Intergenerational relationships in ageing societies

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Three key premises

- population ageing affects people of all ages
- there are critical interdependencies between family generations and between men and women which are built and reinforced by social policies
- to understand intergenerational interdependencies, a range of levels must be distinguished and recognized
Findings from

- Generations and Gender Programme (ggp-i.org)
- MULTILINKS, an FP-7 project focusing on multiple linkages in families, across time, and across levels (multilinks-project.eu)
Demography of intergenerational family relationships

- three-generation families are the norm
Mean number of family generations, GGP countries
Demography of intergenerational family relationships

- three-generation families are the norm
- opposing effects of increased longevity and postponed childbearing
Mean number of ascending family generations, GGP countries

- Russia
- Estonia
- Georgia
- Bulgaria
- Germany
- France
- Netherlands
Mean number of descending family generations, GGP countries

- Russia
- Estonia
- Georgia
- Bulgaria
- Germany
- France
- Netherlands

The graph shows the mean number of descending family generations for different age groups and countries.
Interdependencies between older and younger family members

- family obligation norms tend to be weaker in generous welfare states
Children should take responsibility for caring for their parents when their parents are in need.
Children should adjust their working lives to the needs of their parents
Interdependencies between older and younger family members

- family obligation norms tend to be weaker in generous welfare states
- intergenerational support flows primarily downward
- little empirical support for the view that public transfers crowd out family transfers in Western welfare systems (complementarity rather than substitution)
- paucity of data on non-Western countries
% adults providing personal care to parents, GGP-countries
% adults providing emotional support to parents, GGP-countries

- France
- Germany
- Bulgaria
- Rumania
- Georgia
- Russia

Legend:
- men
- women
Question for discussion

- Can national policies make caring men?
Gendered intergenerational regimes, four patterns

- **familialism by default**: no publicly provided alternatives to family care and financial support
- **supported familialism**: policies support families in keeping up their financial and caring responsibilities
- **optional familialism**: some kind of option is given between being paid to provide care or to use publicly supported care
- **defamilialization**: care and financial needs are partly answered through public provision
Question for discussion

- What kinds of interdependencies between family generations and between men and women in families are built and reinforced by the legal and policy arrangements in your country?
Beyond the public/private responsibilities dichotomy

- generous parental leaves support parental care
- a father’s quota supports the caring role of men
- child care services lighten parental responsibilities
- at-home, day care or institutional services for the frail elderly partly substitute family care
- earmarked payments for care also partly substitute family care
- not earmarked payments for care support family care, but also encourage recourse to the market
Question for discussion

- Should national governments aiming to help families with intergenerational care needs be encouraged to provide care services, income transfers or a mix of the two?
Legal and policy arrangements are not neutral

- long parental leaves tend to strengthen the gendered nature of family care
- long parental leaves further polarize women of different social classes
- a reserved father’s quota can help de-gender family care
- good quality child care services are not only a conciliation measure but also a resource for children themselves
- over-reliance on family care for frail older persons crystallizes the gender division of labour
In summary

- Exclusive or primary reliance on the family
  - brings risks for the well-being of frail older persons
  - strengthens socioeconomic inequalities between families, and
  - jeopardizes women’s economic independence

- Insufficient economic independence among women implies
  - limited pensions for women, and
  - poorer life chances for children

- It is important to consider the prospects of future generations
  - of pensioners (which include women), and
  - of workers (today’s children)
Question for discussion

- How can national policies develop intergenerational regimes that do not reinforce social class inequalities and gender inequalities?