



The 6th International REIACTIS Conference

INCLUSIVENESS IN AN AGEING SOCIETY

4–6 February 2020

Metz, France

CALL FOR PAPERS

Inclusive societies in an ageing context

In 2002, the United Nations (UN) adopted the slogan “Towards a society for all ages.” Almost 20 years later, and more than 70 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the attainment of an inclusive society is still a distant dream.

This pursuit of an inclusive society is not limited to ageing but involves concepts and attitudes towards diversity in modern societies. Thus, the call for papers for the 6th International REIACTIS Conference is open to any aspect of the cumulative process of exclusion/integration that overlaps with ageing, such as gender, disability, ethnic origin or socio-economic level.

REIACTIS invites researchers in the humanities and social sciences, as well as policymakers and ordinary citizens, to meet on our international stage at Metz in order to imagine and debate what inclusive societies in an ageing world might look like.

Scientific frameworks

Starting with the central question of how age exclusion/inclusion came to be based in modern societies, the conference will discuss explicit and implicit processes of exclusion vs. integration in the implementation of public policies, as well as in daily interactions between older people and their environment. Given the diversity among older people themselves, the interactions between physical, psychic, socio-economic and cultural determinants in the exclusion/inclusion processes will also be examined.

To tackle these issues, the international conference proposes to focus on general conceptual contexts and three main themes. **Proposals should select one of the following four options, although you are free to propose something different.**

Inclusive society: cross-cutting concepts and theoretical issues

The concept of “inclusive society” is often used as a public policy baseline. It conveys a political, and even utopian, dimension that researchers rarely analyse. The notion of inclusion is often used in specific fields, such as research on poverty or urban studies. It is also relevant in other studies related to disability, gender and ageing to comprehend exclusion or, conversely, social integration processes. In a political economy perspective, inclusion/exclusion are mainly related to the structure of production systems and the outcomes of economic and social capital (re)distribution. Not surprisingly, the issue of inclusion/exclusion leads to frequent debates on inequality.

An examination of conceptual contexts requires a broad perspective on inclusion. Contributors are invited to compare the notion of inclusion with related concepts by drawing a distinction, for example, between inclusion and integration. The notion can also be discussed through its boundaries and links with concepts, such as affiliation, disaffiliation, disqualification, and social invisibility. Proposals can explore notions such as disengagement, ageism, or social death drawn from the sociology on ageing, but also draw theoretical input from other disciplines that focus on resilience, participation, affiliation, etc.

The relevance of the dichotomy between inclusion and exclusion can also be discussed. The conference is a real opportunity to open discussion on the links between specific categories, such as elderly and disabled persons' needs, and their inscription in universal rights documents. Contributors are invited to explore the contradictions or convergences among individuals or groups claiming specific rights and their struggles for equal rights. The 6th international conference raises one fundamental question: how can specific rights related to ageing be enshrined in the universal rights of man? Some see contradictions, even a fundamental contradiction, while others believe that there is an essential interconnectedness.

The notion of “inclusive society” can also be discussed by using theories drawn from political economy. For example, inclusive society can be seen as the outcome of economic and social capital redistribution or the result of political and social struggles among specific interests. One can also examine the role of State and public policies in promoting or discouraging social exclusion, as well as the role of social movements in promoting more inclusive patterns. Political frameworks can be viewed from the local to the supranational level.

One can also look at the divergences and convergences in the definition of an “inclusive society” between the ageing field and other fields, such as that of disability. From theoretical frameworks to social movements in action, observations can be made of how different meanings of inclusion play out in the political struggle for inclusion and strategies to change policies and legal frameworks. For example, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed by over 187 countries, provides an opportunity to examine both the thinking and recommendations for action behind its effort to assure inclusion for persons with disabilities. The 6th international conference will bring together stakeholders in both the disability and ageing fields to learn from one another, as advocates for the ageing continue to fight for inclusiveness through campaigns and proposals for legislation against age discrimination.

Special attention could be paid to the role and involvement of the European Union, the United Nations and some of its specialised bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), particularly in the dissemination of standards for the inclusion of older people, such as age-friendly cities and communities.

Participants can also choose among the following three themes for their proposals.

