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THE STRONG HISTORY AND PROBLEMATIC FUTURE OF INTERGENERATIONAL EVERYDAY RELATIONS IN ROMANIA

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***Abstract:** So what is happening to the European Union? A lot of people have asked this question, but very few asked it about Romania. Romania, just like the EU is under tremendous pressure. It is registering changing trends with powerful effects, such as demographic change which is widening rapidly. The real sting behind demographic change resides in the elements that have led to it and which ensure future similar trends. The largely unnoticed extension of the new intergenerational relationships in Romania has brought their own contribution to demographic evolution. The above discussion it is not just about demographics, but, it is crucially a social inquiry on “meta-demographics” or who gets to make the rules within which demographic transition takes place. We consider pertinent historical examples and clear qualitative and quantitative data related to Inter-generational relationships and the way they have been coupled for long periods of time and the way in which have been uncoupled presently. The ramifications created by inter-generational relationships cannot be identified or equated in that perfect way, but we can capture realities that prove their importance in social cohesion, economic development, community networking, value transmission and dominant system meaning. Different social forces and interests are rearticulated with the change of inter-generational relationships in Romania. On what conditions does it depend? Inter-generational relations reflect and sustain the general consensus while also manufacture consent. Extensive empirical work has been conducted to demonstrate the adequacy to explain this theory and to develop this insight.*

***Keywords:** demography, intergenerational, relationships, Romania, Europe,*

1. INTRODUCTION

Our purpose in this research paper is to tease out some of the broader issues which lie behind this apparently simple question of “What did you ever do for me?” We believe this question encapsulates the existence of intergenerational relationships, represented by the relations between the members of such relationships and the relationship between the welfare state and the person that should benefit from social

protection. By identifying the nature of the expectations and presuppositions which have constructed such social relations we may understand the way in which they function. More particularly, our concern is to show that there was a difference between the way in which social protection was envisaged and the way in which it functions today. Expectations “have begun to shatter” [1] (Brie,Horga, 2010:153-171) Naturally the area of interest is the European continent. We consider that the current situation in

Europe presents a great interest and we believe that through the existence of the EU it was “built the first economical region of the world. An economical edifice raised gradually, with a purely pragmatic attitude in mind, so much so that its allure grew in time” [2] (Dobrescu, 2008: 122).

A common misunderstanding is to see Europe only from the purely economic point of view. That is why both advantages and problems of EU received a great of interest from the economic point of view. Solutions and risks are evaluated in accordance with the economic aspect leaving aside other complementary perspectives. We are experiencing change within the greater context of globalization. We believe that the statement that globalization is a process “through which the center, the West, America displays dominance upon the periphery, seeing that modernity wins in face of tradition, experiencing the victory of capitalism” [3] (Ciocea, 2009: 41) captures the move of periphery countries towards the western model. In this case we believe a good comparison is between the model of the welfare state, the modern response for social risks and intergenerational relationships, seen as the traditional way of preventing social risks. We believe the two should be complementary in handling such a complex situation.

The sort of assumptions that are being made around this topic affects the structure of our society. The European Commission acknowledged in 2009 within the Ageing report that public expenditure will increase as the population will experience a process of ageing. This increase in expenditure was meant to provide social security for the population. The European Commission anticipated a constant increase of about 1.5% out of total GDP per year. In this conditions the current pension system the PAYG is under threat. The European Commission anticipated that till the year 2060 the number of people dependant or needing social assistance due to age will considerably outnumber the number of people active that are paying the necessary

taxes so as to support the dependant population.

Due to demographic transition Romania will have to invest a lot of its funds into social systems. Not having at its disposal such important funds it will have to turn to the possibility of borrowing money. Under these conditions the European Commission anticipates that the public debt will amount to 633.8 % in 2060. Again these figures are valid as long as the traditional welfare state approach is used. We wish to point out the possibility of using an intergenerational relationships approach to such problems. This huge debt would be totally different from the debt estimated in 2010, around 22%. It is easy to notice that even in 2012 the debt has seriously increased. This brings further confirmation to the European Commission’s estimation from 2010.

