"Ageing Well" in Changing Times and Places.

Further Notes on Anchoring and Stakes in a Brazilian and an Italian Context

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ABSTRACT

The rapid ageing of the world population has led social scientists to speak about an ageing society, posing new questions and concerns, and to advance different theoretical perspectives. Among these, Positive Aging, Successful Ageing, Active Ageing constitute social psychological and social policy models explicitly designed to help people face later phases of life at their best. Various studies also exist on the Social Representations of ageing, while less attention has been given directly to ageing-well. The aim of this study is to explore the issue as considered by people living in contexts characterized by different societal situations and trajectories: an Italian and a Brazilian context. Geopolitical belonging and age were taken into account: 360 participants, with a 2 (geopolitical context) ×3 (age group: young, adult, elderly) design, equally balanced by gender, were invited to complete a free associations task on "ageing-well" and to answer an open question on what they see as being most important in order to live longer and better. Results relating to the more implicit level of analysis highlight a hegemonic representation enhancing individual accomplishments and resources in both contexts, as well as relational bonds to the detriment of societal commitment. The importance of societal concern is clearly advanced in the explicit argumentations made mainly by Brazilian respondents, while Italian ones place high expectations on research but basically interiorize the individualization of risks and demands brought by ageing. These and other results are discussed – theoretically and methodologically – in relation to the proposed models and to urgent challenges that the ageing society is posing on a worldwide scale.

Keywords: Ageing-Well; Anchoring; Stakes; Implicit/Explicit; Hegemonic Social Representations

INTRODUCTION

The world population is ageing and ageing itself has become a challenging social issue calling for renewed attention from different interdisciplinary perspectives. The demographic change has been so evident in the last decades - and demographers foresee further changes in this direction -

that we can observe a rapid transformation of the population structure from the traditional pyramidal shape to the silhouette of a jar (United Nations, 2013). This phenomenon runs across the board and concerns a variety of contexts, not just the so-called "Western" world, with Germany and Italy ranking top in terms of ageing rate, but also Japan and the "Developing" countries, in particular Brazil and the entire Southern American subcontinent.
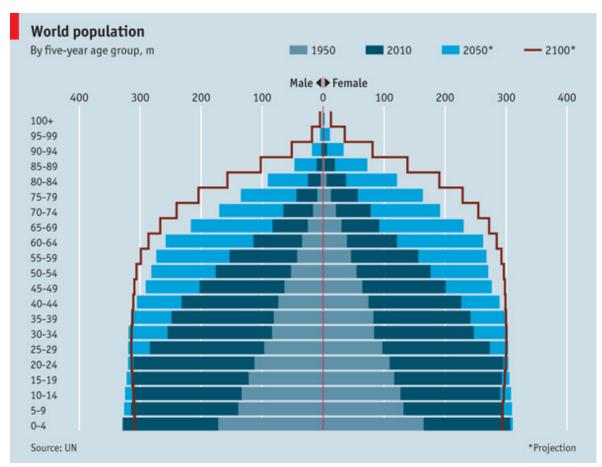

Figure 1: Demographic change of ageing of world population

Conventionally, an ageing society is defined as a country in which at least 8-10% or more of the population are aged sixty or above (cf. Victor, 2010; Phillipson, 2013). This rate is spreading at such a pace that we increasingly speak of a global ageing society. Italy fits quite well within this picture being the third in the world as to age rating after Germany and Japan (United Nations, 2012); Brazil less so although the country's ageing has accelerated quite rapidly in the last two decades (Wong & Carvalho, 2006). We are not so much facing an extension of life beyond absolute biological limits as a progressive increase in the population's average age, which

for many individuals means a potential lengthening of their life. While this appears to be a gain, the last phases of life continue to scare people and to be considered problematic, highly connected with frailty and disadvantage, at an individual level, and with costs, at a societal one. The priority that our scientific community places on the topic is witness to the increased awareness of this situation, seen as one of the main issues of our time. The theme is thus well suited to be studied within a social representations approach: it is a debated and contested issue (with widespread intervention from international and national agencies), and is better understood by taking into account different and slightly overlapping areas: the (embodied) subjective; the inter-subjective; and the trans-subjective sphere (cf. Jodelet, 2009).

Within this picture, the main aim of the present study is to explore ageing or, more precisely, ageing-well in our time, particularly as conceived by people living in social contexts that are characterized by different and differently evolving societal situations as well as living in different moments of their personal life trajectory. More precisely, our aim is to deepen the anchoring of the social representation of ageing in geopolitical and age/generation belonging (Moscovici 1961/76; Doise, 1992). As regards the former, we have had the opportunity to examine an Italian and a Brazilian context in the last few years, which has allowed us to perform a quasi natural experiment, considering the opposite trends the two geopolitical contexts have recently encountered in terms of economic reduction vs. expansion, mainly considering welfare. As regards individual life trajectories, we believed it would be of interest to compare the views of people differently located along the life span, and expected to find differences in how they face ageing "from within", in older phases of life, or "from outside", as an internal vs. external perspective towards ageing has long been recognised (cf. De Beauvoir, 1970).

In line with the social representations tradition, we will also search for resonances and clashes between theories advanced within social/psychological sciences and everyday thinking as well as for rational and warm thoughts linked to the issue. As we look for traces in contemporary everyday thinking of concepts and theories advanced in sociological and social psychological contexts, the next sections will briefly consider perspectives developed in these areas referring to ageing and, above all, to ageing well.

