INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

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Public Value
Principle
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YOUR
PUBLIC
VALUE

INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AS PART OF DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Photo Daniel Peuch - Berlin, 2021

"Hi Jules. I'm Ben, your new intern." Those who watched the movie "The Intern" starring Anne Hathaway and Robert de Niro will know the heart-warming story of a retired man who joins a young entrepreneur's office as an intern, and how things eventually work out professionally between them after a rocky start with what might be called as a mild 'clash of generations'.

Intergenerational interaction in reality presents more challenges especially in workplaces, where four generations are said to now be working together: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y and Gen Z. [1] An added hurdle is that the differences in the values of these generations appear to be stark.

A related topic of interest is diversity, which is of essence in current times, not only in workplaces but also in entertainment, social and other media content and in societal circles. We now live in a global village; technology and connectivity are driving the nature of collaboration and information exchange on all levels across countries and cultures. However, the path towards understanding this seemingly basic concept is riddled with real, complex societal issues such as racism, sexism, classism, sexualism, sizeism, ethnicism and several other biases.

Although diversity and inclusion today is about the multiplication of individualities, this still means that people are put into boxes with respect to their social and other identities.

Progress in science has led to a longer life expectancy over the years. Although the demographic shift differs across the eastern and western worlds, there is a palpable and almost ironic similarity in mindset with regards to age as another basis of prejudice.[2]

Perhaps this is just another way for humans to cope with the increasing discrimination that we ourselves face due to other aspects such as our heritage, physical appearance, social status or intellectual or political standing, in that we look for any means to find ourselves amongst 'our own'. We create and live in silos because we are looking for people who think alike. However, in a world where division is rampant, the need for belonging is also more relevant than ever before.

Belonging can be found in collective beliefs and values, and this shared value system is part of the concept of Public Value which is, in a way, the consensus of the public as to what is right and acceptable. At **YOUR PUBLIC VALUE**, we believe that companies can also engage in the creation or delivery of public value by considering the society that upholds shared values an active stakeholder.[3]

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1 https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/multi-generation-work-place-1.4980659
2 https://ilcuk.org.uk/theres-no-excusing-ageism-especially-in-a-world-of-longer-lives/
3 https://yourpublicvalue.org/about/

THE CHALLENGE

Photo Daniel Peuch - Berlin, 2021

The term 'ageism' was coined by Robert Butler and is essentially the stereotyping of individuals and their unfair treatment due to their age. An example could be a person getting fired from their job because they were considered too old to be able to fulfil that position or job role- , companies prefer younger professionals who they can shape, rather than professionals with more experience, more expensive, and often unwilling to change.

However, it is not only older people who are subject to ageism. Ageism is also faced by the young, who could, for instance, risk not landing a job simply because of the perception that young people switch jobs frequently, or that young females could request maternity leaves.

So why really is age perceived to be a problem?

Several theories have been connected to the emergence of this type of intolerance. An interesting paper relates Terror Management Theory to the concept of Ageism.[4] The authors of this theory present two implications:

- self-esteem and the worldview on which it is based serve as anxiety-buffering functions, so people work towards preserving this self-esteem to preserve their psychological security,
- these efforts are in line with eachindividual's cultural worldview

Since these are fragile social constructions, people react negatively to anyone or anything that challenges the construct they have built. In the context of Ageism, older individuals indicate the future, i.e. they may be a reminder of inevitable mortality. On the other hand, younger people can serve as a reminder of the past, of what could have been.

The authors of the aforementioned paper further describe four coping mechanisms or reactions, of which derogation and annihilation seem to be most related to ageism.[6]

Derogation- the dismissal of different beliefs than one's own, can be correlated to common prejudices, such as 'old people are just forgetful' or 'young people don't have enough experience to contribute meaningfully'.

Annihilation- the belief that one's own worldview is correct and should thus prevail can be associated with statements such as 'old people are not willing to change' or 'young people do not know what real hard work looks like'.

