 4.4% in 2008 to 12.1%. At the same time, there is a dramatic reduction in birth-rates across the board, which is only partially offset by the rise in incoming migration. In the past, statistics on population aging were represented by a classic pyramid shape, with a wide base representing the youngest segments of the population and a narrow tip representing the oldest. The two graphs below clearly demonstrate the transformation of that figure, examining the fifteen years from 2003 to 2018 and the period from 2018 to 2100. The first graph still shows a clear difference between the wider base and the slightly narrower tip, with a clear “swelling” in the middle part of the figure representing adulthood and hinting at a rhomboid shape. In the second graphic, on the other hand, there are no longer

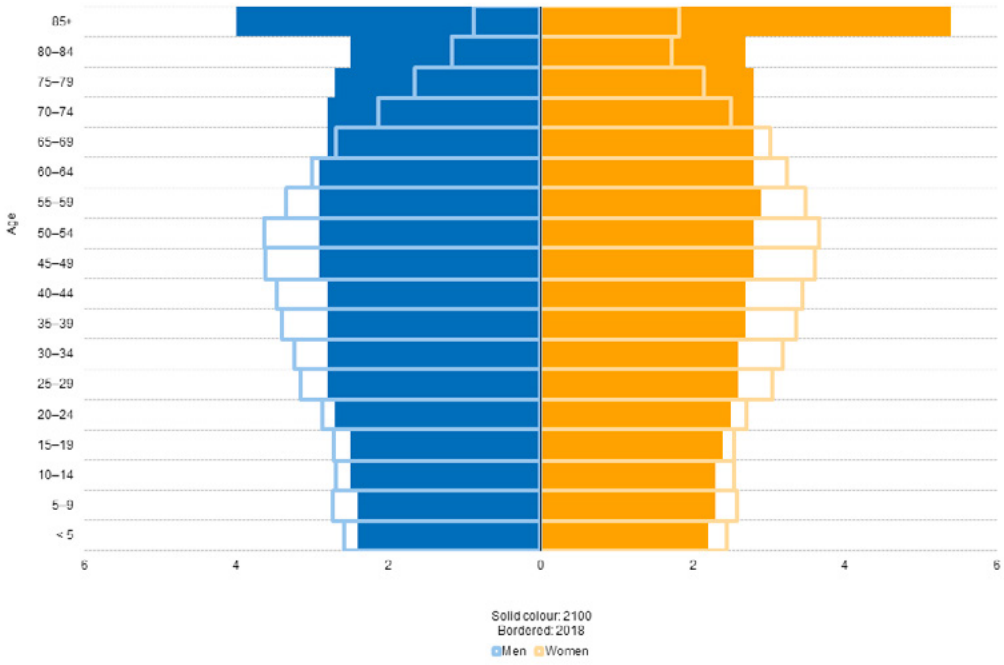
Population pyramids, EU-28, 2003 and 2018
(% of the total population)



Note: 2018 provisional.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_pjangroup)

eurostat

Population pyramids, EU-28, 2018 and 2100
(% of the total population)



Note: 2018: provisional. 2100: projections (EUROPOP2018).
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: demo_pjangroup and proj_18np)

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significant variations, and what was originally a pyramid has become increasingly similar to a column, with a base that is, if anything, slightly narrower than the summit.
The repercussions of such a scenario on the social fabric of the population – and here we are moving on to the second facet – are clear: politicians and civil servants will be called upon to conduct a thorough and sustainable realignment of systems of support and services, from pensions to healthcare and from education policy to individual wellbeing. This is not simply a matter of setting new priorities and deciding whether to allocate more money towards the construction of new retirement homes as opposed to new schools. Taking into consideration the ongoing increase in life expectancy, it will become necessary to carry out a full reassessment of certain parameters of social and educational roles (how we understand wellbeing, autonomy, individual development) and how training of those employed in such fields should adjust as a result.
The final element mentioned above is the epistemological angle. At first glance, this may seem like the most tangentially connected of the issues we have raised herein, and yet it certainly has its part to play. The way in which our understanding of the sciences – including social and human sciences – has evolved over time demonstrates how previous approaches based on the principle of specialisation of knowledge are giving way to new, more holistic and systemic approaches. Breakthroughs in understanding today tend to favour comprehensive approaches that are in harmony with the paradigm of complexity; problems and facts are no longer compartmentalised or categorised into one specific sector. Rather, by far the most common approach among researchers – in every field – is to expand the focus as far as possible, creating new interdisciplinary connections and collaborations.
A detailed reading of the three perspectives outlined above immediately highlights the topical and strategic pertinence of an intergenerational approach to politics: it takes into account demographic trends in the population and acts as a social measure that redistributes the balance among the generations, all as part of a “systemic” approach.