Ageing From Sociological and Social Psychological Perspectives

In order to study the topic of ageing from different but connected perspectives, a wide variety of disciplines has merged into Gerontology since the Forties. Among these, sociological research offered theories and studies aiming to interpret the phenomenon through a social lens and to give suggestions for better coping with its demands. Parsons' role theory (Parsons, 1942) was extremely influential in the Forties, and was followed by contrasting views in the Fifties which maintained that activity within society (Havighurst, 1954) or disengagement from its demands (Cumming & Henry, 1961) could help individuals to capitalize their strengths with beneficial effects on subjective well-being in later phases of life. Soon, other interpretations further stressed the links between individual processes and societal/historical dynamics. For instance, Burgess (1960) enhanced the role-less role of the elderly in societies which were encountering intense urbanization, industrialization, bureaucratization and in their age stratification theory, Riley & Riley (1994) underlined the priority of birth cohorts and the historical challenges placed on them by societal demands, thus focussing attention on specific generations and inviting us not to generalize views and interpretations of ageing across historical periods. The influence of birth cohorts is also emphasized in Atchley's (2000) continuity theory in which ageing is seen as closely tied to earlier periods and phases of life as well as in the life course perspective advanced mainly by Elder (1974) and Neugarten & Hagestad (1976). The key elements can be summarized as follows: ageing spans from birth to death, involving social, psychological and biological processes, and ageing experiences are shaped by cohort historical factors.

After providing an overview and discussing these and other perspectives, Phillipson (2013) re-launches the view of ageing as a social construction, which emerged around the Eighties and is still adopted, both in sociological and in social psychological environments. From a sociological perspective, this is often linked with critical gerontology, particularly keen to consider the relation between ageing and social inequality. With this regard, the cumulative advantage and disadvantage model (O'Rand, 2000; Crystal & Shea, 2003; Dannefer, 2003) documented how social inequalities tend to widen along the process of ageing. To state it in a line: *The rich get richer, the poor get poorer*.

How much do these views reverberate in everyday thinking about ageing and ageing-well? In light of the above-mentioned theories we might expect people to embrace different aspects of their lives: solitude and spiritual life, be fully involved in society with strong relational

bonds, self expression and personal fulfilment, maintenance and capitalization of previous key concerns or financial security with shared assumptions of risk and fairer distribution of resources.

From a social psychological standpoint the theme has been considered in different ways. Introducing the concept of ageism, Nelson (2002), for instance, states: "in social perception, people tend rather automatically to categorize others along three major dimensions: race, sex and age" and then observes: "age prejudice is one of the most socially condoned, institutionalized forms of prejudice in the world – especially in the US" (p. ix). Studies conducted over time in the US searching for sub-types of elderly through sorting tasks indicate a variety of stereotypes (cf. Brewer *et al.*, 1981; Schmidt & Boland, 1986; Hummert *et al.*, 1994). Following this line, Fiske and colleagues analyse process, content and functions in stereotyping older persons as well as the pervasiveness and the persistence of the elderly stereotype in US and non US countries (Cuddy, Norton & Fiske, 2005).

Within the framework of Fiske and colleagues' stereotype content model, the mixed stereotype of warmth and incompetence towards the elderly appears to be quite resistant in spite of robust research that has failed to demonstrate an actual relationship between age and competence, for instance in job performance (e.g., Salthouse & Maurer, 1996). For our aims, the proposed dimension of competence includes independence and agency, while warmth refers mostly to relational features. Further analyses show that "when asked about the warm-incompetent cluster that included elderly people, participants most endorsed items reflecting paternalistic prejudice (pity and sympathy) and least endorsed emotions reflecting envy" (Cuddy & Fiske, 2004, p.10).

More open to a variety of possible outcomes is the social constructionist movement, which, in social psychology, has Ken and Mary Gergen as outstanding promoters. In the authors' words:

> "The extensive research demonstrating deterioration of physical and psychological functioning during the latter span of life is not a simple reflection of what is there. Rather, that a given configuration constitutes 'decline' - or indeed, is worth mentioning at all - derives from a particular domain of values… along with various assumptions, vocabularies, measuring instruments, and so on" (Gergen & Gergen, 2002, p. 6).

A different kind of scientific literature was seen as necessary to give voice to studies illustrating a counter-expected picture and above all to monitor existent scientific knowledge presenting evidence of gains counterbalancing losses in older phases of life. Research in this field is flourishing, e.g. showing how elderly people, contrary to the general idea of decline, maintain a future time perspective in very old age, with good effects on their well-being (Zambianchi & Ricci Bitti, 2010), or how, rather than dependency and incompetence, what is at stake in ageing, and mostly in very old age, is fragility (Lalive d'Epinay and Spini, 2008). These evidence-based paths, however, fatigue to enter everyday knowledge which continues to favour a narrative of decline. With this regard, Gergen & Gergen (2004) discuss the pervading role of productivity and individualism, highly esteemed values in western – and not only western – society which become dangerous obstacles to social inclusion of the elderly. Based on available literature, the authors propose a pattern named 'the life-span diamond', which appears to generate well-being throughout the life course and particularly in the late phases of life. Four vertices are considered - each serving both as origin and outcome: Relational resources, physical well-being, positive mental states, engaging activity. Playing in harmony, these four strengths may create positive, interrelated links in the domains of self, relationships and community.

Ageing as Social Representation

As seen above, the theme of ageing is a widely debated, contextually bound issue, relevant at different levels (individual, relational, societal) and thus well suited to be studied within a social representations approach. It would be particularly interesting to trace the content and representational field of the issue, searching for the organising principles which shape it as well as the anchoring processes of different groups endorsing different stakes with respect to ageing (Doise, Clémence & Lorenzi Cioldi, 1992, Moliner, 1993).