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4 https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-73820-8_4#Sec3

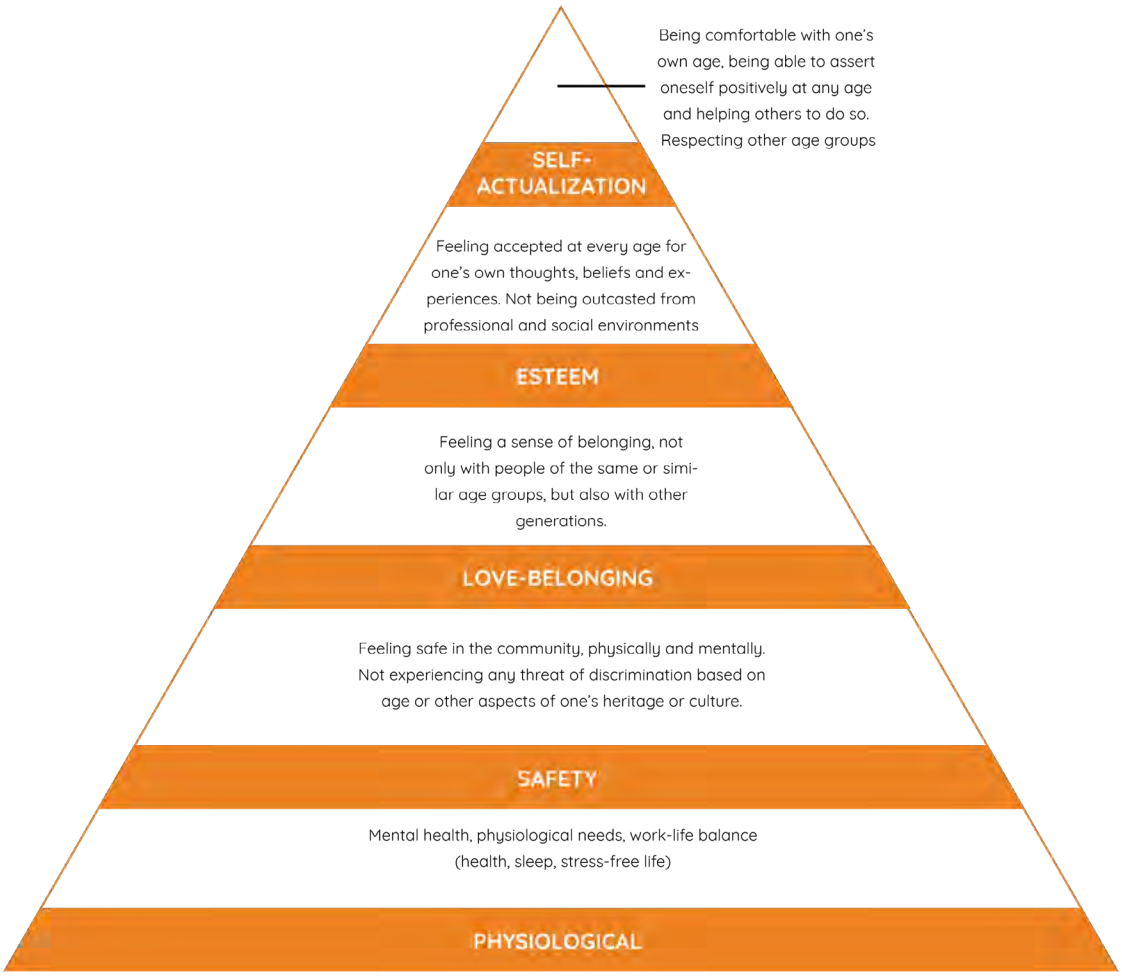
5 https://www.uni-ulm.de/fileadmin/website_uni_ulm/iui.inst.160/Psychologie/Sozialpsychologie/19_Greenberg_Arndt_Terror_M

6 The other two coping mechanisms include assimilation- 'they are wrong, and I can help see them the light, thus strengthening my own worldview' and accommodation- 'I take only the parts of other views I agree with, but base views on my original core beliefs'.

