

A feasibility study

**Grey Power Italia
A Centre of Experience for Senior Citizens**

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Executive summary

This feasibility study deals with the issue of the ageing of the World population and suggests solutions in the field of life long education which could help in dealing with the problem.

UN, OECD, UNECE, European Union, statistical sources from all over the world for once are all in agreement in defining this process “ a global demographic revolution”. The ageing of the World population is becoming so fast that in 2050 people over 60 years of age will be equal to 22.1% of the globe population . In Europe people over 60 in 2050 will reach 35% of the overall inhabitants.

In Italy, the country which together with Japan has been declared the “oldest country in the World” by the UN conference in Vienna, according to the latest Census and the CNR data, people over the age of 65 are equal to 18.7 % of the population (2001 census). This number is growing fast. In spite of this fact nothing seems to be done to equip the country to face this revolution which brings with it huge economic and social consequences.

The author of this study works in education. This sector is indicated by all the international organisations quoted above as a pivotal and strategic element to ease and help the oncoming change. This is the core issue discussed in the study.

Structures dedicated to the Third Age exist in Italy. They are either supported by those Regions that passed laws and funds in their favour or totally autonomous. They are called Universities of the Third Age. They were born under the influence of the so called French model which started in 1968 . They mostly reproduce traditional teaching and learning methods, include a variety of courses of a very diverse nature whose quality level also varies greatly . Mostly they give Senior Citizens a reason to meet socially. They do not offer Senior Citizens a chance to use the experience, know how and the knowledge which they acquired during their working lives.

Different is the situation of other countries such as Great Britain and Germany (to quote a few) where these organisations have been set up on very different principles: knowledge sharing and self help are the two outstanding ones. The U3A movement in Great Britain counts on 131.000 associates and almost 600 centres. Senior Citizens meet up and almost all the teachers come from the learning group. They are used to working in groups, frequently with the help of Internet, set out for themselves projects and their competence in some cases is so remarkable that Public Administrations have asked them to carry out social or commercial researches.

This leads to empowerment as Senior Citizens are not treated like school children in a traditional classroom situation . They form working groups which produce useful results first of all for themselves and for the community. They feel needed and a part of something. They have a sense of purpose.

One cannot look at these issues without taking into consideration the cultural differences which exist between the Anglo Saxon and the Italian cultures, which are real but with hard work and patience they can be overcome. If Centres of Experience (in the way described in this study) were to open up in Italy they would give a real and concrete answer to the needs of so many active and capable people who should take part in the development and progress of this country.

This study offers suggestions and guidelines for the establishment of such Centres. If the pilot project is successful the model can be easily duplicated and spread on the Italian territory.

Introduction

This document is a feasibility study. It is structured as a marketing plan even if the issues herewith discussed are not normally managed in this form.

The Aim

The aim of this study is to verify the feasibility of a project which named Grey Power Italia and within the project the setting up of a centre of Experience for Senior Citizens. These structures are normally described as Universities of the Third Age. We do not want to use this name as we are not in agreement with the founding principles of such Universities much as we acknowledge and respect their work.

The structure we want to create is a new concept in the Italian scenario whilst it is very well known in Great Britain thanks to the U3A movement. Its main principles are:

1. Life long learning or Learning In Later Life (LLL, LiLL). Acceptance of the concept by which learning and teaching are possible at all stages of life throws a different light on the way in which U3A are managed in Italy.
2. Knowledge sharing. Knowledge should be shared more then imparted at later stages of life. The management principle behind this statement is obvious.
3. Self Help . By helping others to learn one becomes an active partner in the learning process. Who teaches shall learn and who learns also teaches (P. Laslett U3A)
4. Empowerment. It leads to the concept that Senior Citizens in Italy are mostly unaware of the power they can have and hold at various levels of the country's structures and economy. It also leads to making them more aware of their worth in terms of self esteem, and as a powerful segment of the population, in economic, political and social terms.