Some demographic trends will help clear the situation and exactly understand the current context. In 2008 the population pyramid had some definite alarming signs. The number of children between the ages of 0 and 5 years represented only 45% out of the active population. The active population is also called the population peak and represents the number of persons active within a society at a moment in time. In order for it to be replenished it needs a higher percent of children between 0 and 5 years. The percent of approximately 45% was well under the replenishment value. From the gender point of view, the number of young female was significantly lower than the number of young male. This means that in order for the population to grow, it needed at least 2 children per family, but this is highly improbable in a culturally different society as Romania today. The possibility of families having at least 2 children decreases even more when considering the current economic crisis. Currently the median age in Romania is approximately around 37 years, but prognosis by the European Commission forecasts a median age of 53 in the year 2050. This makes PAYG (Pay as you go) pension system, currently used in Romania impossible to sustain.



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In the table below it is obvious that the amount investment in social security in Romania is well under the median figure in Europe and well below some of the other countries recently added to the European Union. The acknowledged need in social spending did not find appreciation in Romania due to several broader economic, political reasons. It is highly doubtful that Romania will have soon the financial ability to provide social protection at the level of

Romania did not experience population loss before the 1990's. Partially for this we believe is the social security system made out of intergenerational relationships. Such relationships compensated for the lack of direct intervention from the state. In time we notice that although Romania stopped being part of the communist states and headed towards the construction of a modern European state, the percent of GDP invested in social protection remained at a low level,

Year	1991	1995	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
COUNTRY													
Romania		2.4	2.6	4.2	4.1	4.1	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.3	3.7	3.8	4.4
Hungary		5.8	5.2	4.9	4.8	5.4	5.7	5.4	5.6	5.6	4.9	4.9	5
Czech Republic		5.9	5.8	5.7	6	6.2	6.4	7.3	7.2	7.2	7.1	7.2	8
Bulgaria			2.9	3.6	2.5	5.3	5.9	5.2	5.4	4	4.1	4.5	4.4
Greece		3.8	3.9	3.9	4.6	4.5	4.7	4.7	4.9	5.3	5.4	5.6	6
Latvia		3.4	4.1	3.9	3.2	3.7	3.4	3.5	4.3	4.9	4.3	4.6	4.7
Spain		5.3	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.2	5.2	5.5	5.7	5.7	5.7	6.1	6.7
Denmark	6.7	6.5	6.4	6.6	6.8	7	7.1	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.5	7.8	8.8
Germany	5.8	6.3	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.1	6.2	6.2	6.1	6.3	6.9
United Kingdom	5.3	5.5	5.4	5.7	5.9	6.2	6.3	6.7	6.9	7.1	7.1	7.5	8.5
Finland	6.7	6.2	5.8	5.7	5.9	6.2	6.5	6.6	6.9	6.9	6.6	7	8
Portugal		5.4	6	6.2	6.5	6.5	6.7	7	7.2	6.7	6.6	6.3	7.1
Slovakia		5.1	5.4	5.2	4.9	5.1	6.5	4.7	4.8	5.8	6.4	6.9	7.8
Austria		7.7	8.3	8.2	6.9	7.1	7.4	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.7	8.2
EU - 15		6.1	6.1	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.5	6.6	6.7	6.6	6.8	6.8	
EU - 27						6.2	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.8	

Figure 1 – Dynamics of public Expenditure for social protection as percentage of GDP during 1991-2009

2. OBJECTIVE

From the start we notice the fact that Romania even in comparison with other ex-communist countries relied very little on social protection from the state. Although the state provided little social security

from 1909 when van Genep, an anthropologist noticed and started investigating the results of intergenerational relationships. Each age come with a certain set of duties and started at a certain moment in time. Currently statistics has used us to use age as a determinant for old age, but from qualitative studies we find out another way of determining who is of an old age and who is not. The term of pyramid population [4] (Hagestad, 2001) best represents intergenerational relationships but from a front view perspective and a bottom up perspective.

I shall specify at first why is important to study intergenerational relationships. According to our research, sustained by other scientific opinions the current demographic trends and globalization has brought in sight issued regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending on social protection. Next, we shall consider the rapid process of demographic ageing, especially in Romania and the increasing number of older people that need support, this in turn represent public spending in a welfare state. Romania, as a EU state should have and apparently is trying to construct a welfare state, but it is very difficult to realize this goal while demographic change is actually taking place. Such rapid and dynamic shifts in demographics lead to the lack of a economic and social base for any welfare state type reforms. More important, perhaps is the apparent absence of a public system, mature enough to handle such difficult demographic problems and the existing pressure on families to boost family spending on children and elderly, while their own financial stability is not what is could be. We believe that intergenerational relationships represent a solution in this dynamic time. We believe that this type of relationships presupposes care provided for relatives and that such a relationship presents itself as a resource of a concrete economic value. In Romania the demographic transition is very dynamic. In just 2 years Romania has moved from a stage in which the number of active members surpassed that of dependant