Another possible reason for the emergence of ageism is explained by Bratt et. al who attribute the bias to Modernisation Theory.[7] According to them, the development of the rural and traditional society into an urban and industrialised one along with falling birth rates and increased longevity can lead to an increased proportion of retired older people who are dependent on the younger generation.[8] This could result in the 'decline' in the status of older people. On the other hand, older people might consider it irresponsible on the younger people's stead to not procreate and thus assist in the creation of a 'balanced' society. After all, if today's older population fulfilled their duties by looking after the former generation, it might be, in their view, fair to expect the same from their descendants.

Prejudices and biases could also be attributed to the vastly divergent realities that each generation has lived through. These distinctive experiences can be linked to unique needs. According to Maslow, who proposed the Hierarchy of Needs, needs shape value systems. Thus, it can be inferred that, for example, Baby Boomers, who grew up in the post war world would have a separate set of values in comparison with Generation Y, which was brought up in a world of globalisation and economic stability along with the advent of internet and hence faster connectivity.

Our infographics below depicts an ideal world derived from Maslow's Hierachy of Needs where everyone feels comfortable with their age.



7 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7144460/
8 https://www.forbes.com/sites/soulaimagourani/2019/04/25/leading-multiple-generations-in-todays-workforce/?

WHY FOCUS ON INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

Photo Daniel Peuch - Berlin, 2021

Both older and younger adults face discrimination. For example, a UN report mentions how training and education opportunities reduce for people as they age and how young voices are rejected or disregarded when it comes to health, housing and politics.[9]

Generally, several health, economic and social costs have been associated with ageism. [10] This UN report mentions how the young and old can have psychological, behavioural or physiological repercussions due to ageism: "Psychologically, negative age stereotypes can exacerbate stress; behaviourally, negative self-perceptions of ageing predict worse health behaviour, such as noncompliance with prescribed medications; physiologically, negative age stereotypes predict detrimental brain changes decades later, including the accumulation of plaques and tangles and reduction in the size of the hippocampus."

Not only does this affect individuals, it also drives up the cost of healthcare significantly, leading to economic consequences which are in turn exacerbated by a lower health standard in the population resulting in lower productivity.

Moreover, a report from the Australian government highlights how ageism can affect older employees who wish to work, however are denied employment due to their age, thus having to rely on the social security and welfare system. Such situations can be avoided in the absence of bias.

At the workplace, ageism also has negative effects. It affects the self- esteem of individuals and reduces motivation and job satisfaction. Ageism is also connected with intergroup anxiety, which refers to the anxiety related to anticipation of rejection, negative consequences or a sense of discomfort when interacting in a group. [11]

By now, we all know that the pandemic times can lead to a severe loss of freedom and financial autonomy worldwide, that states may not be able to sustain their citizens for long and could be tempted to close borders and increase control. We also know that citizens' survival and wellbeing will increasingly depend on their ability to sustain themselves and their family, away from any state dependency.Focusing on engaged young people who need to develop in a world full of barriers and stereotypes, YOUR PUBLIC VALUE has the objective to support their empowerment, wellbeing and sustainability.

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9 https://www.who.int/news/item/18-03-2021-ageism-is-a-global-challenge-un
10 https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/age-discrimination/publications/age-discrimination-exposing-hidden-barrier-mature-age#Heading389
11 https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jasp.12628

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE AS VALUE CREATION

Photo Daniel Peuch - Berlin, 2021

Almost bafflingly, all this prejudice and bias can be possibly boiled down to one's own value systems. It might then seem to be that all our values are different and thus we must live in detachment. However, this is not necessarily true.

Extant research shows that there are far more perceived rather than actual differences. Jennifer Deal has found in her research about generational differences in the workplace, that working age generations have mostly similar values and the perceived generational conflicts are majorly caused by miscommunication and stereotypes of different age groups. This finding proves that intergenerational dialogue is an element of value creation and the tool with which negative consequences mentioned previously which affect individuals, organisations and societies can be prevented. It strengthens the probability that differences are simply a matter of perspective and that communication facilitates the multiplication of perspectives leading to a richer, more holistic trove of knowledge and ideas.