PART ONE. A GLOBAL SCENARIO

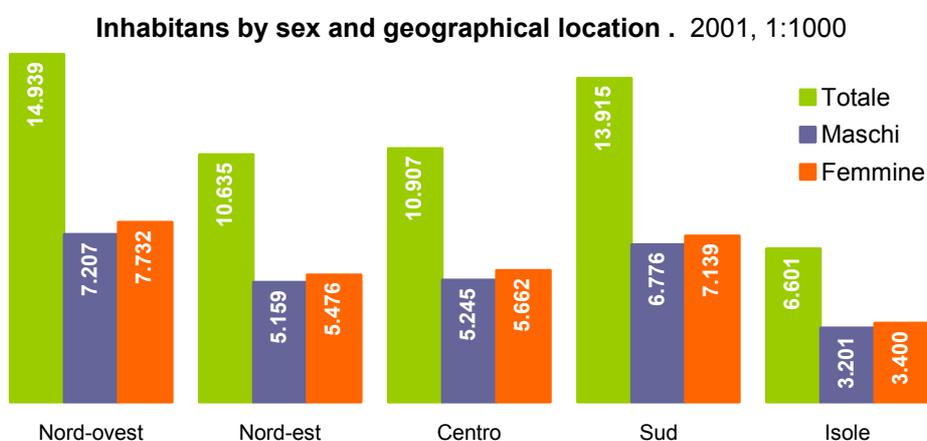
Chapter 1. Facts and data

Section 1. The demographic picture of Italy

This section offers some focussed information on the Italian population as emerging from the Istat latest Census figures for the year 2001.¹

The population is stable

The number of inhabitants in Italy for the year 2001 is equal to 56.995.744 units.²



Also:

The female population is greater than the male one. Females are 29.408.762 surpassing males by 1.821.780. The ratio is 93.8 men vs. 100 females.

Resident population by sex and male ratio 2001

	Totale	Maschi	Femmine	Rapporto di mascolinità ⁽¹⁾
Piemonte	4.214.677	2.034.161	2.180.516	93,3
Valle d'Aosta	119.548	58.563	60.985	96,0
Lombardia	9.032.554	4.373.289	4.659.265	93,9
Trentino-Alto Adige	940.016	460.011	480.005	95,8
<i>Bolzano</i>	462.999	227.749	235.250	96,8
<i>Trento</i>	477.017	232.262	244.755	94,9
Veneto	4.527.694	2.204.420	2.323.274	94,9
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	1.183.764	569.002	614.762	92,6
Liguria	1.571.783	740.922	830.861	89,2
Emilia-Romagna	3.983.346	1.925.322	2.058.024	93,6
Toscana	3.497.806	1.680.940	1.816.866	92,5
Umbria	825.826	399.162	426.664	93,6
Marche	1.470.581	713.872	756.709	94,3

¹ Cartella Stampa dati definitivi del Censimento Istat, 22 Dicembre 2003 Appendice 1

² Ibidem pg.1

Lazio	5.112.413	2.450.848	2.661.565	92,1
Abruzzo	1.262.392	612.477	649.915	94,2
Molise	320.601	155.841	164.760	94,6
Campania	5.701.931	2.778.532	2.923.399	95,0
Puglia	4.020.707	1.951.278	2.069.429	94,3
Basilicata	597.768	293.755	304.013	96,6
Calabria	2.011.466	983.807	1.027.659	95,7
Sicilia	4.968.991	2.401.542	2.567.449	93,5
Sardegna	1.631.880	799.238	832.642	96,0
ITALIA	56.995.744	27.586.982	29.408.762	93,8

3

Also:

The Ageing process of the population continues

The ways and time in which the transition occurred brought Italy to become one of the fastest ageing countries. The percentage of people over 65 passed from 15.3% (8.700.150) of 1991 to 18.7% of 2001 (10.646.874). The most noticeable increment hit the oldest segment of the population: people 75years old or older passed from 6.7% of 1991 to 8.4% of 2001 (4.762.414). In the segment 75 plus women account for 63.7% (3.032.941).

This segment can be further defined analysing the percentages referred to the “very old”. People of 85 plus passed from 1.3% of 1991 (728.817) to the present 2.2% (1.240321). Here too women account for 70.1% (869.522).⁴

Just to close this section of data

More elderly people for one child

The ratio between the population aged 65 or over and the population aged 15 or under, also defined as the ageing index has further increased in the last ten years passing from 96,6 of 1991 to 131,4 of 2001. The highest value is the one shown by the Liguria Region equal to 241,6 . Only few southern Regions in Italy now show levels below the 100. Campania is at 76,9, Puglia at 95,2 and Sicily at 98,7. Exception in the north is the Bolzano province (92,0)⁵.

The data speak for themselves. Senior Citizens in Italy (considered by Istat to be those of 65 years of more) are growing very fast and they now account for 18.7% of the population. Within this segment the oldest section (75plus) has further increased and the ageing index has grown rapidly.

Statistically Italy is an old nation, getting older every day. What needs to be discussed and established is whether the country is equipped to deal with future projections and with the consequences the oncoming change will bring forth.