1.3 The economic and environmental dimensions

Last but not least, there are two further arguments in favour of promoting intergenerational learning initiatives. The first is an issue of significant interest to politicians and civil servants: the economic angle. Although education and social policies should never be dictated by cost-cutting interests, there is no question that in a period where public finances are coming under significant strain, this aspect must also be taken into consideration. The finite nature of resources makes it critical for future projects to be focused, and for any necessary facilities to be multifunctional and suitable for as many beneficiaries as possible. Intergenerational initiatives are a direct solution to this challenge, with existing centres (which will be detailed in the second part of the document) being deliberately designed to meet the needs of different age groups within the population. Solutions of this kind also enable us to centralise a range of offices – secretarial, transport, administration, coordination etc. – enabling a more streamlined staff distribution.
Discussions of clear investment strategies and ensuring the sustainability of projects cannot help but raise the need for an environmental angle to this topic. In so far as public services are provided in dedicated buildings and facilities, creating multifunctional centres that concentrate different services targeting different beneficiaries means less land being paved over and a reduced environmental impact. This is especially important in the present moment in history, in which urbanisation plans are being managed with significant caution. Remaining on the environmental issue while shifting slightly to include a more specific political vision of acting the interests of the collective, there is also the principle of regeneration of urban communal

assets: this envisions promoting and supporting initiatives that seek to reclaim communal assets and spaces and to make them more inclusive, with the end goal of increasing their use within the community, thereby improving the overall quality of life of residents. This principle is underpinned by a collaborative pact between citizens and public offices in the interest of undertaking renovation and regeneration of public spaces, the conversion of private spaces to public use, and the development and promotion of new models of civic collaboration in social and cultural services, urban creativity and digital innovation.

2. Intergenerational Learning Centres: analysis of good practices and transferability conditions

2.1 Introduction: methodology and research structure

Intellectual output no.3 of the "GE&IN" project involves designing a model for an intergenerational centre that could be replicated in the other member states in the partnership. This developed over four phases:

1. analysis of the state of art of intergenerational learning;
2. interviews and on-site observations at existing intergenerational learning centres;
3. data analysis via the construction of a "good practice framework";
4. analysis of the findings of the "good practice framework".

The first phase began with analysis of the state of art, using bibliographies on intergenerational learning, previous research and existing national and international projects. Overall, this primary phase analysed 27 applicable projects, 14 in Italy and 13 in other countries (across a total of 10 countries)[1].

Fig. 1. The experiences map

[1] The Italian projects were: Fondazione OIC, **Padua**; Fondazione De Lozzo Da Dalto, **San Pietro di Feletto**; Borgo Mazzini ISRA, **Treviso**; UNICOOP social cooperative, **Piacenza**; Centro San Zeno, **Pisa**; Casa dei Nonni, **Forlì**; intergenerational day centre, **Matera**; intergenerational community centre "Casetta Maritati", **Verona**; intergenerational group centre "Amelio Memè Perlini", **Montecchio**; Homefull project, **Rome**; "Nonni su Internet" project – Fondazione Mondo Digitale, **Rome**; "Nonno ti vengo a trovare" project, **Portogruaro**; Hortus Urbis, Rome; Centro "Il Melo", **Gallarate**.
The foreign projects were: Providence Mount St Vincent, **Seattle** (USA); Intergenerational Centre, **Žiri** (Slovenia); Generationen In Partnershaft, **Graz** (Austria); Experimental University for grandparents and grandchildren, **Prague** (Czech Republic); Centro intergenerazionale Opera Mater Christi, **Bellinzona** (Switzerland); Mehrgenerationenhäuser, **several cities,** (Germany); Municipal Project for Intergenerational Housing and Community Services, **Alicante** (Spain); Innovative Intergenerational Care, **Fujisawa** (Japan); Generations Working Together, **Glasgow** (Scotland); Intergenerational Centres For Children And Olders – Princess Margareta Foundation, **Bucarest** (Romania); Intergenerational "Dancing Międzypokoleniowy", **Warsaw** (Poland); Tampere Department of Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL), **Tampere** (Finland); Penttilänranta Settlement Apartments, **Joensuu** (Finland).

These were then divided into four categories:
- occasional/one-off projects;
- semi-structured projects and activities;
- intergenerational centres;
- co-housing projects and experiences.

The next step was to identify the most meaningful projects in each category and to plan interviews and on-site observations – with a total of ten visits. A best practice framework (fig. 2) was drawn up in order to ensure that the elements that arose from the detailed study would be meaningful and transferable. This would enable an accurate summary of the most representative elements of each project, with a particular emphasis on highlighting the conditions for transferability.

GOOD PRACTICE	
Project title / activity/centre	
Lead partner institution	
Partner/s	
Project contact person	
Key factors that influenced the decision to start the project?	
What is the background or context of the project?	
Which particular issues have inspired the partners?	
Project description, aims and objectives	
What approach and/or methodology is or has been used in working with partners?	

GOOD PRACTICE	
Metholdologies	
How long the project has lasted?	
Beneficiaries	
Funding	
Innovative aspects/elements	
Qualitative and quantitative impacts	
Social, economic, demographic, cultural, political, legislative and technical conditions for the transferability of the project	
Other additional info	

Fig. 2. Goog practices matrix

The analysis of the data inserted into the best practice frameworks enabled the team to identify the conditions for transferability (social, economic, cultural, political, legislative and technical) of each project into another context. These conditions can be divided into tangible and intangible conditions, and these are outlined in the following two sections.