In recent years we have been involved in research on ageing within social representations paradigms, often in tune with an intercultural framework and in dialogue with the social constructionist perspective of Positive Aging (cf. Camargo, Contarello, Nascimento Shulze, 2008). Over time, our research has moved from the study of how the elderly are seen, or rather, constructed, in everyday knowledge, to the study of how old age is endorsed and the analysis of ageing itself as considered in lay thinking. Moving from images of people to phases of life and to

processes in terms of life course allows one to encounter both stereotypical images, often coloured in dark tones (sign of ageism), and elements of positive/generating stances which are seldom, however, organized in clear-cut pictures (Magnabosco-Martins, Camargo, Biasus, 2009). Recent research with Italian and Brazilian participants shows differences in the social representations endorsed by age groups and by people from different countries. Older Italians present a more concrete and richer representation, while Italian youngsters activate proportionally more normative schemas. Italian young people hold a representation with more activated relationships than Brazilian participants from the same age span, and both representations differ in their content (Wachelke & Contarello, 2010). An analysis of the press (magazine illustrations and TV ads) also corroborated the idea of a minimal presence – somehow an absence – of elderly people. When they are actually depicted, they are shown in negative terms or at most, in Italian telecommunication, with touches of irony (Leone, Mastrovito, Contarello & Polo, 2010).

Overall, we interpreted these various results as the persistence of a dark view of ageing depicted with worries and concerns and only partially counterbalanced by desirable features. Thus an overarching view emerges which, however, we read not so much as a basic human inclination in terms of cognitive or motivational bias, but rather as a powerful social representation (cf. also Liu, Ng, Loong, Gee & Weatherall, 2003; Tura & Silva, 2012). Cultural contexts appear to play a major role in this, not only defining contents but mainly shaping local views of ageing.

Focussing on institutional stakes, i.e. main challenges and 'enjeux' handled in specific macro-contexts, Macedo, Contarello, Wachelke (2011) explored social representations of the elderly in three contexts which differed in age structure of the population: Brazil, Germany and Italy. Data collected via a free association task to the stimulus-word "the elderly" and analysed through content and correspondence analysis, supported our expectation that the three groups would present certain differences, both in the content of the representation and in positions taken along the detected underlying dimensions, which appear to reflect and re-launch divergences in their political and public agendas.

From Ageing to Ageing-Well

Undoubtedly, cultural context is important and structuring, but a dark view of ageing still generally appears to prevail. Yet being able to live a longer life while maintaining a negative

view of ageing represents one of the well known paradoxes which, as social psychologists, we are called to face and to resist. How can we move towards a more eurhythmic layout?

Various approaches have been proposed, aiming to better understand and ameliorate the ageing process. We have already encountered Gergen & Gergen's social constructionist vision. More oriented to a biomedical perspective, the Successful Ageing approach by Rowe & Kahn (1997; 1998) indicates three pillars supporting good ways of ageing - absence or avoidance of disease and connected risks, maintenance of physical and cognitive functional capacities, and active engagement with life – and invites interdisciplinary research aimed at reducing risks of adverse events and enhancing resilience in their presence. From a cognitive perspective, the SOC model by Baltes & Baltes (1990) suggests that successful ageing can be reached though processes of selection, optimization and compensation of declining competences and resources. Finally, since the beginning of the century, the WHO has proposed a social policy model aimed at drawing attention to the six 'petals' of a flower depicting a reasonable outcome denominated Active Ageing (2002). Following this view, in order to age well, society and individuals should gain and capitalise economic, behavioural, personal, physical and social resources as well as be allowed to rely upon health and social services.

A rich flowering of studies has followed along these main perspectives in recent decades in order to better devise theoretical views, as well as to implement indicators of satisfactory performances in older age both at individual and societal levels, mainly in Europe. The debate on the strengths and shortcomings of the concepts of Successful Aging and Active Ageing has recently grown (cf. The Gerontologist's special issue, 2015; Foster and Walker, 2015). One of the main critiques invites researchers to take into account the 'missing voices' of older adults' (Martinson & Berridge, 2015), in order to include subjective meanings of these notions before trying to devise shared indicators.

Along this line Ryff (1989), for instance, searched for the meaning of positive psychological functioning in middle-aged and older adults in US, maintaining that beholders' views are precious to complement experts' views on the topic. From her research, what appears most important for both the age groups investigated is a sort of "others orientation", meant as being a caring, compassionate person and having good relationships, as well as endorsing a sense of humour, enjoying life and, mostly for the elderly, accepting change.

Through a national population survey with people aged 50+ living at home in Britain, Ann Bowling and her colleagues also showed how older people's views add further elements to the main constituents of successful ageing present in literature (e.g., accomplishments, financial security, physical appearance, sense of humour, sense of purpose) (Bowling & Dieppe, 2005). Moreover, an interview survey with people aged 65+ in the same context, indicated how the respondents offer lay definitions of active ageing which show a general overlap with those in the literature to the detriment, however, of features such as productivity, empowerment, dignity, human rights and enabling elements of environments (Bowling, 2008). Both theoretical and lay perspective appear to be needed in view of a comprehensive model: "An important ingredient in the internal complexity of the concept of active ageing is its combination of political/ethical (normative) and scientific (descriptive/explanatory) concerns… It is in this context that a psychosocial focus on the views and experiences of ordinary older people becomes relevant" (Stenner, McFarquhar, Bowling, 2011, p. 468).

We fully agree with this conclusion. Yet, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of social knowledge, mainly its "thirdness" which always requires "others" in its construction (Moscovici, 1984; Jesuino, 2009), we believe in the importance of listening to the views not only of the elderly, but also of people differently located along their life course.

AIMS OF THIS STUDY

Within this general framework, the main aim of the present study is to monitor shared views of good ways of ageing in everyday thinking. In particular, we intended to explore the existence and structure (content and representation field) of a social representation of "ageing-well", i.e. a socially shared and debated view of the issue from different angles and perspectives, interpreted in terms of sociological and socio-psychological anchoring processes (Doise, 1992). As regards anchoring, we advance some specific research questions.