Theme 1: Inclusion and the life course

Proposals for the 6th International Conference may take a life course perspective on inclusion and exclusion processes. Research shows that exclusion processes often occur at early stages of the life cycle, especially in the labour market, training and lifelong education. Since work is such a strong socio-economic integrator, what could be the design for an inclusive society for people whose main characteristic is precisely to be outside of the labour market? Contributors can bring insights to bear on the evolution of retirees' roles, status, social integration and recognition. This involves the capacity to accept a large diversity of retirement patterns, such as active or productive ageing within family and society, as well as the right to consumption and inactivity.

REIACTIS invites contributions on how older persons' continuing abilities, as well as disabilities, are lived and mobilized by older people themselves, their social and family networks and public policies seeking to empower older people. An examination of the difficulties and barriers faced by older persons to retain control over their lives and their environment would also be welcome. Research on social markers, such as retirement, widowhood, residential change, disability, etc., will be discussed to understand challenges to inclusive patterns and the adaptations of models of inclusion that become necessary when change occurs. Reports of longitudinal studies that extend until the end of life would be particularly enriching. This includes all aspects of personal biographies that lead to changes in capabilities with their implications for exclusion and opportunities for integration.

The life course perspective brings us to explore "inclusiveness" in the latest years. The representation of the last stage of the life course is often imbued with negative social connotations and can lead to invisibility and social exclusion. Contributions are welcome on the role of personal resources (psychic, internal, symbolic, etc.) and environmental supports (professionals, caregivers, and volunteers, family) to improve the quality of life in accordance with the desires and needs of people in the last stage of their lives. One can examine the implementation of "life projects" until the end of life and the responsibilities of stakeholders in this process (public policies, civil society, practitioners, families, individuals). What is an inclusive society at this point in the life course and, to what extent, are individuals in nursing homes, in hospitals or at home still considered to be full citizens empowered with equal rights until the last stage of life? The question of their inclusion in decision-making is an issue in the specific context of the end of life.

Theme 2: Inclusive society and environmental perspectives

The second theme of the conference focuses on inclusiveness in an environmental perspective. The environmental perspective in a context of ageing refers here to material infrastructure (buildings, transportation, etc.) and to cultural and symbolic concepts of space, territory, goods and services.

Different aspects of the subject can be discussed—for example, the way in which environment generates inclusion or exclusion by becoming more or less welcoming or suitable as individuals grow older. In a context of changing (dis)ability, what are the responses of the environment to facilitate the expression of needs and concerns, and to what extent are older people involved in the design of relevant solutions for their needs? It would be particularly helpful to understand how societies, institutions, families and older people themselves can contribute to more inclusive environments through access to decision-making

processes. Here, the scope can range from “home” (what is an inclusive housing?) and “neighbourhood” to “age friendly cities and communities”.

The contributions of disciplines that have broached the field of ageing relatively recently, such as geography and architecture, may offer opportunities for a new approach. Particular attention will be paid to environmental contrasts (cities, suburbs, countryside) and the type of solutions created for different categories of ageing populations. Studies on “territories” or “communities” (e.g. in Canada and the United States) provide perspectives on the various configurations, responses and forms of social and political action that are directed to integrating the diversity of populations, especially older persons.

One can also take a critical perspective on the limitations of inclusive patterns. For example, are there justifiable distinctions to be made between “age friendly communities” developed by advocates for ageing and “dementia-friendly communities” developed by disability advocates? Similarly, do the notions of “universal design” or “universal accessibility” make important distinctions for the design of material and non-material goods to promote their use by all?

Theme 2 also encompasses critical issues related to accessing facilities or services, such as the lack of choice, prohibitive cost, a refusal to use services, etc. In addition, there are cultural obstacles to accessing complex environments, such as computer illiteracy, confusing forms and terminology. Proposals for new public policies, protocols for action and evaluation aimed at adapting environments to the diversity of older audiences’ capabilities and uses are welcome.

The environmental perspective will also deal with the impact of digital technologies on age (un)friendly environments. New technologies refer to two major groups: assistive technologies (including robotic devices) and information and communications technologies (ICT). This issue is centred on a basic but fundamental question: to what extent can technologies support or hinder the inclusion/exclusion of older people?

Under the best conditions, these tools can help to improve and preserve the autonomy and quality of life of both elderly people and family caregivers. Including older people in the world of technology can add value for new generations. Technology can also play an important role in supporting social inclusion and intergenerational solidarity. New technologies and the Internet can be beneficial when they bolster social interaction among relatives or friends or informal networks, when they allow privacy to be maintained or when they provide access to information and services. Technologies can also play a role in supporting social action for older people’s inclusion (e.g. campaigns against ageism on a global or national scale).

