

**THE WORLD ACADEMY OF ART AND SCIENCE: GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2008**  
**Session on : The Demographic Transition**  
(Aalankrita Hotel, Hyderabad; 19 October 2008)

Introductory note, by  
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At the beginning of the Club of Rome, the issue of the world population has been at the center of the “world problematique” . We add here some considerations on the issue of “ageing”.

A recent study of the United Nations indicates that in the year 2050, the world population will include almost two billions people over 60 years of age, corresponding to about 22% of the total. The majority will live in those countries we define today as developing.

Keeping this figure in mind, we propose here a number of key considerations :

- the lengthening of the life cycle is a unique revolutionary phenomenon, having a profound impact on contemporary and future societies . It concerns the social, political and economic institutions in a far deeper sense that it is still commonly perceived ;
  - people in older age, over 60, 70 and 80 have always existed. But they were special cases representing a minute minority. Now the lengthening of the life cycle concerns the majority of the population. It is a mass phenomenon. An analogy can be found in the economic history of the industrialized countries : from the beginning of the twentieth century, the poors ( and the illiterate ) have become a minority after having been for centuries a majority;
  - the lengthening of the life cycle is a world wide phenomenon. From the “older” industrialized countries it is extending to the large majority of communities, everywhere. The contribution from the developing and industrializing countries to the “over 60” population in the world will be determinant and overwhelming ;
  - the lengthening of the life cycle is often presented ( wrongly ) as the problem of “ageing of population “, and as such an indication of decay of the industrialized world : in fact, the “older” countries have the great advantage to both offer a longer ( and better ) life to their citizens and to advance in the delicate social, economic and political adaptations required by the new demographic reality. Such problems and experiences will concern more and more the rest of the world ;
  - what is really ageing is the notion of older age itself. Taking into consideration the ability of each individual to be autonomous ( in physical and/or mental terms ) , many studies and surveys indicate that in the average a 60 or even a 80 years old person of today, correspond to a person about 15/20 years younger living one century and more ago. Statistics based not on age but on capacity to perform , indicate in fact that in many countries, the population is not “ageing” but “rejuvenating” . In fact we live in a “Counter-ageing society”\* ;
  - the lengthening of the life cycle is clearly the result of economic and social advances strictly linked to the scientific and technological advances : biology, medicine, health control, nano technologies, nuclear applications, communication, instrumentations etc. are all producing now almost every year significant advances for the human body and its maintenance;
  - the lengthening of the life cycle, in all its aspects, is then clearly the fundamental issue to keep in mind discussing social policies
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Most of the issues introduced in this summary are dealt in THE EUROPEAN PAPERS ON THE NEW WELFARE ( “ The Counter Ageing Society “ ) : issues 1, 4, 6, 8 and 9 in English and issues 2, 3, 5, 7 and 10 in Italian. They are fully and freely available on : [www.newwelfare.org](http://www.newwelfare.org)

- we would also strongly recommend to consider as key indicators of the Wealth of Nations the figures concerning life expectancy, as well as its quality ( the WHO has already started some work in this direction .

- the lengthening of the life cycle implies of course to redefine the period of the ACTIVE life : many studies and statistics of the WHO ( World Health Organization ), among others, are devoted to this issue .
- active life should be considered in two different categories : remunerated work on one side and unpaid or benevolent activities on the other. In fact the two are complementary, and this more and more so in the post-industrial Service Economy ;
- concerning remunerated work and employment, the lengthening of the life cycle implies the open possibility ( and in many instances the necessity ) for extending the retirement age. At the time of the first provisions for retirement were fixed at the average age of death, very close to the end of the working life. Today, at the age of retirement, in many countries, life expectancy tend to reach 15 to 20 years;
- satisfactory employment , based on adequate formation and education systems ( including preparing to change type of jobs according to age conditions ) , is in a majority of cases the condition to have a healthier life ;
- at the basis of this : enhance the HUMAN CAPITAL at all ages
- it is very important to consider and promote part-time employment as a basic element for a well balanced social security system : among others, it is an important issue for all those working over 60 and 65. As it happens in some northern European countries, part time pensions will be more and more coupled with partial work. Important are also the gradual retirement plans and the perspective of the “four pillars system” ( see on this [www.genevaassociation.org](http://www.genevaassociation.org) ) , based on the three pillars of the Swiss system plus the fourth pillar referred to the partial employment;
- health improvements necessarily produce a great increase in costs : one could die almost for free in a not so long past, and one has to pay for possibility to control , eliminate or reduce the effects of all sorts of illnesses or accidents. We spend already a lot of money to buy and use an automobile which allows us to move ( sometimes ) faster : we will probably one day spend even more for our health maintenance, which allows us to live and move
- from an economic point of view, retirement and health costs, imply to building of financial capabilities, under the form of redistribution ( de facto : fiscal systems ) and under the form of savings ( or reserves ). We have here to do with nothing less than a new definition of the notion of Capital ( its building and utilisation ) in the post-industrial Service Economy ;
- another very important issue on which to invest research capabilities in the one or two next decades, is the reconsideration of the measurements which refer to the “ Wealth of Nations” and from which to derive the most appropriate references for better welfare policies. In the Service economy, not all the “value added” measures indicate an increase in the level of wealth ( for instance the costs to cope with pollution ), whereas many developments in service functions and performances ( for instance in the case of many communication systems ) add to real wealth much more than usual value added references indicate. In particular the notion of productivity , in a Service economy, is much more relevant with reference to performance in time ( hence in a probabilistic system ) than to the production factors costs ( in an equilibrium based system ). But all this is linked to progress in economics as a discipline, and to its integration with environmental issues ( which also pretend to solve the problems of the “ Wealth of Nations” , on the base of their “sustainability “ );