population to a stage in which the number of dependant population is net superior to that of the working active and contributor type population. The percentage of persons over 65 has doubled in just a decade, reaching 15% out of the total number of inhabitants. As a comparison we would like to mention the case of France. In the case of France it took around 100 years for the population to reach such a percent. A similar percentage of a population over 65 can be found in Japan, which also experienced a rapid ageing process, in just 26 years. We have chosen to present other countries as examples to demonstrate that ageing is in fact an universal process that does not occur dependant on a specific culture. Although it is not culturally or regional dependant, the way in which the social risks involved by it are solved can be of a vital importance for the existence of a community.

A change in the demographic trends naturally leads in changes in intergenerational relationships. For example, the life expectancy has increase, especially in the last hundred years. Nowadays it is not uncommon for more than three generations to have contact and influence each other. Prolong life expectancy means also that people of a certain age will need social support and economic help for longer periods of time, especially when they do not benefit from special support from a welfare type state. It also means that the ratio of people active, the working force will be shrinking in comparison with those that need pension support or are no longer active in the work environment.

3. Material and Methods

Our analysis on intergenerational relationship used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative data was used from EUROSTAT, the World Bank, The National Romanian Institute of Statistics with own calculations. We wished to supplement the quantitative information and included a qualitative research conducted in 2011, based on face-to-face in-depth interviews. There were conducted a



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number of 40 interviews, 20 were females and 20 were males with persons that were over sixty years old. They were from lower, medium and higher occupational areas, all of them with grandchildren. The project participants were freely selected and the interviews were conducted in public places with their consent. The median age of the participant was 62, the variation of age being between 58 and 65. All of the respondents reside in the city of Bucharest, half of them being the first generation living in Bucharest. They have provided consent.

Despite the fact that intergenerational relationships have not received a lot of attention from the part of the scientific community it has been proven that people's interest in intergenerational relationship is very high [5] (Hank, 2007).

How one chooses to assess the impact of intergenerational relationships depends on the perspective from which one views this sensitive issue. There can be little doubt that this type of relations need to be viewed as more than just an isolated social phenomenon. Its centrality to social cohesion, economic development, community network, value transmission should play an important role in underpinning it in a contemporary analysis of current social developments and social risks. Nevertheless, the centrality premises mentioned by us just before have been mostly rejected or left aside. The reasons for this have principally concerned the over attention paid to economic developments, social aspects being considered a result of the economic and political developments or as autonomous phenomena. Our purpose is not to change from the ground up the entire foundation of looking at our society, but to refuse to confer to current analysis an

economic consecration of the rationality of reality. Thus, we believe that by adopting a purely unique economic view on reality we deprive scientific research by any means of connecting to social reality, thus being unable to understand how it functions and being unable to change it.

The concept of intergenerational relationships carries with it the implication of complexity. Although it has its relative autonomy, with some distinctive properties it has to be viewed as a social instrument with a high degree of complexity. There is little doubt that the life course is no matter the research formulation embedded with vulnerabilities. It means that it proves influential for both micro and macro level that these vulnerabilities are contained or held in check. Nevertheless, this social reality was castigated as being a problem of the state, thus the emphasis was on the welfare state, or as being a problem of the micro, the family, thus being formed a series of powerful cultural and social interpersonal relationships based on a cultural model. The second solution was encapsulated in the phrase "intra household cooperation" [6] (Bird, 2007). Before surveying these developments, the mention that the beginning and the end of the life course present a particular problem due to the limited capacity of the individual to produce or care for oneself. Pruchno transported some of this type of perceiving intergenerational relationships in his work. He paid little attention to this type of social relation into his general theory. Indeed, it seems that the dynamics of grandparent-grandchildren [7] (Robertson, 1996) offered little significance as its most pertinent effect or result was emotional support, at least in the eyes of this research mentioned