2.2 Tangible conditions for transferability

Welfare measures. One of the recurring elements required for transferability in many of the environments analysed by the team was ties to the welfare system – i.e. the need for institutional leadership capable of fostering and taking systemic measures to support a "culture" of warmth and mutual respect. In these examples, the intergenerational learning centres are no white elephants – they represent an active and lively hub of community life. From the perspectives of those operating the centres (educators, teachers, trainers, social workers etc.) this means becoming change agents, leading from the front in promoting openness to the outside through regional networking initiatives, starting with their political and public sector representatives. The example par excellence in this context is the intergenerational "Plaza de America" building in Alicante (Spain). The facility is the brainchild of a motivated and multidisciplinary team (social workers, architects, politicians), who were driven to promote a culture of shared living, reciprocal support and assistance and lifelong learning among young and old.

Fig. 3. The "Plaza de America" intergenerational building in Alicante (Spain)

Physical layout. Following multiple on-site observations, it is possible to state that the architectural layout of an intergenerational centre must be designed with the dedicated goal of "connecting" generations. This perspective leads to an understanding of the need of the structures to be "fluid", multifunctional spaces, without rigid and confined barriers. This is why a collaborative strategy between professionals from different fields, especially architects for the design and construction and choice of materials, and education professionals for the pedagogical side, as well as their understanding of the core principles of intergenerational learning. The following are a few examples of spatial layout taken from our on-site observations.

Fig. 4. The OIC complex, in Padua (Italy)

The OIC in Padua (Italy) is a prime example of an open, flexible and multifunctional space. Within a few dozen metres from each other, there is a senior centre, an independent living facility for senior citizens (who can make use of the centre's services), a park that is open to all residents of the city, a safe track for cyclists and road safety courses, and an intergenerational nursery (which includes various activities with the senior citizens living in the residential centre).

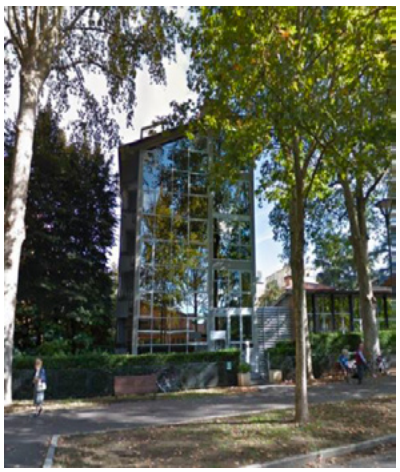

Fig. 5. The ABI building in Piacenza (Italy)

Fig. 6. The "multifunctional chair" (ABI, Piacenza - Italy)

ABI, the intergenerational centre in Piacenza (Italy), is a model of urban redevelopment, sitting on a converted building that has been repurposed into a retirement home for senior citizens with an integrated nursery. The main facade of the building is completely taken up by a large glass wall, ensuring the complete homogenisation of the inside and outside (fig. 5). Despite various pre-existing structural restrictions, the internal areas are dynamic and suitable for both generations (children and senior citizens). Special thought was given to the furnishings, such as the "multi-purpose" chair (fig. 6) which is simultaneously a child-sized bookshelf as well as a chair with firm traction to ensure a safe and comfortable place for the senior residents to sit.

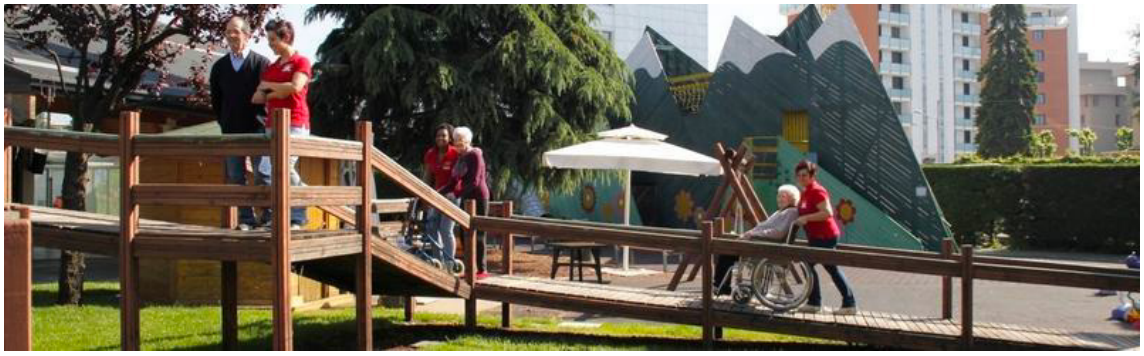

Fig. 7. The multifunctional platform in the Melo's garden (Gallarate, Italy)

"Il Melo" in Gallarate (Italy) offers a similar concept, with a multifunctional space taken up by a centre offering various services (a retirement home and senior centre, a nursery, and the local headquarters of the University of the Third Age). Here, the architects designed a long wooden walkway, which is both a play area for the children and a rehabilitation structure for the senior residents (the walkway is suitable for prams and walking frames).

Fig. 8. GIP – Generation In Partnershaft in Graz (Austria)

The GIP ("Generation In Partnershaft") centre in Graz (Austria) also provides residential spaces for senior citizens, on the first floor of the building: there are also communal spaces alongside the private areas (such as a large kitchen and cafeteria) which are used by the senior citizens themselves, or by the children in the nursery located on the ground floor. The two main areas – the senior centre and the nursery – are connected by a lift, and there are many shared activities.