More controversial aspects of technology must also be discussed. One important issue is the development of “e-government” which, today, affects broad swathes of society. While it can improve older people’s power to act and their ability to run their lives, to access their rights and social and health benefits, it can also obstruct them. Issues can arise related, for example, to the design of interfaces and the many ethical and social justice concerns that technology raises – not only for seniors but also for their close friends and family. Finally, it is necessary to ask whether, in an inclusive society, the work being carried out today in technology is successful at going beyond “acceptability” and leads, for example, into a consideration of what a real co-construction of technological services and objects involving users could become.

Theme 3: Inclusive society, citizenship and social participation

The third theme of the international conference focuses on power relationships within an inclusive society. Indeed, if an inclusive society presents itself as the ideal to combat forms of exclusion linked to ageing, and if it aims to take into account the variety of ways ageing takes place, it is not only the principles of this society that should be examined, but also how they manifest in action. The first question of theme 3 deals with the involvement of older people in decision-making.

An inclusive society can take place in all forms of democracy. However, questions about various institutions of democracy arise too. For example, how much do democracies care about voter participation in public decision-making? Recent findings regarding the sharp increase in senior citizens' rate of abstention from voting raise questions about exercising civic rights throughout one's life. Is the right to vote a lifelong right or perishable with age? Can one have inclusiveness without active citizenship?

Beyond political rights and participation in elections, recent social movements invite us to consider the relationship between "inclusive societies" and the protest role of older people.

Different forms of participative democracy, social democracy and even direct democracy shape experiences of inclusion. Researchers are welcome to review the tools and methods required to set up an inclusive public policy, including an analysis of the ways in which the principle of including seniors is operationalised through frameworks and participatory methods. Assessing the effects on seniors who participate in these approaches is a topic that could be explored. How do these approaches oppose or overlap with systems that are already encouraging seniors to exercise their civic rights? The development of labels (like age friendly cities) raises questions about the sectorisation of ageing, whereas intersectorality can be considered as the final goal of integration.

Consideration can be given to the challenges of evaluating practices and tools that foster inclusion in all kinds of decision-making processes. More precisely, while there is currently a set of measures in place supporting the social or civic participation of seniors in decision-making processes (whether in daily interactions with family, practitioners, social workers, volunteer opportunities, or within institutions such as residents' councils, advisory committees), the point here is to show how participation can contribute to institutional systems and, more importantly, to decision-making processes as a whole. While the goal of these approaches can be summarised as "doing with" instead of "doing for", they can also be met with resistance or conflicts of interest (personal, family or professional) that can weaken the implementation of empowerment processes. These tensions are of particular interest within the study of social movements bearing the slogan "nothing about us without us."

The forms and goals of social intervention can ultimately be transformed beyond the quest for civil rights and social participation. Inclusion then takes place within formal processes, where older people are given different names and status (citizens, users, beneficiaries, etc.). Some studies question the representativeness of representatives of social categories that are as broad and varied as retirees and seniors. What about those who are "invisible" in consultations and decision-making processes? Finally, we can examine studies on different frameworks of action and the difference, for example, between "intervention" cultures and "community building" and "community organising" one, which are widespread in the United States and Canada and are also gaining ground in continental Europe. How do they contribute to the development of inclusive societies?

Key information

- ✓ The international conference is organized by REIACTIS and Lorraine University together with scientific networks and societies: CR6 of the International Association of Francophone Sociology, the RT7 of the French Association of Sociology (AF7), and the French Institute on Longevity of Ageing (ILVV).
- ✓ Proposals for papers are to be submitted on the REIACTIS website dedicated to the conference (www.reiactis.com) between **22 April and 5 June 2019**.
 - Proposals for **individual papers** should be no longer than 5,000 characters, including spaces.
 - Proposals for the **roundtable** (3 to 4 speakers at most) should be no longer than 4,000 characters each, including spaces, and a summary of 2,000 characters, including spaces.
 - Proposals for a **poster** should be no longer than 5,000 characters, including spaces.
- ✓ Assessment of proposals by the International Scientific Committee and responses to authors will be completed by **15 July 2019**.
- ✓ A pre-programme of the conference will be available around **15 July 2019**.

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