researcher. The establishment of an achieved linked between intergenerational relationships and identity came with Kornhaber. Identity, was secured through intergenerational practices [8] (Kornhaber, 1996). We have to mention that his statements were in direct connection with certain conditions that had to be fulfilled. We can think of few pertinent statements around the intergenerational relationships between child-parent-grandparent. Most of the time the focus is on a dual type relationship in which the third element is excluded not being taken into consideration. We acknowledge that the presence of a third element or even a fourth element representing another generation could add difficulty in understanding the relation, but omitting it can lead to misinterpretation. By limiting research to only dual partnerships of two generations it is present the danger of leaving out important elements that are the result of interactions or even over or under estimate the importance of one generation. Another limit to the research undertaken till now was the limit of scope. Most research conducted in view of intergenerational relationships was from only point of view, it lacked the perspective of all of those involved. The research was focused on the point of view of grandparents, parents or seldom children. At the present time, the research also lacks a historic perspective. Seldom was the case when the researcher has taken into consideration the reach and power in time of the intergenerational relationships. This gives new urgency to the need of putting together more accurate and close to reality research in this field. As we shall see, interaction [9] (Baranowski, 1982) between more than two generations or even third generations due to the increase in longevity is paramount in understanding this complex social mechanism.

There are numerous instances that represent potential social risks that could be resolved in a type of intergenerational relationship. As we noted earlier we believe that currently there are numerous social risks that need to be properly managed. In an attempt to get around this dangerous

societies have encouraged two models: that of the welfare state or that of intergenerational relationships. Most of the time, one was the most visible, while the other worked alongside the first, as a sort of support. Although such interventions may not prevent all together and in all cases the social risk they do prevent some of the inherent problems. This somewhat bold assertion is supported by current trends in the social life. As supported of the importance of intergenerational relationships we can not help but notice a series of changes in the social order. Conducted qualitative studies have managed to capture the first reasons that make intergenerational relationships important even in our contemporary context. There are a number of problems that have appeared with the new economic mentality. The idea of the classic family, with only one parent working and the other taking care of the family has become unrealistic. The rather general nature of families of having both parents working has led to a tendency for them not to have enough time for children or for intimate household time. It is difficult to offer emotional support and care while having to work in a competitive economic environment. At the same time we notice a deterioration in the traditional structure of the family. This is achieved through a higher number of families that experience divorce and a lot of single parent type families. Since transport and travel have become a lot easier to manage we experience migration at a higher degree than before. Migration operates in most cases with one of the parents working abroad, the parent remaining at home being in the situation of supporting himself or herself the entire family. Hence, while accepting the need for financial support through migration, families also accept the need for support in taking care of the family. In this situation the existence of intergenerational relationships present a positive alternative, especially for a country with little social protection for these cases, such as Romania. Analysis has revealed tensions within split families. In seeking to establish or to provide financial



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stability, people often put in danger social cohesion and social stability. In seeking to establish economic stability through economic activities both abroad and within the same country we suggest the necessity of placing intergenerational practices in the correct context. The focus on the social structure of the family in today's context does raise certain problems. We would like to bring another element that suggest the need for practical intergenerational relationships. So far we have underlined the divorce rate, the one parent working abroad context, both parents working abroad, long working hours for the parents and we wish to consider also the possible low raising children skills of some parents. Furthermore, the demographic development plays also an important role in intergenerational relations while the numbers active population is decreasing, while the number of inactive from the point of view of economic production is increasing. The connection between all of these elements is a systemic one. We believe all of these social variables operate at the level of overlapping and coinciding social structures. The existence of intergenerational relationships, especially in Romania, has been taken for granted. It becomes apparent that this system is breaking down, without being replaced in time with a welfare state system. Intergenerational relationships have served unconsciously and perhaps even unwittingly as support for social cohesion, preventing social risks. What cannot be doubted is the profound revolution in these practices.

Interest and discourse of the value brought about by intergenerational relationships has come from a variety of reasons. Concern with the emotional support represented by intergenerational

relationships is something most mentioned in qualitative research. It suggested that the general atmosphere of our society, in Romania, was that of a peculiar emotionally repressive one, an important concern being that for the need of emotional support, under all of its forms, especially from the part of those of an older age. They tended to be concerned with the overall problem of lacking the means and context for socialization. When questions related to emotional supported were directed towards the young generation it reflected also pessimism around both capacity and occasion to socialize or meet new person or of emotional support. Emotional support was a vital issue and early intergenerational relationships were able to provide a solution. This was achieved through frequent contact, serving one another, conversational patterns, conversation within the family and recreational outings represented by either active participation through games, network activities such as involving other people or passive participation. Similar perceptions regarding emotional closeness were displayed at the different generations represented in the study. An interesting fact arose out of the research. The satisfaction obtained out of doing something for somebody. In this case all generations present felt as if they were demonstrating their own instrumental capabilities through instrumental assistance and showed emotional support. The great value of doing something for somebody is clearly a stabilizing element in such relationships. Through this action we observed the aspect consent. Gaining satisfaction out of doing something for somebody represses the notions of power and dominance and put in their place the notion of consent. In this case