Fig. 9. The park of the "De Lozzo Da Dalto Foundation", in San Pietro di Feletto (Italy)

A slightly different example is provided by the "Fondazione De Lozzo Da Dalto" in San Pietro di Feletto (Italy), where the use of space is primarily felt in the external areas. Here, the senior centre and the preschool with a nursery are in two distinct buildings, separated by a large private park with a path designed for the specific purpose of connecting the two spaces. Here too, there are a number of joint activities that require the participants to walk through the park.

Fig. 10. Intergenerational parks in USA and Singapore

Last but not least, there is a constant increase in the number of cities featuring intergenerational urban designs, intended to encourage integration and interaction between able-bodied and disabled people, using specially-adapted equipment for play-time or physical activities: examples include the Rotary PlayGarden in San Jose (USA) or the Intergenerational Playground in Singapore.

The economic aspect. The economic angle is particularly relevant in various circumstances, especially those in which the intergenerational centres provide a range of services and/or cases involving urban regeneration. This is in part as a result of the need for synergy between local actors and specialist individuals (educators, teachers, trainers, politicians, architects, information services, social workers etc.). People involved in designing intergenerational activities or projects usually demonstrate social pedagogy skills, but these are also combined with fundraising abilities, especially in calls for tender and planning in partnership with other organisations or entities.

Planning ability. Mutual benefit of all involved generations is a fundamental precondition of intergenerational learning, both in theoretical underpinning and self-evident obligation. This aspect shines a spotlight on the planning phase of an activity, and on the planning abilities of those behind it. It requires ensuring that the various beneficiaries of the education and learning activities are at the heart of everything, paying careful attention to potential outcomes for all beneficiaries (expanding and improving relationships within the facilities, but also between the facilities and their environment).

Monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation provide a valuable and inescapable contribution to an intergenerational centre, enabling assessment of the underlying assumptions of the educational project, in terms of the formal and informal aspects of the centre. This evaluation must be rooted in clear, communicable and observable criteria. The risk here is to confuse a positive work environment in which people "feel good", with concrete, tangible outcomes in terms of learning, personal development and social skills.

Strategic partnerships. One of the clear takeaways for planning and managing an intergenerational centre from the observations carried out was the importance of creating networks among different organisations and local service providers. An intergenerational centre is a highly complex undertaking and requires synergy during every phase of construction and management.

Community needs. The need to start from the genuine needs expressed by the beneficiaries of the service/activity is the starting point in a project action for the development and well-being of the community as a whole. The core element here is the methodological and project-management abilities of the team behind the project (educators, teachers, trainers...). It ultimately rests on their planning abilities, as well as those of the centre, as determined by the real needs expressed by the community.

Time management. As with all educational activities, intergenerational learning is rooted in the development of long-term relationships. The effects of this can impact on the planning time, as often the time-scale necessary to consolidate positive relationships does not coincide with the duration of projects funded by public money.

Volunteering. Some of the projects and experiences examined as part of this paper also incorporated volunteers alongside the paid staff. Taking into consideration the transferability of pedagogical principles, the work of the volunteer staff is an important variable: it is vital for these individuals to be properly trained, to evaluate their true motivations as well as to ensure their full buy-in to the goals of the centre and to qualify their contribution trough appropriate training sessions.

Ongoing staff training with an intergenerational perspective. Ongoing training of the staff – who, in the examples we observed, were often from the generations bridging the gap between children and senior citizens – constitutes another vital component in ensuring transferability. This training must be linked to the development of the skills and soft skills necessary to work with different age groups simultaneously, to generate strong community bonds (including among the various professionals on site) and to be able to review their own conduct with a critical eye.

2.3 Intangible conditions for transferability

A long-term approach. Setting up an intergenerational centre requires adopting a long-term mindset right from the primary planning phases. As stated above, successful intergenerational programmes require the formation of bonds that take significant time to create, and cannot be mere throw-away or one-off initiatives: it must be underpinned by a structured organisational, cultural and policy programme. This must make allowances for the necessary commitment and investments (not only financial ones).

Maintaining relationships. The relationship between the different generations is the fundamental feature of educational initiatives and intergenerational learning. It is necessary at this point to once more underline the importance of the team's project management capabilities when planning and carrying out activities designed to spark and develop relationships, generate trust and openness and enable work in an environment free from judgment and prejudice. In addition to the pre-planned activities for developing relationships, it has also been possible to observe the benefits of leaving relationships to develop organically, through informal situations and/or moments.

Cultural and social aspects. Many of the experiences analysed for this paper share a focus on the need to re-evaluate our collective understanding of old age, and to transition away from a purely assistance-based mindset. On the contrary, the objective should be to promote a vision in which this phase of the lifecycle is full of opportunity, skills and knowledge to be maximised, not only within the small circle of the immediate community, but also within the wider community (this is particularly applicable to co-housing projects).

3. The framework for a model of an intergenerational learning centre

3.1 Introduction: what is a model

Analysis of best practices in intergenerational learning/education uncovered several recurring and indispensable elements. These should serve as the foundations of any programme seeking to successfully introduce an intergenerational learning situation. When we talk about learning situations, we are referring to planned, deliberate circumstances, able to generate positive outcomes on the lives of their participants. Examples include situations that make people feel better, in which they can use skills in an ongoing manner. These should prioritise long-term positive effects over fleeting emotional impact and produce a positive change in people's lives, however it is achieved.