1a. On a macro level, the most interesting aspect regards geopolitical contexts. What does "ageing-well" mean in a Western "ageing" country which experienced some decades of welfare and is now confronting economic decline? And what about in a "young but already ageing" Southern, so-called developing country known (until recently) to be an emerging one within the BRICS?

1b. Age positioning assumes an important role in the bigger picture. From a social representations perspective, this can be interpreted in terms of distance from the object investigated: young, adult, elderly people would endorse different stakes as regards ageing, and even more so in times and contexts which require their involvement in the issue in different ways.

A second aim of the study is to analyse the resonance, if there is any, of the emerging social representation with sociological and social psychological theories on ageing mentioned above, and to try to match its fit with the most recent perspectives on good ways of facing later phases of life. Last, but not least, we intend to better distinguish between different aspects of the representation: i.e. between "warm" vs. rational thoughts. Our expectation is that these will play a part as two different sides of the same coin, helping us to trace a more thorough picture.

METHOD

Design

The present research consists in an exploratory/comparative study, aimed to investigate the social representations of "ageing-well" with a 2×3 balanced design: geo-political context (Brazilian, Italian) and age/generation of the respondents (young, adult, elderly people).

Participants and Procedure

Three hundred and sixty participants equally subdivided according to the above mentioned design – i.e. 60 per geo-political context/age condition – were invited to individually answer a questionnaire including various tasks[2]. The young people group comprised participants aged between 18 and 34 years, the adults' group included participants aged between 35 and 64, and the group of elderly people had people aged 65 or above. Mean ages were 25.4 years for the young (SD = 4.1), 40.1 for the adults (SD = 8.5) and 77.7 for the elderly (SD = 7.6)[3].

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[2] Gender will not be considered in the present paper, however, in the research design we ensured to balance each cell in terms of gender.

[3] The limits of inclusion in the three groups follow those indicated by demographers (e.g., Rosina & De Rosa, 2014) and adopted in common knowledge and language (e.g., Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2013, www.treccani.it).

The young participants were undergraduate or graduate students attending the University of Padua, Italy, and the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Florianopolis, Brazil; adult and elderly people were recruited within their same milieu with a snow ball sampling strategy. The Italian respondents lived in North Italy, mostly in the Veneto and Emilia-Romagna regions. In Brazil, participants were recruited from the state of Santa Catarina. However, any comparison must be considered cautiously as, although both cities host important universities, they represent very specific contexts and certainly do not make it possible to generalize findings to the level of the nations that include them. Florianopolis is a touristic capital from the South of a continental country and Padua is a province capital in the North East of Italy mostly developed in the tertiary sector.

Data were collected in the academic year 2009/2010: two years after the beginning of what only then was acknowledged as a dramatic economic crisis in Italy and twenty years after an inclusive health reform (the Unified Health System - Sistema Único de Saúde) had been launched in Brazil. The recruitment context was based upon the access to university students' personal networks. The students completed questionnaires themselves and were asked to invite other participants from all the age ranges included in the study among their acquaintances, friends and families in order to make the research design possible. The only criterion relevant for inclusion as participants was the classification in terms of age in each cultural context. The completed questionnaires were returned to members of the research team later.

Each questionnaire was introduced by instructions with a consent form and was composed of different sections, including: free associations to "ageing-well" (five associations were requested), followed by a brief justification of each of the associated items; argumentations, in an open answer, to the question "In your opinion and experience, what are the most important things which could make people live longer and better?" The detailed research procedure was included in a project approved by the Ethics committee of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (Brazil), under protocol number 231. It also followed the standard Italian ethical guidelines recommended by the Ethical Committee for Psychological Research of Padua University.

Textual data were explored through content analysis, specificity analysis and correspondence analysis with the package SPAD.T – Système Portable pour l'Analyse des

Données Textuelles (Lebart, Morineau Bécue, 1989). This software includes explicitly designed analyses for textual data, i.e. pre-treatment of the corpus as well as typical words analyses and correspondence analyses, well suited to answering our research questions.

RESULTS

The content of the representation

Free Associations

A total of 1716 lexical forms were provided, with 751 distinct forms. The usual treatment of the text reducing synonyms and antonyms in search for superordinate meaning (with the help of justifications given by the participants) was performed by the fourth author (CP) with a thorough double-check by the first (AC) and the third one (JW), in order not to miss culturally based nuances. After fixing a frequency threshold at 2, we were left with 62 distinct (categories of) words, the most frequent of which are reported in Table 1.

In both the analysed contexts, a span of elements are evoked by lexical forms: first of all health, which appears to be a synonym of "ageing-well", but also forms enhancing the relational, economic, individual, physical parts of a rich and multifaceted pattern (Table 1a). Comparing answers given in Brazil and Italy, we see that sharing, consideration, and involvement but also a range of other aspects including economic resources were typical of Brazilian respondents, while focus on individual strengths was typical in the Italian ones. Age and national group appear to give voice to different worries and priorities in life with desire for activity and participation expressed mainly by the younger of both nationalities, independence or support mainly by the adults in the two contexts, and different features in the two national groups of elderly. While older Brazilian participants stressed relations and personal efforts in prevention, Italians enhanced generativity and mental well-being (Table1b).