dominance that is often used in depicting the difference between active working people and those that are called dependant is taken out of the analysis in the presence of intergenerational relationships. By taking into consideration intergenerational relationships it is difficult to label people at an early age or those at an late age as dependant population. This way of looking at population is most of the time from the economic point of view and leads to misinterpretations. We agree that there are certain economic ties that link and future the relationship independent as in producer and dependant as in consumer, but it should be viewed from other points of view, not only an economic one. We believe this is a vital issue, one that needs a critical revision. For the weaker position given to older or younger persons is a result of the inability of explaining their role. The great value of an intergenerational approach is that includes these elements.

During the qualitative study it has been revealed another interesting fact. It has always been a problem defining old age. In terms of age studies have generally taken into consideration that old age comes with one's retirement. As a result of the interviews the respondents considered that old age comes with the moment in which they start taking care of their grandchildren. It seems that retirement is a very emotional moment in a person's life. Most of the time the respondents agreed that along with retirement they experienced the feeling of being out of place without a purpose. Such a situation is very difficult for somebody. The respondents living in an urban environment did not have the option of taking care of a garden or getting engaged with agricultural activities. Keeping strong ties with their family was among the top priorities and getting involved in raising grandchildren was of paramount importance. On the other hand the respondents agreed that it was important for them to retire so as to make room for the younger generation. This is a very interesting fact, because till now we have discussed intergenerational relationships at the level of the family, but it

seems that they transcend the family level and find direct application through a cultural model in the economic market. This natural succession although difficult for those that leave the active region of the economy is seen as something needed and beneficial. In a way the respondents see it as a sacrifice of their own, making room for the others, but taking on other roles in the family. We believe that this sort of thinking benefits grandchildren because they could enter into contact with the experience of their grandfathers and this in turn will help them because a young person is looking to break free from routine tasks that are time and energy consuming and to dedicate himself to creative professional activities [10] (Guranda,2011 :93).

Respondents recognize their need to continue contributing in a way for society, even if it is as the level of the family. At the same time the expectations towards the state are high. Indeed people would like to see a greater involvement in social protection, but expect very little to happen. It is a general disillusion with both the willingness and with the capacity of the Romanian state to provide the care and social security that they feel they deserve and need.

From the perspective of expectations, very few respondents considered that the state is able to provide the necessary social support that a family needed. It seems that intergenerational relationships are the base for their social security. Of course, the majority of the respondents were satisfied that they live in proximity to their grandchildren and acknowledged the danger of moving further from their relatives. It seems that the frequency of contact was directly linked with geographic proximity. The majority of respondents although admit that they started to feel old of age as soon as they had grandchildren, although this happened before retirement they did not renounce their job before retirement just to help with the raising of the grandchildren. It seems that job security is a top priority, considering that they can provide financial aid or at least not become an economic burden for the family.



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The contours of this argument have to start with a look at each of the two systems used to cope with social difficulties. We would define the intergenerational relationship system through the context that encourages its existence. The contribution of intergenerational relationships to the emergency of social risks is evident in a country like Romania. If this process worked it was because the wide range of interests and variety of competing needs of the family where confronted by the unavailability of public institutions. Intergenerational relationships were the bedrock of the family structure. They were constantly under check and were meant to limit the social risks to which the family was naturally exposed. None of the members gained a position of dependence preponderance in relation to the others. The members of the family lived close. The grandparents took care of the children, thus allowing the young to work and financially sustain the family. The grandparents also functioned as a sort of social capital base for the grandchildren, often enough coming together into gathering where both them and the children socialized. The two generations came together and provided financial and time release for the young core of the family. The young core of the family did not have to worry about the children or their grandparents and were able to pursue other economic problems. Grandparents being vested with the responsibility for the children led to the removal of the constrain pose by family to the young core. These social realignments had marked consequences for the way in which family was viewed. Grandparents took care of the children while the young took care of their parents. The financial burden was mostly centered on potential

health care issues that surpass the possibility of the grandparents, while education was the primary target for investment in the case of the children. "The old taking care of the youngest and the young taking care of the old" [11] (Silverstein and Bengston, 1997) best captures this reality. This type of structured functioned and was needed due to the lack of proper trustworthy public institutions, an existent active culturally defined model of values and aspirations and a powerful emotional aspect involved in the closeness between the members of the family. We would like to admit the existence of dependence between the members of the family. Grandchildren were dependant on the grandparents for time, care and social capital, parents were dependant on grandparents for help in raising and forming a family and most importantly saving part of the money so as to be able to create an endowment for their children, while the grandparents were dependant on parents for economic help sometimes and on grandchildren for emotional relief. The intergenerational relationships were strong, having at their base emotional, economic and social interests and needs.

