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ON OLDER PEOPLE, CINEMA AND OLD AGE

Cinema vehicles images of old age more powerfully than other media. Indeed, it may produce a strong impact on representations of old age, understanding of old age and dealing with it. Therefore, it is important that cinema does not vehicle outdated stereotyped images about exclusively fragile, helpless, dependent, isolated and grudgy or threatened older people, ageing and old age, replacing them with images more in conformity with the present times where ageing has changed and will continue changing. But how can one age actively; what social transformations are needed; how can cinema contribute to the change of the older people's social roles and their position in society; how can cinema help that older people remain fully included in society nurturing valuable and productive relationships with other generations.

Why CINAGE?

This does not come as news; since the beginning of last century considerable changes have occurred in the structure of population all over Europe to end up in what is called ageing society; workforce has been shrinking and ageing, there are less young people and a growing number of older people due to reduced fertility rate. But is it true that ageing of population is a threat, a tsunami or a catastrophe? None of that! Our societies do not need muscles and physical force. On the contrary! What they need is experience, experiential and through use validated knowledge, knowledge about relationships, and knowledge about how knowledge can be used.

Population in advanced countries started ageing at the beginning of the 20th century as a result of a number of factors: improved living conditions, better education and socio-economic conditions, better prenatal and paediatric care and, better preventive medicine, the use of advanced technology etc.

Demographic ageing has been and will be considerably changing all areas of social and economic life. It will also change relationships among generations. Generations in the middle will end up accepting older people as possessors of important and valuable knowledge, as efficient workers and contributors to the decision-making processes and older people will accept the fact that not only learning is a lifelong process and but also work will last all life. The benefits older generations have acquired have to be better shared with younger people.

Only advanced societies with educated population age! Ageing societies are therefore a success of our civilisation; on condition the traditional cultural organisation of ages changes; the clear distinction between employed and retired people disappears; on condition older people cease being considered as an age dependent group of population; on condition in our knowledge based society where knowledge is the only distinctive advantage societies may have, older people's knowledge is not shuffled away but passed on to other generations, modified with their help and used in new situations.

In addition, it is not possible to continue looking down on older people's values: leisure, relationships, family, friendship, order, safety, continuity and to continue privileging consumerism i.e. having instead of being.

Older people do not want to be pictured only as veterans. They have their ideas about both present and future, they would like to express them and to contribute. They are ready to change when they are expected to change. They are ready to adapt to younger people's thinking categories on condition their opinion is valued and asked for.

An encouraging older person's learning and education has become inevitable in knowledge based societies. Namely, one's learning is never just a personal matter. The more people learn the more they are educated and skilled, the more communities are educated and indeed the entire society. The growing number of older people with no access to education would hinder the advancement of all

generations and society.

Longitudinal studies have shown that psychological growth never stops not even in advanced age. The image of old age has changed in the interpretation of the Rorschach's test and also to some extent in our collective understandings of old age that is dependent on older people's biological, socio-cultural and intellectual. Psychological studies have been picturing older people as psychologically frail, with declining capacities due to the past research methods very much impacted by the stereotyped old age images. (International Journal of Behavioral Development, 24, 257- 266 in Reichlin, R. E. (1984)). Current perspectives on Rorschach performance among older adults. Journal of Personality Assessment, 48, 71-81.) Now these methods have been rejected.

Older people are being encouraged to get involved in meaningful activities and to share them with other generations older people are being encouraged to acquire new skills and participate in society. And here the role of cinema could be of significant importance.

How can older people remain fully included in society after they get retired? How is it possible to alleviate negative a positive stereotypes about them? How cinema can help to this end?

Cinema books, newspapers, communities, older people themselves and other generations can all help change the image and expectations towards older people. The role of cinema in this function is going to be explored in the CINAGE project.

What is innovative about CINAGE?

The interface of old age and cinema is a fascinating, fertile and rather unexplored territory.

CINAGE explores that territory using a new approach to active ageing, empowering older learners to engage with European cinema.

CINAGE will consult older learners to discuss how the cultural perspectives on ageing, reflected in European films that they view, relates to their own personal experiences. In fact CINAGE will measure how far from or how close to cinema it is to old age realities.

Lifelong Learning, learning in later life and education of older people are crucial, not only for employability, competitiveness and economic prosperity, but first and foremost for social inclusion, active citizenship and personal fulfilment of all people living and working together in knowledge-based society!

What is going to be achieved?

The ultimate goal of CINAGE is to contribute to lifelong learning opportunities for the ageing population, using European cinema as a tool.

CINAGE aims at producing, testing and validating a cinema based course for older learners, encouraging and supporting all aspects of active ageing.

Who is this project for?

- Adult educators, older learners;
- providers of older adult education;
- ageing and cinema experts;
- older learning and older adult education stakeholders.

CINAGE's target audience will be actively involved throughout this collaborative project. They will participate in specific activities (focus groups, workshops etc.) and their feedback will be an integral part of the project's life cycle.

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