This is why we must briefly deviate to discuss the concept of a "model" – to ensure there is an understood and agreed-upon definition and to clearly set out the "rules of the game"; creating initiatives that are not only enjoyable, pleasant and emotionally engaging, but that also result in visible, significant benefits to the lives of the participating individuals.

The word "model" occurs regularly in common parlance, often taken to mean the idea of something that should be imitated or reproduced, across a range of theoretical and practical fields. We use it interchangeably alongside synonyms such as "example" and "prototype". However, in scientific terms (including pedagogy, which seeks to design and evaluate educational activities), this term is used to refer to something more complex, with an unambiguous, specific and constant meaning. It is useful as a specific reference point in creating and introducing a range of learning activities targeting people of different age groups. Allow us to explain. We can say that a model is a simplified vision of a certain phenomenon. Using experimental observations, we are able to understand the underlying rule. There is no such thing as a correct or incorrect model; rather, there are simply models that are more or less suited to faithfully representing the guidelines underpinning that phenomenon and that validate it.

Let's look at an example: when conducting any intergenerational activity, there are always certain elements, identified in the various observations and subsequent reflections, that make it constructive and meaningful for the participants, as well as for those who create and oversee it: together, these elements can be combined into a series of guidelines that, when applied, ensure an effective outcome. Recreating intergenerational activities under different conditions while holding to the guidelines (the building blocks of the model) ensures almost guaranteed success in achieving the desired objectives. Failure to meet the objectives would be indicative of a need to review our procedures (from planning to practice), as it would mean that we have potentially overlooked certain elements that ultimately have an important role in our process. In short, a model can be understood to mean a collection of guidelines that ensure the desired outcome when applied, even in different environments and circumstances, provided they are clearly stated and obeyed. Failure to achieve the results would indicate that the framework for the guidelines is inaccurate (we chose to follow incorrect guidelines, like adding instead of subtracting in an equation), or we did not properly apply the guidelines in the new context (too quickly, not carefully enough, without considering all possible consequences of certain elements).

3.2 Prerequisites of the model: the human, planning and operational dimensions

Before delving into the specific explanations of a guideline framework (a model of intergenerational learning) that enables us to plan and carry out effective intergenerational activities, we will highlight certain prerequisites for educational activities/initiatives/projects of any nature:

1. any educational or learning initiative must have an idea of a person; this is what we refer to as the ***human dimension***;
2. any educational context must have a strong identity, and must be clearly outlined, with the intended beneficiaries, the methods, duration and locations all defined; this is what we refer to as the ***planning dimension***;
3. finally, each context must define its own characteristics and those of the beneficiaries of its educational initiatives, which can facilitate or hinder the practical implementation of the activity; this is what we refer to as the ***operational dimension***.

So why do we need a "model" for educational initiatives generally, and for intergenerational activities specifically?
Experience teaches us that education can take many forms: our parents educate us, and so too our friends and our society. Even a specific event that happens to us can act as an educational experience. We educate ourselves by observing others, picking up behavioural traits or attitudes we learn from other people. However, if we want something to achieve an educational setting, something that has a positive impact on an individual's life, it cannot be something improvised or spur-of-the-moment. Equally, however, it cannot be designed in a laboratory, copied from the pages of a one-size-fits-all instruction manual. This is why we need a model – it is a supporting tool for education initiatives, a system that enables us to plan, realise, oversee and evaluate the initiatives, ensuring that they are delivering the promised positive change and individual growth. If an initiative fails to produce even a minimal change in the daily lives and sense of individual fulfilment, it cannot be considered educational. However, it is important to emphasise early on that the model is not a rigid framework, a mechanism that operates an educational relationship irrespective of the parties involved in it. Rather, it is a logical, thorough and coherent framework that contains within it the proper guidelines to support planning and creation of educational activities, to release them from relying on either improvisation or standardisation. That is why the primary dimension of an intergenerational education model is tied to the idea of the person: who is the person? What defines the person? Would it be equally accurate to talk about it as a human being?

3.3 The human dimension: the person

Any initiative with educational aspirations must keep firmly in mind a concept of the person. Below, we have provided several principles that we believe to be the vital foundations of any educational experience, intergenerational or otherwise. It is our view that intergenerational experiences are a place where the multitude of worlds, cultures, backgrounds, identities and individual peculiarities cannot be reduced to mere passive participants in an activity (whether one-off or ongoing). Rather, these participants must be seen as an active part of the process, and this is why the activities in question must not take the form of pre-arranged templates, but should instead be "special" learning opportunities adapted to the people involved. Think about it like a tailor's craft: they have a mannequin "template", but the end product will always