³ Ibidem pg.2

⁴ Ibidem pg. 3

⁵ Ibidem pg.4

Section 2. Not just Italian data, let's look at the rest of the world

The issues we are touching have a global dimension. We feel it is also important to take a look at the rest of the world then to draw conclusions that do not simply refer to the Italian nation but place it within a larger context.

“Italy is the oldest country in the world”

The statement is taken from the analysis of the data published by the UN during the Second world assembly on ageing held in Madrid from the 8th to the 12th of April 2002 and leads to the various questions on the future of our country⁶.

The Centro Maderna in the same documents says that “Italy by virtue of its ageing leadership may become a “lab” for all the other industrialized countries”⁷

One of the true reference points for all the world studies on this subject is the content of the opening statement of the UN conference quoted above.

“Population ageing is unprecedented, without parallel in human history—and the twenty-first century will witness even more rapid ageing than did the century just past.

● *Population ageing is pervasive, a global phenomenon affecting every man, woman and child—but countries are at very different stages of the process, and the pace of change differs greatly. Countries that started the process later will have less time to adjust.*

● *Population ageing is enduring: we will not return to the young populations that our ancestors knew.*

● *Population ageing has profound implications for many facets of human life”⁸*

These documents and the many more that have been prepared on the subject show the global impact of these issues and the vast reaching implications they have from an economic, social, political, educational point of view.

It must be acknowledged that the ageing of the world population has to be considered from many points of view. Education leading to empowerment is just one of the elements which, if accurately managed and steered, can improve the world's future possibilities.

⁶ Centro Maderna. Anziani: analisi demografica (a cura di Flavia Filippini – Settore Documentazione Centro Maderna, Gennaio 2003 www.centromaderna.it consultato il 10 Marzo 2004

⁷ Ibidem pg.1

⁸ <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/worldageing19502050/index.htm> consultato il 12 Marzo 2004

We would like to close this section with some data which, translated into visual images, give us all a very clear picture of what lies ahead for all of us.

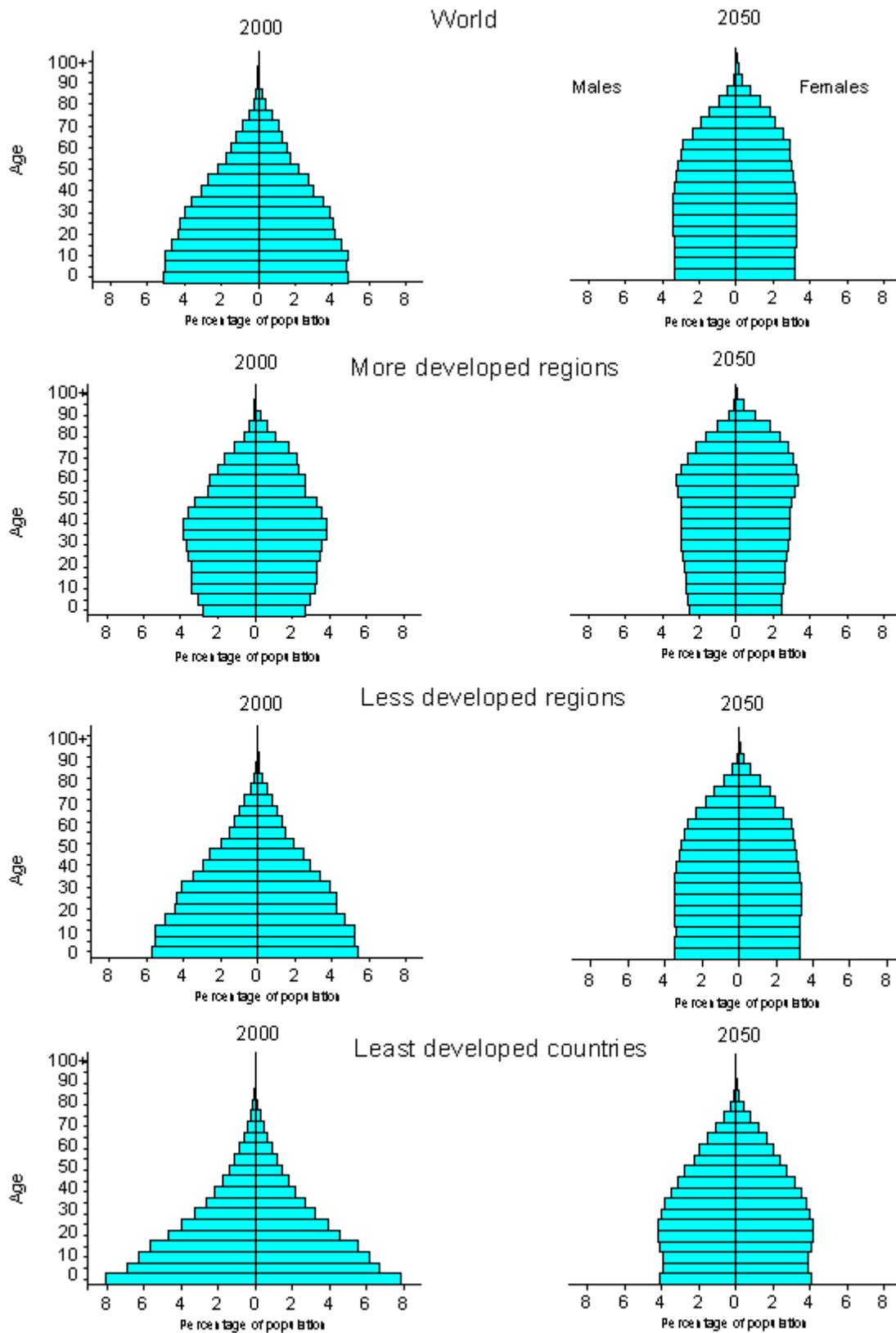
First of all let's look at the definition of the UN which is depicted below and leaves no doubt as to the seriousness of the issue.....