Table 1 Free Associations: a. List of most frequent associations (82.5% of the total) b. Typical words by nationality; age; nationality x age (p < 0,05)

a. Overall Content

Health (263), Family (156), Friendship (76), Physical_Activity (74), Economic_Resources (70), Peace_of_Mind (61), Nutrition (50), Active_Life (50), Helping_Others (49), Free_Time (49), Company (45), Wisdom (41), Culture (40), Experience (36), Travelling (34), Autonomy (32), Interests (32), Love (30), Social_Life (30), Involvement (29), Work (25), Fulfilment (23), Happiness (22), Faith (21), Pension (21), Accepting_Changes (19), Mirth (19), Well_Being (19).

b. Specific Terms

	Brazilian	**Italian**	
	Sharing, Nutrition, Faith, Love, Economic_Resources, Happiness, Well_Being, Consideration, Experience, Prevention, Peace, Work, Involvement	Interest, Peace_of_Mind, Autonomy, Helping_Others, Optimism, Mental_Health, Mental_Lucidity, Accepting_Changes, Active_Life	
Young	Experience, Economic_Resources, Work, Fulfilment	Accepting_Changes, Interests, Fulfilment, Luck, Memory, Active_Life	Fulfilment, Experience, Accepting_Changes, Wisdom, Free_Time
Adult	Social_Support, Well_Being, Peace	Autonomy, Peace_of_Mind, Interests, Mental_Lucidity, Hobby, Travelling	Social_Support
Elderly	Faith, Sleep, Nutrition, Love, Sharing, Physical_Activity, Prevention	Mental_Health, No_Worry, Peace_of_Mind, Helping_Others	Faith, Sleep, Nutrition, Physical_Activity, Mental_Health, No_Worry

Argumentations

Even at a first glance, the results pertaining to the explicit question show a different picture (Table 2). A total of 1078 lexical forms were provided, with 862 distinct forms, reduced, after treatment, to 68. What drew our attention was the emergence – and almost the unique emergence – of social and social policy features, which were practically absent from the free associations list. These are particularly evident in Brazil where, among the most typical words, we found public policies, pension and health assistance. In Italy, instead, research and prevention came first, followed by personal and relational resources. Passing on delivery, nearly exclusive of Italian respondents, calls for intergenerational exchange and transmission of knowledge and

values. Only one item in the Italian context explicitly refers to public space: citizens' meeting places.

Table 2 Argumentations: a. List of most frequent argumentations (82.5% of the total) b. Typical words by nationality; age; nationality x age (p < 0,05) (most frequent ones are reported - 78.7% of the total) and typical words by nationality; age; nationality x age (p < 0,05)

a. Overall Content

Health (81), Health_Services (69), Better_Institutional_Support (51), Economic_Resources (50), Nutrition (48), Prevention (41), Family (34), Respect (30), Physical_Activity (26), Pension (24), Consideration_by_Society (22), Peace_of_Mind (20), Leisure (20), Culture (20), Quality_of_Life (20), Integration (19), Work (19), Access_to_Health_Services (18), Family_Support (17), Education (17), Friends (17), Healthy_Environment (16), Company (16), Citizens_Meeting_Places (15), Love (15), Activities (15).

b. Specific Terms

	Brazilian	**Italian**	
	Respect, Leisure, Culture, Education, Public_Policy, Things_Making_Happy, Understanding, Better_Sensibility, Pension, Health_Service	Peace_of_Mind, Research, Integration, Family, Prevention, Activities, Autonomy, Interpersonal_Relationship, Interests, Mutual_Help, Handover, Healthy_Environment, Nutrition, Economic_Resources	
Young	Social_Justice, Mobility, Quality_of_Life	Citizens_Meeting_Places, Handover, Trained_Mind, Mutual_Help, Integration	Citizens_Meeting_Places, Quality_of_Life, Adeguated_Pension_Syst em, Social_Justice, Passing_on_Delivery
Adult	Leisure, Physical_Activity, Travelling, Help, Hope	Autonomy, Family, Interpersonal_Relationship, Integration, Prevention	Leisure, Listening, Autonomy, Physical_Activity
Elderly	Understanding, Things_Making_Happy, Not_Let_Yourself_Go, Love, Education, Self_Knowledge	Peace_of_Mind, Economic_Resources, Activities_to_Be_Done, Research, Interests, Family, Health	Peace_of_Mind, Understanding, Love, Health

The representation field

Free Associations

In order to explore the representation field, a correspondence analysis was performed on the table crossing (categories of) associations and participants (60[4]x360). On the basis of the eigenvalues histogram, we chose to present the first three factors which account overall for about 10% of total inertia. In the illustration of the results, we retained lexical forms with absolute contribution ≥ 1.7[5] (Table 3).

Table 3 Free Associations: The Representation Field

FACTOR 1 (3.65%)   *Active Ageing vs Well-being*

Words	Coord	AC	RC	Words	Coord	AC	RC
Physical Activity	-1.48	21.2	0.47	Happiness	0.97	2.7	0.06
Prevention	-2.84	18.9	0.29	Health	0.27	2.4	0.16
Nutrition	-1.70	18.8	0.43	Economic Resources	0.50	2.3	0.06
Sleeping	-2.00	5.2	0.11	Experience	0.66	2.0	0.04
Mental Activity	-1.77	4.1	0.09	Fulfilment	0.79	1.9	0.04
Culture	-0.76	3.0	0.06				
Travelling	-0.62	1.7	0.04				

Illustrative variables	Illustrative variables
Elderly, Brazilian;	Young, Adults, Italian;
Brazilian elderly, Italian elderly	Brazilian young, Italian young, Italian adults

FACTOR 2 (3.18%)   *Focus on the Individual vs Focus on Relationships*

Words	Coord	AC	RC	Words	Coord	AC	RC
Luck	-4.17	13.0	0.19	To Be Regarded	1.29	4.0	0.07
Close ones	-1.73	8.0	0.16	Wisdom	0.72	3.2	0.05
Fulfilment	-1.33	6.1	0.12	Work	0.91	3.1	0.06
Spirituality	-2.00	4.8	0.07	Faith	0.94	2.8	0.05
Feeling-useful	-2.08	4.5	0.07	Company	1.37	2.5	0.04
Freedom	-1.61	4.3	0.09	Helping-others	0.49	1.8	0.04
Mobility	-1.97	4.1	0.08	Family	0.28	1.8	0.05
Little-suffering	-2.91	3.8	0.06	Involvement	0.63	1.7	0.03
Accepting Changes	-0.96	2.6	0.05	Pleasure	1.52	1.7	0.03
Prevention	-0.92	2.3	0.03				
Happiness	-0.81	2.1	0.04				

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[4] "Decline" and "Pain" explained almost the whole first factor of a previous CA, thus were inserted as supplementary variables in the present one.