need to be adjusted to the needs of the individual standing in front of them. The suit will need to be tailored to them, and as a result it will end up different every time.
The principles below, then, are to be taken as the starting point for an idea of a person that will enable the creation of activities with an educational objective, for the exact reason that:
1. Every person is unique and individual, and will always be so. Their dignity does not rest on social conventions or codes – it comes from them, intangible and eternal. An education is everyone's birthright; everyone is capable of giving and receiving it, irrespective of their age, gender, culture or social class;
2. It is important to recognise that every person needs and offers different things. By needs, we mean an imbalance, something that is missing, leaving a hole that, if left unfilled, can develop into a problem or a state of disquiet. Needs are another way of referring to basic human requirements, necessary conditions that are not met, resulting in a lack of wellbeing. Alongside this, each person also offers something – an inclination or willingness to do a given thing. Each of these is an unrequited characteristic/ability, which necessitates the existence of certain conditions in order to be brought to the fore. They must be expressed in the widest possible acceptance of talent, abilities, skills and potential: this makes them a fundamental and primal concept;
3. this organised network of arrangements is an intrinsic element of human nature, under which every individual is encouraged to maximise their own potential, regardless of their existing historical, evolutionary, material, cultural or biological circumstances;
4. in this way, the individual is a value, a resource in and of themselves, both in the present and in the future: their vulnerability is also their value; that vulnerability is a pathway to opportunity. We should keep in mind the vulnerability of the human being at the moment of birth, and the unlimited potential carried within it;
5. another fundamental condition of humanity is relationships: we humans are inherently social beings. We grow and develop through our relationships with others; 6. in addition, the individual is a citizen and thereby has both rights (first and foremost, to life) and responsibilities;
7. a person is always a product of their historical, social, cultural and emotional environments and their social relationships;
8. the intended beneficiary for an intergenerational education centre is that same individual who in a period of life, from infancy to old age, has needs and requirements that must be accommodated, understood and placed at the service of personal growth and the collective growth of the human race;
9. the biography that each person carries with them is an inseparable part of planning an intergenerational centre, and of any educational initiative;
10. every person is a bearer of fragility, resources and values: this applies to recipients, families as well as operators, managers, educational staff and also to all people who, for various reasons (personal or institutional, singular or collective) become part of an educational process.
Keeping these principles in mind, accuracy demands that our first thoughts regarding any social actor participating in an intergenerational programme regards their identity. From this, we will develop an understanding of their ability to participate in educational activities in synergy with their background, their culture, their values and the institution's goals for its local area, and draw up intergenerational activities according to these.

3.4 The planning dimension

When we refer to planning, we understand it to mean the delicate phase in which thoughts, ideas and intuitions regarding desired activities begin to take shape as tangible programmes. We should start by clarifying the need for planning: why is it necessary? There are various rea-

sons, which we will attempt to sum up in brief here:
- firstly, it enables us to manage the inherent complexity of any environment that aspires to being educational and thereby creating a positive shift (in a number of ways) in the lives of its participants;
- secondly, it enables us to create a sensible and practical path, with stages that lead seamlessly from one to the next;
- thirdly, it enables us to evaluate our progress on this path, making sure we carry out the necessary adjustments as we go and enabling us to be more flexible;
- finally, it shuts down the need for improvisation and the associated negative consequences, replacing it with welcome flexibility.
Furthermore, the planning is a paper, a document that acts as a vital "toolbox" for the educational/learning services. This also works to craft its identity over time and offers a significant contribution to the culture of education within the specific environment. Indeed, it is through careful planning that educational institutions or places of learning can formulate clearly-defined areas of responsibility within the local area: this planning is the process through which a specific and tangible contribution to the needs of the local environment can be met, going from a desire ("it would be great if...") to a programme of implementation ("we can do this here, using these budget, to meet this objective").
This is therefore clearly important, and this is what makes the difference in the activities that can be implemented. The planning work does not rest on questions such as, "what do we do?", but rather focuses on similar questions, such as "who are the intended beneficiaries?" and "why should we do this type of activity?" and, last but not least, "what type of institution are we? What are our values? What is our purpose?". The planning phase is therefore more than a simple to-do list of the necessary steps to be taken; it operates on two different levels:
- the first level is the specific purpose of the institution fostering the activity (learning centre, recreational centre, cultural association, preschool, retirement home, youth centre, intercultural centre etc...) and the specifics of its intended beneficiaries (children, families, adolescents, working-age adults, senior citizens, disabled people, people from different cultural backgrounds...);
- the second level is to answer the question, "why should we do this type of activity?" and it is intrinsically tied to the objectives and the intended benefits to participants of the activities in question.
We will now go into the details and explain how the planning of the two levels works to open the door to the initial drafts (of the project) which will then be fleshed out by analysis and evaluation of the activities carried out.
First of all, it is important for those proposing the initiative to be clear regarding their goals and regarding the nature of the planned service/organisation/educational entity: not all reasons for planning and developing such an organisation are equivalent and replicable. They require a clear vision of the specific nature of the initiative and a clearly-defined justification for its presence in the area in question. Generally, the "birth" documents of a new service provide indications regarding its identity, with clarifications regarding its purpose and its founding values. The second aspect relates to the intended beneficiaries of the initiative: the data of each group is particularly important here, such as the characteristics that typify the different phases of childhood and youth, for example. The analysis carried out on various examples of best practice demonstrated that a detailed familiarity with the particular demands (and conditions) of the different age groups was the way to ensure high-quality initiatives: for example, babies and early childhood already require two very different approaches, and that is heightened by the introduction of senior citizens into the environment. The guiding principle is that it is not possible to improvise intergenerational activities: there is a need for a detailed knowledge of human development and of how both content and methods of teaching/learning are received at different times, as well as how they impact on the individual growth and change of their intended beneficiaries. It is also of vital importance to identify the potential for growth and development among the intended beneficiaries (e.g. in relationship-building, communications,