The Ageing of the World's Population



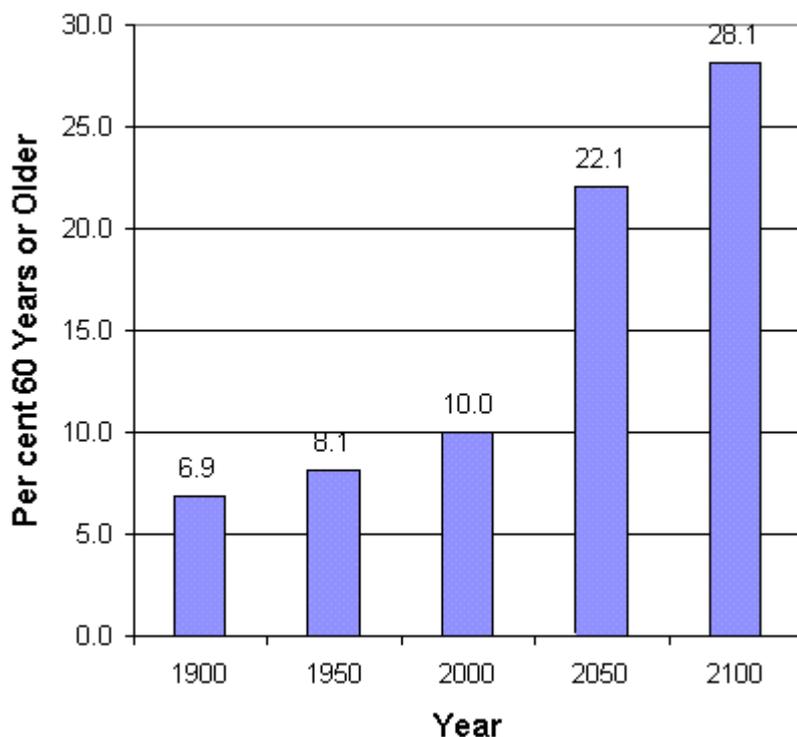
[Return to Ageing of the World's Population](#)

Figure 1. Population pyramids: age and sex distribution, 2000 and 2050.



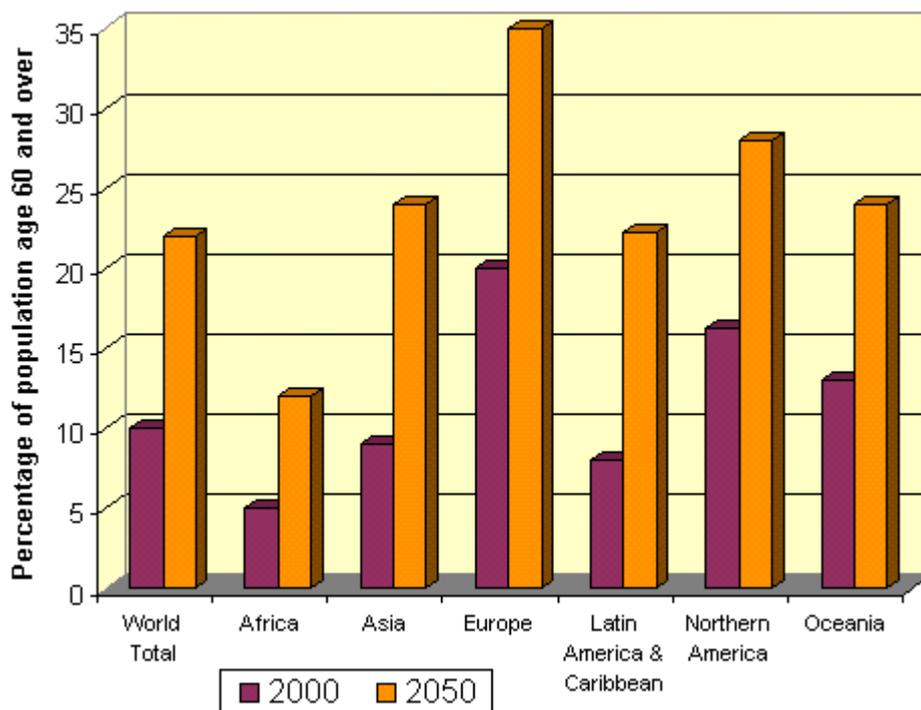
Source: *The Sex and Age Distribution of the World Populations: 1998 Revision, Volume II: Sex and Age* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.XIII.8), medium variant projections.