[5] The absolute contribution of a point to a dimension is the proportion of inertia (variance) explained by the point. The sum of the contributions of the points to each factor is equal to 100. Only points with considerable value (i.e>100/*n* where *n* is the number of points) are discussed.

Peace of Mind	-0.46	1.9	0.04				
Illustrative variables				**Illustrative variables**			
Young**,** Italian;				Elderly, Brazilian;			
Italian young**,** Italian adults				Brazilian young, Brazilian adults, Brazilian elderly			

FACTOR 3 (3.10%)   ***Right vs Privilege***

Words	Coord	AC	RC	Words	Coord	AC	RC
Spirituality	-2.99	11.0	0.15	Luck	5.01	19.3	0.27
Peace of Mind	-0.64	3.9	0.08	Littler Suffering	4.97	11.4	0.19
Autonomy	-0.84	3.5	0.07	Fulfilment	1.32	6.1	0.12
Affects	-0.99	2.7	0.05	Hobby	1.65	5.0	0.09
Accepting Changes	-0.91	2.4	0.04	Love	0.79	2.9	0.05
No-worry	-1.46	2.3	0.04	Faith	0.88	2.5	0.04
Interests	-0.65	2.1	0.04	Company	1.32	2.4	0.04
Social Life				Feeling useful	1.40	2.1	0.03
				Family-affection	1.21	1.8	0.03
				Nutrition	0.48	1.8	0.04
Illustrative variables				**Illustrative variables**			
Adults**,** Italian;				Elderly, Brazilian;			
Italian young**,** Italian adults, Italian elderly				Brazilian adults, Brazilian elderly			

The first factor opposes a kernel of activity to be performed - in itself a reification of *Active Aging* – to a more abstract and fundamental complex of values concerning *Well Being* which we find in the preamble of most Western institutional charters (US, French, Italian), values and accomplishments that tend to be pursued along the entire life course. We can see that a focus on practice, on what to do to better cope with the demands of life, is held by the protagonists of the process, i.e. the elderly and by Brazilians. More specifically, the Italian elderly respondents took position along this pole, while Italians in general, and, overall, young and adult respondents gave voice to the pole in which ageing-well is depicted in a more abstract, theoretical way.

The second dimension shows what we interpret as *Focus on the Individual* on one hand (e.g, luck first, but also fulfilment, spirituality, freedom) vs. *Focus on Relationships* (respect, company, family) on the other. As might be expected, our more "Western" context (Italy) is associated with the first, while our more "Southern" one (Brazil) with the second pole of the factor. However – as Italy is not among the most individualist of European countries neither is Brazil among the most collectivist domains – it did not come as a surprise to find nuances of affective bonds on the first pole and of individual concern on the second. Besides geopolitical

belonging, age plays its role: younger participants privileged focus on the individual, while older ones on relationships. Adult respondents were split: the Italian ones on the first, the Brazilian ones on the second pole.

The third dimension, perhaps less easy to read, offered good 'food for thought'. The contrast here is between what might refer to a conception of life – and of a good life, even in its late phases – as a *Right* to be advocated and nourished vs. a *Privilege* to encounter and pray for. The former enhances an idea of agency or being in control, the latter evokes a more external locus of control in which relationships play an important role. Italian respondents take position on the first pole, as well as adults, while Brazilians and elderly people on the second[6].

DISCUSSION

We can now try to answer our main research questions. What does "ageing-well" mean in two macro-contexts encountering a rapid growth of the elderly population while experiencing opposite socio-economic trajectories? And how does the age of the respondents themselves enter into the overall picture?

When asked to answer through a free associations task what ageing-well evokes for them, both Brazilian and Italian respondents bring to the forefront first of all health, and then personal, financial and relational features: in terms of content, these are the aspects which appear with greater frequency. Common to both geopolitical contexts and age groups are health, family and friendship. At this more implicit level, different priorities emerge in the two geopolitical contexts, particularly in concert with the respondents' age groups. Active participation in society is less present than expected, voiced mainly by younger Brazilian respondents, while tranquillity and affection are mostly required by the elderly, who typically mention the importance of self-help and prevention in Brazil and of still being able to offer help in Italy. Independence and social support are golden paths towards ageing-well mostly for adults: the former being characteristic of Italian adults, the latter of Brazilian ones. Finally, the younger Italian respondents point to personal fulfilment, as do their Brazilian peers, but also to memory, thus confirming previous

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[6] A correspondence analysis was also performed for argumentations, which for reasons of space we do not report thoroughly. Not surprisingly, given its priority in the content, various declinations of "Higher institutional support" appear in the representational field contrasting individual/relational to societal features. The first three factors thus refer to: a. *research and prevention at an individual level vs. institutional support;* b. *research, support and access to care vs. recognition and mutual help;* c. *listening within friend and family relationships vs. welfare*

research results which stress the role of witnesses of the past attributed to the elderly in this context (Macedo *et al.,* 2011).