There is no dearth of papers and articles that promote intergenerational dialogue and explain it with a 'what' and a 'why'. At YOUR PUBLIC VALUE, we go one step further and provide the 'how'. We do not believe that intergenerational differences are negative. Rather, we embrace the complexity of these differences and believe that its intricacies are what make up the solution.

Our research has shown that what young people need most when starting their professional life is active networking. Multiplying connections on LinkedIn is no longer enough. Being acknowledged by leaders and finding a mentor who cares and is able to share their knowledge are very much in demand.

This is why YOUR PUBLIC VALUE has launched a reciprocal mentorship program. Through reciprocal mentorship, we fight intergroup anxiety and provide a safe space for individuals to project and explore ideas with the aim of creating a society that protects and empowers its people regardless of age.

We like running reciprocal mentorships programmes in parallel. Before being accepted as volunteers, senior experts need to have a project of their own that needs support and mentorship. While they mentor one engaged and purpose-driven young person, they also share their project and consider the young person as their personal accountability expert.

The mentoring pairs develop their own relation and all meet monthly with YOUR PUBLIC VALUE leaders in a group coaching session to take stock of their own development and learn from otherpairs.

Collaboration is core to our success – our research, labs or workshops are allv based on co-creation. We offer a safe space & empower them to focus on the needs of their communities & co-create solutions.

While baby Boomers are currently the oldest and most experienced generation in the workforce, Generation Z is said to be the most diverse, i.e. they are the most ethnically and racially diverse generation so far in the history of the world.[12] Race is presently one of the top for bases for discrimination, [13] and the diversity in GenZ will mean that tolerance towards racism, or discrimination in general will reduce to a great extent.

We believe that it is important to make sure that our values do not form a basis of conflict. Rather, we urge and encourage a collective search for common and shared values. Only then can we hope to achieve true unity in diversity.

After all, as Ben said in 'The Intern'- *"You can teach a young boss old tricks." CONSIDER INTERGENERATIONAL*
DIALOGUE AS PART OF VALUE CREATION

12 https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/consumer-business/welcome-to-gen-z.pdf
13 https://www.statista.com/chart/19761/discrimination-experienced-by-respondents-in-the-workplace/

YOUR PUBLIC VALUE RECOMMENDATIONS

Photo Daniel Peuch - Berlin, 2021

CONSIDER INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE AS PART OF VALUE CREATION

In today's times, when people feel the threat of becoming inconsequential and by extension want to feel seen and heard, the best way for businesses to attract success amongst fierce competition is to make customers feel valued. This way, customers feel like they belong. Belonging, in turn, leads to loyalty and contributes to the long-term growth of the company.Intergenerational dialogue functions only when the comments collected during such dialogue are properly integrated into the company's strategy.

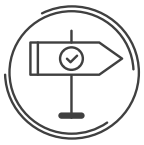
INCLUDE AN INTERGENERATIONAL DIMENSION IN DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

On the backdrop of a more open culture, communication will become key to cooperation between generations, facilitating a symbiotic relationship between different schools of thought, beliefs and experiences, thus resulting in harmonious co-existence. An inclusive strategy with regular reporting on its progress is proper service to society.

PUBLIC VALUE PRINCIPLES

FAIRNESS, RESPECT, INCLUSION

We govern, lead, and run our company on the principles of fairness, respect and inclusion for the benefit of society.



LEAD BY EXAMPLE

We empower individuals and lead by example at all levels.

PRIVACY AS A HUMAN RIGHT

We acknowledge individuals as the owners of their data and their privacy as a human right.

ETHICAL USE OF TECHNOLOGIES

We enable and empower human oversight for an inclusive, transparent, and ethical use and application of technologies, data, and knowledge.

GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR TRUST

We seek continuous improvement and build trust by measuring, auditing, and sharing intentions, actions, and impact transparently and regularly.

CORRECT NEGATIVE IMPACT

We commit to corrective action in collaboration with our peers and stakeholders at large for any negative impact throughout our value chain.

SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENT

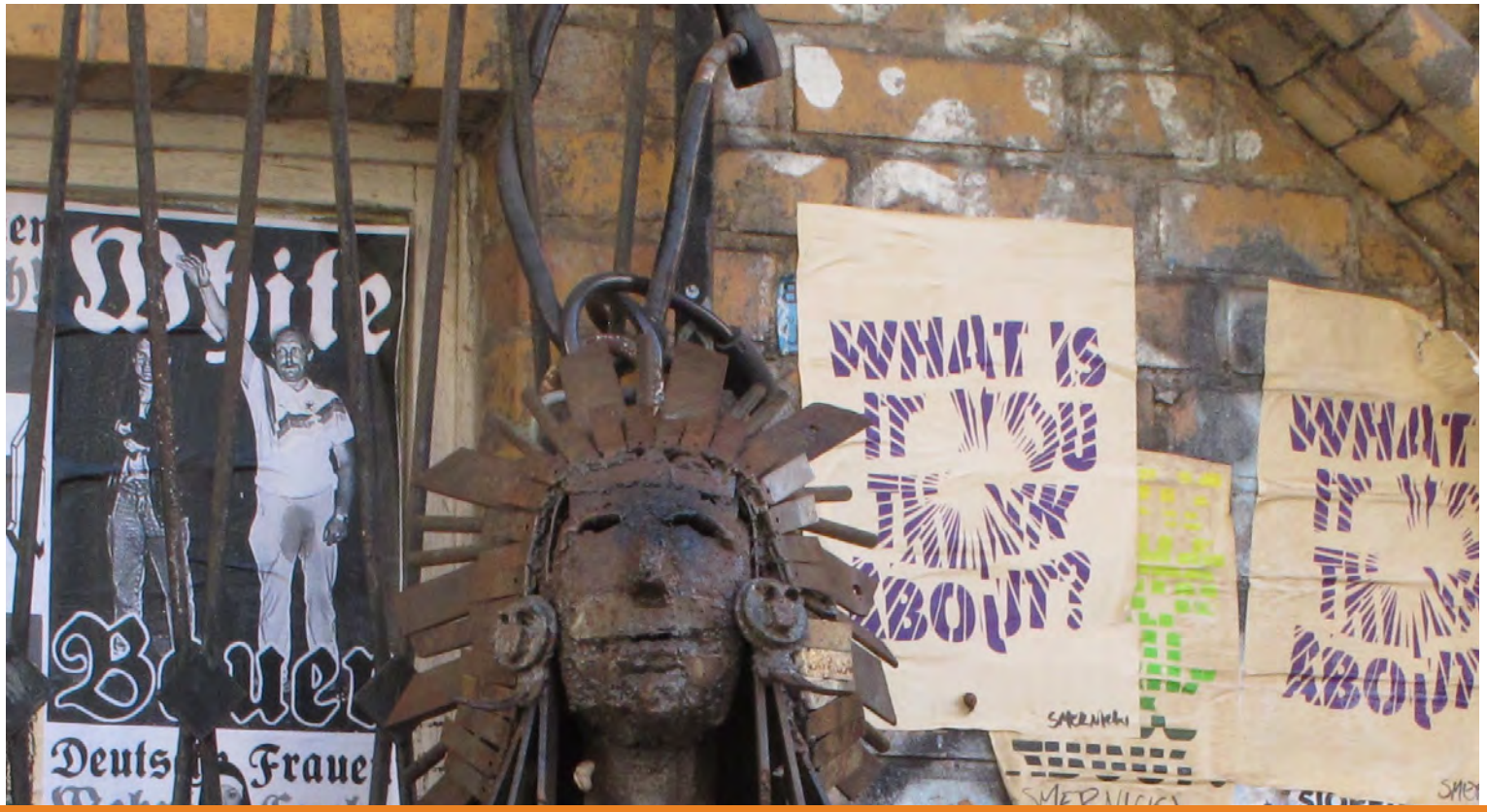
We strive for systemic improvement towards circularity and regeneration within planetary boundaries.

POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY

We are accountable for making a positive contribution to the societies in which we operate through our business models.

SOCIAL CONTRACT

We aspire to an inclusive global social contract that will improve the lives of people locally and beyond.



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