Figure 2: Three Centuries of World Population Ageing



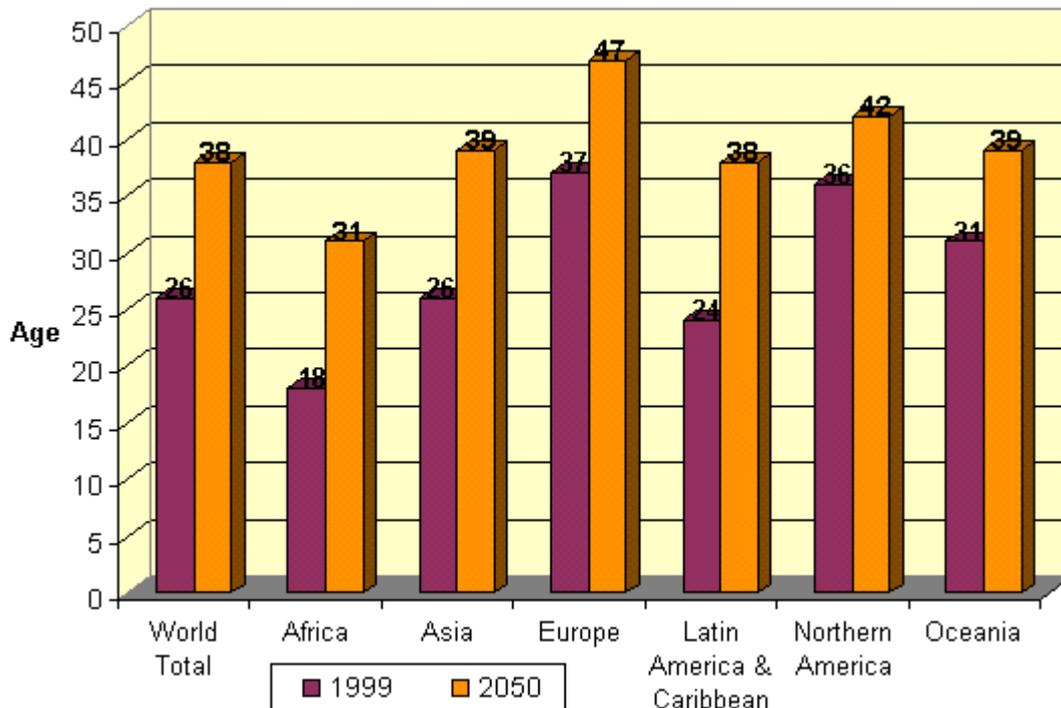
Source: *Long-Range World Population Projections: Based on the 1998 Revision*. The Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat

Figure 3: Percentage Increase in Age 60 and Over by Region, 2000-2050



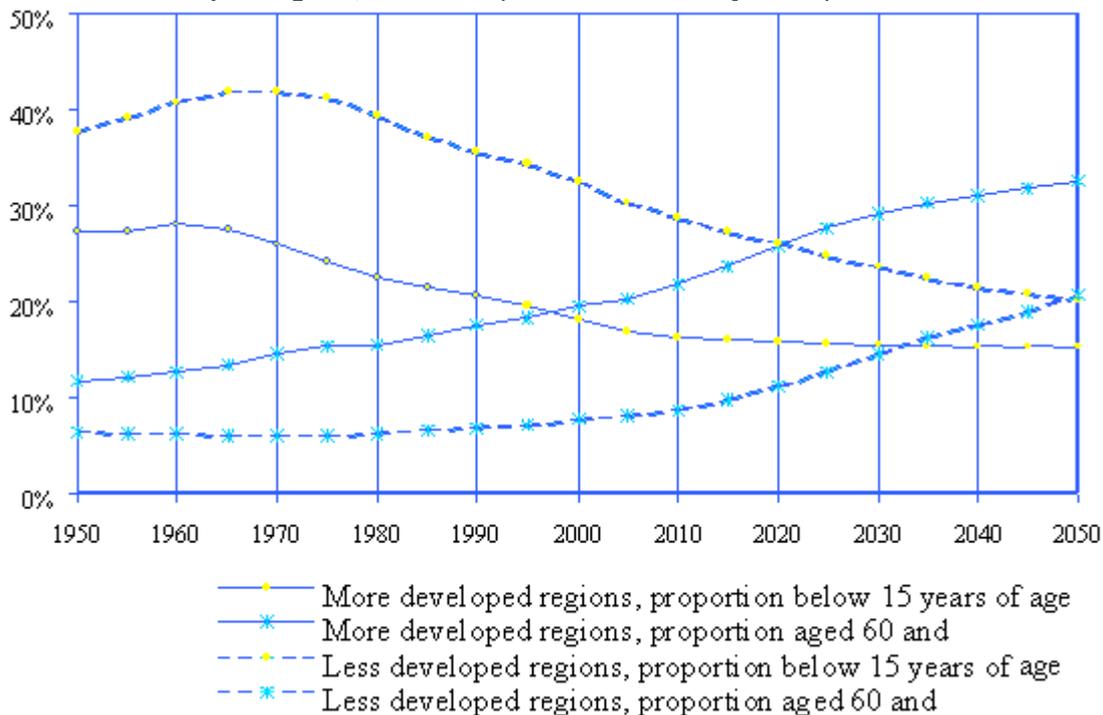
Source: *World Population Prospects, The 1998 Revision, Volume II: Sex and Age*. The Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat

Figure 4: Median Age by Region, 1999-2050



Source: *World Population Prospects, The 1998 Revision, Volume II: Sex and Age*. The Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat

Figure 5: Proportion of Total Population Aged 0-14 and 60 and Over. More and Less Developed Regions, 1950-2050. (Medium Variant Projections)



Source: *World Population Prospects, The 1998 Revision, Volume II: Sex and Age*. The Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat

Section 3. The priorities to be met according to the United Nations

The priorities are not indicated as such by the author of the present study but by the guidelines and recommendations agreed upon by the member States during the Vienna conference.

“II. Recommendations for action

A. Priority direction I: Older persons and development

16. Older persons must be full participants in the development process and also share in its benefits. No individual should be denied the opportunity to benefit from development.⁹”

Objective 1: Recognition of the social, cultural, economic and political contribution of older persons.

Actions

(a) Ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by promoting the implementation of human rights conventions and other human rights instruments, particularly in combating all forms of discrimination;

.....
(c) Provide opportunities, programmes and support to encourage older persons to participate or continue to participate in cultural, economic, political, social life and lifelong learning;

(d) Provide information and access to facilitate the participation of older persons in mutual self-help, intergenerational community groups and opportunities for realizing their full potential “; ¹⁰

⁹ <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/waa/a-conf-197-9a.htm> visitato il 12 Marzo 2004

¹⁰ ibidem

Chapter two. The initiatives in Italy

This plan concentrates now on the major theme under discussion, namely which structures provide Life Long Learning in Italy bearing in mind the fact that informal education has been singled out in this study to be a strategic tool to place Senior Citizens in the national system so that they achieve a full and active participation to the social, economic and political life of the country.

No judgements are passed here on the quality of the Italian initiatives. They all deserve praise also because they frequently were activated thanks to private efforts and voluntary work, mostly without any support on the part of the State or the local Administrations. We want just to describe in a schematic form the situation of the country with regard to these issues.

“.....the primary components of the traditional education have not connections with the informal education systems aimed at adultsthis area is populated with public and private organisations.....the level of educational consciousness is frequently very low.....the State, the counties and local and provincial administrations operate without having previously planned and without any coordination.....in the private and non commercial sector organisations are basically voluntary and in some areas of Italy one association vs. 7/800 inhabitants is active.....**up to now there has been no perception of the possibility of an integrated and coordinated management of initiatives on the part of the State or Regional authorities.**”¹¹

In consideration of the fact that the Italian population over 65 in Italy was equal to 10.646.874 units in 2001 (Census figures) and it is rapidly growing, the immediate consequence is that almost 19% of the population is not taken into account when it comes to educational issues.