As regards the representation field resulting from the free association task, three main organising principles shape the representation suggesting: practical vs. theoretical stances; focus on the individual vs. on relationships; internal vs. external locus of control, with the Brazilians – and the elderly – taking position on the latter poles of these dichotomies. The first dimension opposes a simpler view of ageing-well – somehow a sharp know-how recipe - to a general and broad perspective of living well in its fullest meaning.. On the first pole, key words coming from the Active Ageing campaign advanced by the WHO surround the quintessential idea of prevention in a kernel which is voiced by Brazilians and by the elderly. On the second pole, a comprehensive picture recalls the funding principles of modernist constitutional charters as well as an everlasting process of growth and achievements. Interestingly, this virtuous path to ageing is mainly advanced by Italian participants, as well as by young and adult respondents. Two different views are thus depicted, both focussing on individual strengths and resources, but in domains defined by different levels of agency and recognition. In the latter case self-fulfilment implies a global view of well-being including health, wealth and happiness. In the former a do-it-yourself approach appears to be advocated, centring the attention on one's own activity and one's own embodied individuality, as if when located on the less dominant pole of the dimensions of geopolitical context and generation (i.e elderly and citizens of a 'new' country[7]), individuals interiorize reduced levels of social inclusion and search for the motor of desired outcomes directly in themselves.

The second dimension shows one pole in which the two vertices of the first dimension come together and an emerging one which points to a new feature, in this case the central role of relationships. Self-fulfilment is what is at stake in both poles of this dimension, but on one hand it is acquired through freedom, happiness, spirituality and, above all, luck, while on the other through company, helping others, family. The Brazilian and the elderly give voice to the latter view, while Italians and younger participants to the former.

The third dimension, which we interpreted as a right to be advocated and nourished vs. a privilege to encounter and pray for, seems to reflect wider worldviews peculiar to the geopolitical

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[7] As well as women, as a parallel analysis shows.

groups and invites us to reason in terms of cultural concerns. Perhaps this dimension reflects a realistic assessment of the practical conditions with which one gets to experience later phases of life. Brazilians probably take into consideration the strong inequality found in their country, which unfortunately still presents obstacles to a healthy and good old age for a significant part of the population. Here, Italians seem to demand their rights to quality of life in old age, whereas Brazilians acknowledge that to age well might be a privilege not shared by many fellow countrymen.

A second aim of the study was to analyse the process of transformation of 'scientific thinking' into everyday, 'lay' thinking, when considering good ways of facing later phases of life.

Does the picture we outlined fit with social psychological and social policy models of ageing-well? The answer is only partially positive, as the present results partly – but only partly – resound and overlap with previous theoretical and empirical advances. The Positive Aging perspective is probably the model which better fits the present set of data, based on free associations, though still not completely. In the views of the respondents, personal resources are remarkably enhanced and find a virtuous counterpart in relational bonds. Also physical potentials are clearly underlined. Engaging activity in society, however, is less explicitly advanced and deserves to be analyzed in more detail. As can be observed both in the content and in the representation field regarding free associations, an active presence in society is openly asked for by younger and middle aged people while the elderly seem to appreciate some kind of detachment which finds expression in tranquillity and absence of worry (associations given especially by the Italian elderly). This leads us to think that suggestions from disengagement theory (Cumming & Henry, 1961), at least from the elderly' point of view, should not be too quickly abandoned, although they should perhaps be updated and reframed. A key point of the Positive Aging model is the link of causal chains interconnecting the four apexes of the proposed 'diamond' (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). Correspondence analysis may have limitations with this regard, as it tends to photograph structures rather than monitor unfolding processes. However, in extracting differently inter-related bipolar dimensions, it offers an overall picture which allows a good match with the theoretical model proposed.

Also if we compare the present findings with the Active Ageing agenda advanced by the WHO, at first glance we see a quite good fit. However considering the six 'petals' designed by

the program to enhance and promote a good way of ageing, we find personal resources at the forefront in the evoked representation, and with decreasing evidence, relational and economical potentials. On the whole, only a slimmer idea of prevention seems to have entered everyday talk: eating well, walking, taking physical exercise, travelling. These practices appear at the forefront, mostly in Brazil, where they find good roots in one's own body care, nearly a national icon. Prevention is the key word, but it looks like everyday thinking has grasped only one part of what the WHO invited people to consider: mostly physical activity, dieting and, to a lesser extent, extending one's own horizons through culture and journeys.

How do the present results relate to Baltes & Baltes' (1990) Successful Ageing model? If we explicitly look for clues of selection, optimization, compensation of abilities and resources, we would probably find little support for the model. One could object that the SOC model focuses on processes governing a good outcome in later life, while the present research design was mostly devoted to content and structure of the social knowledge involved[8]. Focus on weights and benefits, however, as well as features of personal commitment and feeling in charge of one's own gains and losses, which are pivotal to the model, appear to be even too present in the emerging representation which prioritizes, as already discussed, individual efforts and personal resources. Also considering Rowe & Kahn (1998)'s approach, we see that the three pillars envisioned - absence or avoidance of disease, maintenance of functional capacities, and active engagement with life – are all of great importance but, in everyday thinking, they are probably included in a more comprehensive view of health and wellbeing.

A fundamental question in social representations studies is: What is missing? What remains silent in the depicted social thinking? The great absent in the picture resulting from the free associations task is clearly involvement at a societal level, in terms of social debates and policies aimed to help to maintain, support and improve good ways of ageing as well as shared assumptions of risk and fairer distribution of resources (as discussed by Pillipson, 2013). Yet these very same features appear crystal clear when participants explicitly discuss the topic, particularly in Brazil. When invited to reason and debate on the most important things which could let the elderly live longer and better, the first issue is again health; this however is

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[8] This is not to say that processual aspects are not considered in the social representations perspective. On the contrary, research adopting the theory focuses both on the content and structure of the enquired social knowledge and on the process of representing (e.g., Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Foster, 2011).

immediately followed by health services, better institutional support and, together with personal concerns in terms of prevention, retirement system as well as consideration and recognition by society.