body language...) and to use this to shape the successive planning phases.
Regarding the second level, there are two different operations taking place:
- on the one hand, the working conditions must be taken into consideration; these include the required resources (of every kind – HR, materials, locations and times) and any potential challenges (people who do not speak the same language, people with disabilities, insufficient space etc...);
- the other side is to outline the desired objectives. These are the important targets to reach as part of the development pathway of each individual participating in the activity: "speak with all the participants", "use respectful language", "know the names of all the participants in the group" are all examples of potential communication objectives in an intergenerational project. In short, the objectives are behaviours or traits that we decide are important for the growth of the participants and that can be developed through certain activities. These objectives must be:
• clear: they must be outlined in language that all participants in the project find easy to understand;
• realistic: the conditions in which the project is taking place must allow for the objectives to be reached;
• quantifiable: we must be able to see them translated into tangible, visible, real results.
If a project is unable to achieve its stated objectives, it means they were not suited to the intended beneficiaries of the activities or that they were not relevant to the stated objectives, however enjoyable or interesting. This is why it is so important to outline objectives that are mindful of the abilities of the beneficiaries and that have a positive impact on their lives.

3.5 The operational dimension

This focus on the desired objectives serves as the launch pad for the research and preparation of the appropriate activities. The activities are the events held under the auspices of the project (drinking tea together, a group dance, story time, painting a mural, writing a newsletter etc.), and these cannot exist separately from the objectives; rather, they must be guided by them. Usually, our approach might be the exact opposite: we think of an activity, and then subsequently attempt to define the potential benefits (i.e. the objective) that such an activity may produce. At the beginning of this chapter, when we defined our model, this was what we were referring to: a project of intergenerational activities must follow a logical order, and that logic dictates that the activities should be defined only after the potential abilities to be developed among the intended beneficiaries and the available conditions have been clarified. Furthermore, from the initial phases of a project and until it comes to fruition, in the "here and now" of the operational phase, there are any number of unknowns, things that occur only at the moment the activity is taking place: this is why we said that a project enables us to manage the complexity, to keep the various, varied and often unforeseeable elements that may support or impede our work under control. For example: what if we planned an activity in pairs, between children and senior citizens, but the number of children is much higher than the number of senior citizens, and creating pairs with children alone is not useful in helping us to reach our goals? What should we do? Call off the activity? If the objectives we identified for the project have been thought through, we will have already planned more than one possible exercise (activation, game, role playing, manual work, dance etc.) to enable us to assist people in their chosen development despite the unfavourable conditions (in this case, the lack of sufficient numbers of senior citizens). The activities can be incredibly diverse in scope, and enough of them should be prepared to enable the personnel to select the most suitable one for the specific circumstances at the time of the event. Careful planning of this nature aids us in focusing on

the stated objective, but also gives us freedom to select the most suitable method to achieve it. Perhaps another, slightly different example would be helpful in understanding the concept fully: if I wish to travel from Milan to Rome, there are an almost infinite number of ways to do it, using different modes of transport, with different durations, using different amounts of resources, and each with its own potential obstacles along the way. However, by keeping the focus on the destination – in this case, Rome – I have the freedom to take the most suitable path for my circumstances, resources and restrictions. In this example, the clear objective is the knowledge that I need to get to Rome: the choice of activity, the time-scale, resources etc. are part of the overall plan, with the freedom, individual responsibility and ability to make changes to it as I go. This is one of the key aspects of any educational or learning process.

As mentioned earlier, the activities we select will not always take us in the desired direction: on occasion, the opposite may be true; they may open up other directions and other needs within the scope of the project. It is at these moments that the project will be modified, taking advantage of the aforementioned "flexibility". Perhaps another example here would be helpful. If, following ten intergenerational encounters, people are still unwilling to call each other by name or continue to sit quietly without interacting, it would then be up to us to realise that the activities we have planned are unsuited to developing relationship-building skills. However, the findings reveal that, during these meetings, the participants have created wonderful works of art from clay, developing their artistic abilities and expression. At this point, we must ask ourselves: was the primary objective to encourage interpersonal communication and relationship-building, or to produce artworks from clay? As we can see, the ability or inability to reach the objectives is closely linked to the evaluation of the project and the ways in which this is employed. Often, a lack of clarity regarding the objectives can lead to the creation of a raft of activities that may be enjoyable for the participants, but that do not enable them to develop and expand their relationship network nor enable them to practice the skills they have gained elsewhere by formulating close ties.

To be successful, a project needs time, and a well-defined progression from one stage to another that does not rely on improvisation: improvised activities, as enjoyable and appealing as they may be, are not able to encourage long-term behavioural changes that impact people's lives. The purpose of a truly intergenerational activity must be to induce a beneficial change in the participants' lives, whether in their relationships, cognitive abilities, recreational skills, or anything else. Passion and good intentions alone are not enough to create meaningful change. They require the professional aspects inherent to programmes of this type – carefully developed and ensuring that planning, running and evaluating educational actions remains at the heart of it.

Below, we have provided a brief recap of everything we mentioned in this chapter, focusing on the questions that may help you in preparing documents to support your intergenerational education work.

Dimension	Contents	Guiding questions
Human	The theoretical framework for the ideal persona within the centre we are hoping to set up	What is our understanding of the persona? What is our understanding of the type of resident we are targeting?