In Italy the Universities of the Third Age started at the end of the Seventies early Eighties but the origins of this movement are much older:

*“An appropriate political climate for the evolution of an idea like U3A was established in France in 1968 when legislation was passed requiring universities to provide more community education.”*¹²

From these beginnings a new movement developed that soon split in two different models

*“Two distinctly different approaches to U3A have been successfully adopted by a number of countries. The original French model required U3As to be associated with traditional university systems. In contrast the British model, which developed some years later, is largely of a self-help kind with little or no support from external sources.”*¹³

¹¹ <http://www.kaapeli.fi-vsy/alice/cou/ita.html> consultato il 5 marzo 2004

¹² An International Perspective of the University of the Third Age - R. Swindell, J.Thompson September 1995 – www.U3A.org consultato il 17 Marzo 2004

¹³ Ibidem

In Italy only the first model developed. The U3As (to use an English acronym which serves the purpose) are schools which offer, at different times of the day, programmes of a classical nature, shyly are entering the world of informatics, concentrate a large part of the teaching time on hobbies and interests and also organize external activities.

As we will see further on they use teachers to impart the courses. The portrait of these institutions is varied geographically, structurally and for its educational offers. A look at the mission of these centres will help us to understand.

Section 1. The Identity card of the Universities for the Third Age in Italy

What are, where are they, what do they do and what is the mission of the U3As in Italy.

“The Universities of the Third Age recognised by the Regional authorities are set up and managed by associations, institutions and cultural foundations, cooperative unions, local Councils and Universities

Their institutional aims are:

- *Promote and spread culture among citizens*
- *Favour and ease the participation of elderly people in the social and cultural life of the place where they live.”¹⁴*

In addition to the above

“To reach their stated objectives (the U3As) every year organize new courses, seminars, researches and cultural initiatives which are precious occasions for learning as well as social enjoyment. The U3As recognized by the Regional Authorities must match precise requirements so as to guarantee the professional delivery of the courses and the quality of the services rendered. They enjoy the support of public funding.

The courses offered – hundreds of them – span a multitude of subjects from classic ones such as history of art and archaeology to technological issues such as informatics and the Web. Yoga , photography, painting and singing are equally included”¹⁵

“Every Regional Authority establishes general criteria and valid principles so that a University might be State recognized and claim money. The Legislations relevant to such funds are art. 42 and 49 of the Presidential Decree dated 24th July 1977. Above and beyond the individual differences and the different cases we can sketch a profile of the requested standards (for recognition)

- *regularly set up as associations, cultural organisations or operative sections of cultural bodies recognized by law and operating in the sector*
- *they must have regular courses – at least 6 – and a total no. of hours of 100 per year*
- *they must have a teaching body of graduated people (2/3rds of the total quorum) professional teachers either from traditional Universities or colleges*
- *they must be financially autonomous*
- *they must have a regular administrative structure*
- *they must adhere to a federation or associations of U3As of a national standing”¹⁶*

¹⁴ <http://www.intrage.it/rubriche/culturaetempolibero/universitagrave/universitagrave1/index.shtml>

Consultato il 14 Marzo 2004

¹⁵ ibidem

¹⁶ <http://www.intrage.it/rubriche/culturaetempolibero/universitagrave/universitagrave5/index.shtml>

consultato il 14 Marzo 2004

These few facts already offer a clear description of what the official U3As want to achieve. We are in fact discussing here organisations which are State recognized, but a lot of other centres which are not recognized escape these statistics.

Also, it must be pointed out that some of these Institutions, if matching the criteria set above, can ask to be financed by the Regional Authorities. Unfortunately not all Regional Authorities have passed appropriate laws to take care of such provisions. Therefore there is a fundamental difference from one regional Authority to the other one, and by consequence, from the possible funding of an Institution vs. another one which becomes also a matter of geographical location.

Subjects of the courses and related quality are various, as we have seen before. The table listed below gives a very precise idea of the location and distribution of such centres on the national territory.