This double-faced pattern of the representation invites us to reflect at different levels of analysis. On a methodological ground, we can see this as supporting the need to consider both implicit and explicit aspects when studying social representations. In the social representations literature, implicit concerns are mainly detected within practices or through substitution questionnaires, which we did not include in the present study. However, juxtaposing more implicit vs. more explicit features, via free associations vs. rational argumentations, we could raise different priorities and concerns at different levels of awareness. This seems to refer to different focuses of attention, different 'objects' of the representations which are close but remain immeasurable. Via free association, we may have been able to gather concerns and priorities at an individual level, while via argumentations we seem to have raised suggestions and recommendations at a societal level, not just for oneself or one's own close ones, but for 'the elderly', the others on a broader and general ground. Further research is required to detect whether this is a stable effect and/or whether it is linked with the specific theme, given that an external perspective on ageing tends to prevail at all ages (old people are 'the Other' even for the very elderly, cf. Lalive d'Epinay and Cavalli, 2013).

Moscovici maintained that social representations are not 'quiet things' (Moscovici & Markova, 1998). Howarth (2006) re-launched this idea addressing the question "What do social representations 'do'?" and added: "The multiplicity and tension within any representation presents possibilities for communication, negotiation, resistance, innovation and transformation" (p.6). Is this the case with the present representation? Jointly considering the two faces of the social representation explored here, we can summarize it with a paradoxical assertion: in order to age well the elderly need to rely upon their own capabilities as well as upon help and institutional support; but individuals would better capitalize on their own strengths and resources, i.e. not to age. This picture seems even more accentuated in the Italian context where the demands placed on individuals remain very high, counterbalanced, at a rational level, by trust and hope in (mainly medical) research. One could object that Italy is a country which, in comparison with Brazil, has known decades of welfare and perhaps its citizens do not need to mention opportunities already present in their life. Unfortunately, this is not the case. On the contrary, as Naldini and Saraceno

(2008) note, the inadequacy of welfare policies regarding ageing have transferred heavy responsibilities and obligations onto individuals and on their families. A solution which is not destined to last in view of the continuous acceleration of the country's ageing process mingled with persistent economic restraints.

In warm thinking through free association, the spheres of pertinence advanced by Jodelet (2009) are mentioned with uneven weight: what is clearly at stake is the subjective sphere, with clear embodied features but also with reference to spiritual strengths. The inter-subjective one, with focus on the context of relationships, appears to be less central and widespread. Finally, the trans-subjective one, relating to social and public space, appears very thin, almost inexistent, particularly in Italy. As social psychologists, we acknowledge that capitalizing on agency, autonomy and self-fulfilment, together with good company in terms of friends and family relationships, may constitute a golden path to living at one's best along the life cycle and in the later stages of life as well. We also recognize that individuals along the ageing process enhance continuity over change in terms of identity. Research shows high levels of resilience even in very old age (Spini & Jopp, 2014). However, the virtual absence in the social representation of concerns raised in recent sociological and social psychological debates, particularly in Italy, leads us to expect less harmonious outcomes in the near future. It looks as if the elderly who need attention remain, at best, 'Others' at a safe distance from oneself, failing to become an active apex of the semiotic triangle on which every social knowledge is based (Jesuino, 2009), at worst, victims and accomplices of a double-bind loop in a paradoxical social representation (Jesuino, 2014). In the meantime, it is our whole society that is ageing, demanding change in previous assets, but in our enquiry we did not encounter lively communication, negotiation, resistance, in view of innovation and transformation. In other words, the social representation emerging from the study seems to be hegemonic and a bit too quiet, almost sleeping (Markova, 2009), failing to thematize an issue which is already exploding with the demographic change (Castro, 2014).

Camargo & Wachelke (2010) advanced that in view of social change we should think of social representations in mutual relation within systems. What social representation might be a good candidate in working towards a desirable modification in the representations of ageing and ageing well? Surely the best one would be health, which can be considered its main synonym. From the present study other candidates might also be suggested. In Brazil what seems to be at the core of people's concern is the human body at its best, something that traditionally carries

great value in this cultural domain (see Justo & Camargo, 2013). The involvement of society at large, however, is also clearly recognized and required. Thus the binomial human body - societal concern might work well in this 'young' country facing a rapid demographic change. In Italy what appears at the forefront is individual autonomy and self-fulfilment within a close circle of relationships, with reference to giving help and generativity as offering meaning and value in life. In this context, independence and being able to give help would probably be the best motors. The strong emphasis on research, reasonable and appreciable as it is, ends up with delegating to external experts and delaying the urgency of societal debates. Only minor references to environmental issues and to social inclusion in terms of easier access to the public sphere are reported in this context. Though thin at present, these features might help to extend the issue to the theme of friendlier and safer societies, mainly in the proximity of close relationships. What could we suggest from these results in the Italian context?

On the one hand, the failure to recognize the societal stuff of personal and relational well-being might prove critical, maintaining on the shoulders of individuals – and their strict circles – the weight of societal and global challenges, a burden that, as discussed in sociological debates, will soon become unbearable. On the other, acknowledging the priority given by the elderly to being able to give help – instead of receiving support – might advocate for, at an individual level, a reformulated notion of agency and, at a societal level, social policies able to facilitate and promote contributions by elder citizens, considering their presence, not as much as a problem as, rather, a suitable resource, i.e., as an ally, more than a burden. The relationship between social representations of ageing well and social inclusion/exclusion remains, in any case, an issue of great importance, which is not extensively treated in the present paper and which deserves further inquiry.

Generally, and particularly in times of change, widening one's own vision beyond specific borders may be of help. Within an overall exploratory/comparative design, with this study we intended to draw further attention to a topic which is challenging the present times and which deserves to become a more thoroughly discussed, contested and negotiated issue.

Acknowledgements

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