Country/Year	1991	1999	2000	2005	2008	2009
Romania		56	75	124	249	238
Czech Republic		322	342	706	1027	1046
Bulgaria		48	61	160	210	200
Hungary		224	244	494	515	465
Slovakia		193	213	346	824	905

Table 2 : The Dynamics of public expenditures for social security per capita 1991-2009

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The clash and diversity of the relationships within generations contained within the free and open circulation of emotions, cultural patterns, economic interests and ideas, thereby enabling them to play the role of a social cohesion and development system. Its participants were constantly reminded of their dependency on the other, but at the same time relieved from social pressures and risks such as health care, care giving, solidarity, social security and social capital. It was noticeable that a concern with what happens with and in between the members of the family was an extremely important issue. The interests of the family as a micro social entity were secured by virtue of the clash and discordancy of interests that existed between the members.

The welfare system currently being developed in Romania in place of this, however, is not yet so convincing. Its version seems to cut down to size the intergenerational workings, to trim it down so as to enable it to fit the observed welfare state in other cases. Although apprehensive with regard to the system proposed we do not oppose these developments so much as merely point to their consequences and to the safeguards that would be needed to be taken against them. We believe in a welfare state, but it should not be constructed on social division between generations, but on these innate social characteristics.

In the table above we wished to compare the level of expenditure on a person just with the neighboring countries that share a similar history with Romania. We notice that the values are still at somewhat great distances apart. The only country with values closer to the values found in Romania is found in Bulgaria, but this in the context in which the problems in Romania have been viewed in international research, press and policy think tanks as graver than in Bulgaria.

We believe in the statement "In the general context of the economic downturn, internal problems of the European Union

have generated a constant decrease of trust and enthusiasm towards the European project, especially in the new member states." [12] (Corbu, Botan, Bargaoanu, Negrea, 2011) and we think a poor handling of social risks and social security may in time lead to a powerful distrust in the system proposed by the European Union.

5. Conclusions

Clearly this is a very different approach to the changing demographics of Romania and of the EU. Currently the social crisis has been started to be viewed as of equal importance to the economic crisis, but little attention has been given to the intergenerational potential. Rather than being regarded as a natural way of coping with the demographic crisis that unleashes social risks and perils for economic development it was been seen as merely another issue of not so great importance. Intergenerational relationships can become a sort of social vehicle through which both the social and the economic sphere can gain a significant balance. Some social risks can be contained through the existence of these relationships. How one chooses to assess the current social and economic context depends on the perspective from which one views it. For there it can be little doubt that in fact we are dealing with a demographic change that has a powerful impact upon the evolution of our society. Although the centrality accorded to the economic problems that plague our society has played an important part in understanding our society it also played a negative part in undermining the importance of other natural and social mechanisms that existed before the welfare state to cope with such social risks. The reason for rejecting of any other variables than the economic variable is that the foundation of today's society has been built on economic reaction and causality. The social thus became passive, even negative in its function. By adopting a social position of transcendence in relation to our contemporary problems we might be able to find solutions that are in fact natural social mechanisms that allow us



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a contact with reality. The potential consequences of leaving aside the social mechanisms that guide most of our lives could and in fact are serious. Without the social aspect and only adopting a purely economic perspective upon social risks we remain above the matter without being able to penetrate into it, without comprehending it. We do not wish merely counterposing social means with economic means, but wish to attract attention upon the existence of other ways that can bring their own contribution.

Our current reality has started to be castigated as a bad reality, but it is not irremediable. We agree with the author "When we debate Europe, we are accustomed to debate the big issues (and most probably those regarded as traditional): trans-Atlantic relations, the diplomatic relations with Russia, China and with Asia as a whole. In other words, we debate the links with the major players. Less attention is directed towards the future tendency, the reality of tomorrow which will certainly become more important; a tendency that will most likely become permanent and will exercise a powerful influence that can't be measured today." [13] (Dobrescu, *Viclenia Globalizarii*: 268). We agree that "It is natural to emphasize the fact that social change nowadays is dramatic in its amplitude, rhythm, and complexity" [14] (Coposescu, 2009) and wish to investigate further these topics of interest.

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