Planning

Our specific identity as part of the region, our purpose, the intended beneficiaries of our activity.

Our conditions (location, space, number of people involved) and the specific objectives of our activity.

What type of service are we offering?
What are our core values?
Who have we chosen to work with (age, background, social class etc.)?
Why have we chosen this specific group?

What resources (human, financial, material) do we have?
What are our restrictions and what are our objectives for the people we are working with (separate into: social, cognitive, relationship, motor, expression, communication)?

Operational

The activities we are proposing

What type of activities are we offering at present?
Are they the most suitable activities for reaching our stated objective?
What should we do if we are not reaching our objective?
Are the activities still beneficial?
How many are we?
What do we need?
How are our participants responding to us?
How are we evaluating the efficacy of our activities?

4. Recommendations for a model for an intergenerational learning centre

Based on the three dimensions outlined in the previous chapter (human, planning and operational), it is now possible to summarise and highlight those elements, in bullet points, that should be taken into consideration to ensure the transferability of the model. For each dimension we have identified four bullet points, for a total of 12 practical recommendations, outlined below:

Vision

A centre that carries out intergenerational projects provides a service not only for its specific target audience – it must also be a subject of policy and point of reference for the entire community. The sweeping changes that are affecting our planet increasingly require an “inter” approach; intergenerational (of course), but even more so for cultures, backgrounds, approaches to safeguarding the environment and integration of positive policies in support of education.

Mutual reciprocity

The activities taking place within an intergenerational learning centre must be planned to enable active, effective and authentic exchanges among all generations. There is no such thing as one generation learning from another in “one-way traffic”; mutual reciprocity is the key for people of any age to feel the benefits of the learning experience. In this sense, intergenerational activities should be seen as moments of “co-constructed learning”.

Personnel

An intergenerational learning centre is a place where educational and social projects are carried out. That means the personnel running it must be at a high level of training and specialisation. While making allowances for the norms of each individual country, the core professional staff are: psychologists, educators, early childhood educators, social workers, doctors, nurses and medical assistants (in cases where the centre incorporates a retirement home). Completing the list are the administrative and secretarial staff. Volunteers may also be allowed to be involved, however they too must be suitably trained and their activities coordinated.

Beneficiaries

Our vision of intergenerational learning is wider than only the two extremes of the lifecycle (children and senior citizens); we believe that a dynamics is truly intergenerational when it brings in more age groups, including adolescents and adults; this is why we envision a multifunctional and dynamic centre, with a wide array of services and wider public participation.

Location

An intergenerational learning centre should be located somewhere that is easy to reach and access, ideally in a city centre, enabling a cultural and social exchange with the entire community.

Building

An intergenerational centre should remain true to the principles of sustainability. Therefore, at the risk of encountering structural limitations, it would nonetheless be preferable to plan to renovate an existing structure, rather than constructing a new one. As the initiative is to develop policies beneficial to the community, regeneration of existing communal assets instead of cementing over new land is clearly important in the community context.

Objectives

An intergenerational learning centre should identify objectives to be achieved through its activities. These should be beneficial for each and every individual participating in the activities, and should therefore be clearly defined in the planning phase. These include behaviours that are considered important for the personal growth of the beneficiaries, and that can be developed and encouraged via the activities. The predetermined objectives must be clear, realistic and quantifiable. They should also be mindful of the abilities of the beneficiaries and should have a beneficial impact on their lives. There is a significant range of activities that may be effective in meeting any given objective: we should choose those that the beneficiaries respond to best, with the highest level of participation and satisfaction.

Physical layouts

A centre for intergenerational activities must pay constant attention to the layout of the internal and external spaces, designing them in such a way as to facilitate and encourage exchanges, meaningful relationships, and meetings. Organisation of space in this way becomes a tangible application of pedagogical principles, a method employed by education professionals to promote intergenerational learning. This encourages new, fertile interdisciplinary thinking that merges pedagogy, architecture and design.

Oversight and coordination

Although many of the projects we considered were the result of private initiatives, whenever community policies are involved, there is an inherent public interest. This is why an intergenerational learning centre must always be subject to oversight or close coordination with a public body, even when it is managed by private individuals/organisations.

Personnel training

Those working in intergenerational environments must have the specific training and familiarity with planning, operations and evaluations. They must be flexible, able to adapt to new situations and willing to engage in tasks across a range of disciplines. This is the indispensable bedrock of any activity in these environments, with daily routine supplemented by regular updates to content, methodology and relationship-building.

Pedagogical supervision

Supervision is an area of work that requires an external professional (pedagogist), who works together with the team in analysing the activities implemented as part of the project management. By analysing the contents of the project as well as the relationship-building tools employed, they are able to draw up a reflection that can help in understanding whether the project is on the right track to meet its stated objectives.

Evaluation

Evaluation is closely linked to the planning and operational dimensions, and it is not merely a method for ascertaining whether the objectives have been met. First of all, it is the final part of an educational programme – the latter cannot be successfully closed without a clear definition that the objectives have been met and that the expected benefits (at least in the medium term) have been felt. It also works as a social reporting, especially (although not only) in cases where the projects have been made possible thanks to public funding, as it is able to demonstrate the efficacy of the measures taken for the wider good of the community as a whole.

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