Section two. The situation in Italy

Table 1. Centres of life long education in Italy, by Region ¹⁷

regions	enrolled	Active	centres	Courses	Teaching hours	teachers
PIEMONTE	16.445	16.445	23	1.781	21.520	660
VALLE D'AOSTA	400	450	1	15	600	15
LOMBARDIA	12.837	12.915	22	849	20.605	774
LIGURIA	1.183	1.193	5	87	2.195	107
TRENTINO	12.285	12.900	68	846	14.020	311
FRIULI -VENEZIA GIULIA	12.352	12.552	16	1.310	26.510	1.030
VENETO	10.048	10.148	47	1.090	18.943	917
EMILIA ROMAGNA	8.268	9.440	17	476	13.479	468
TOSCANA	6.404	6.956	19	261	7.102	203
MARCHE	2.591	2.621	7	241	5.207	340
UMBRIA	3.239	3.300	3	113	6.052	128
LAZIO	20.654	23.348	108	2.243	80.063	703
ABRUZZO	1.014	1.029	5	74	1.819	56
CAMPANIA	2.974	3.289	14	218	7.534	207
PUGLIA	1.011	1.011	7	167	2.603	187
BASILICATA	440	440	3	24	650	24
CALABRIA	580	600	4	44	1.370	107
SICILIA	1.219	1.460	21	108	3.447	220
SARDEGNA	3.541	3.541	11	147	2.189	50
Italia	116.285	122.288	398	10.009	233.158	5.792

¹⁷ http://www.fipec.it/Documenti/ArticoliFF.htm#_Toc494761497

Consultato il 14 Marzo 2004

“The table underestimates reality as we have not been able to find the data of all the most important cities in the different regions. In such cities normally 2 to 4 different centres exist. We feel therefore quite sure that the results describe only one third of the Italian reality . Therefore the 398 educational centres –the ones where the courses are held- must be in reality about 1,000 and the number of courses pass from 10.009 to about 30.000. It is also unfair to describe this reality only with statistics. The data allow us to see a picture of a complex reality and one frequently full of positive surprises!”¹⁸as Francesco Florenzano, President Upter Rome remarked.

From the table in question we can see that 122.228 people follow courses distributed unevenly on the Italian territory.

Lazio, Piemonte, Lombardia, Friuli, Trentino, Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Toscana and are at the top of the list for subscriptions but it is easy to notice the tremendous difference that exists between the number of enrolled students of the first Region, Lazio, and the enrollments of the other Regions at the top of the list.

By cross checking the data purely from a mathematical point of view, without any qualitative comment, other useful information can be discovered.

Lazio: on average each course has 10 students, courses last an average of 35.69 hours and the lecturers teach an average of 113.89 hours per year

Piemonte: on average each course has 9 students, courses last an average of 11 hours and the lecturers teach an average of 32.61 hours per year

Lombardia : on average each course has 15 students, courses last an average of 24.27 hours and the lecturer teach an average of 25.92 hours per year

Friuli: on average each course has 9 students, courses last an average of 20.24 hours and the lecturer teach an average of 25.74 hours per year

Trentino: on average each course has 15 students, courses last an average of 16.57 hours and the lecturer teach an average of 45 hours per year

Veneto: on average each course has 9 students, courses last an average of 17.38 hours and the lecturer teach an average of 20.66 hours per year

Emilia Romagna: on average each course has 19 students, courses last an average of 28.32 hours and the lecturer teach an average of 28.80 hours per year

Toscana: on average each course has 26 students, courses last an average of 27.21 hours and the lecturer teach an average of 35 hours per year

¹⁸ Ibidem

As we mentioned before these data have no qualitative value. Nevertheless they offer a key to understand this reality which can be summed up as follows:

- Apart from the anomaly of Lazio, the truly active realities from a numerical point of view are concentrated in the North of Italy
- They are uneven in the number of courses, individual teaching hours and number of students
- The Northern regions, also at the top of the list, account for 53% (61.187 units) of the overall national student population in this age bracket.

Northern Regions are therefore the most important ones within the national framework and obviously there is interest for these initiatives in the Regions accounted.

Section 3. Where is the State action in this picture?

It is impossible to give a precise answer to this question.

As we have seen in the previous sections the single Regional Authorities were delegated the power to pass laws and autonomously manage this particular area, giving or not giving help and support to those structures active in favour of Senior Citizens or promoting non conventional education which moves away from the official Institutions.

In one of the many articles written by Francesco Florenzano, President of Upter Rome and an expert gerontologist he states:

“The Regions which offer most support are the ones that chose to pass a law to discipline the matter and its financial choices. Table no.2 show which Regions adopted such law and in what year. Nevertheless other Regions, not supplied with appropriate legislation, have made allowances in their budget for these institutions. Examples are Tuscany, Basilicata and Sicily. It must also be acknowledged that many Provincial authorities have promoted life long education granting money towards it. Also some U3As which are registered as non profit organisations get minimal funding thanks to the relevant law.

In total the contributions the Italian Regional authorities give to U3As are more than 4 billion lire (2 Million euros today).”¹⁹

The complete table can be seen in the following page.

With reference to this project, as it is based in Lombardia, the absence of any funding is conspicuous. The fact becomes even more remarkable considering that the Senior population of the Region is of a large size and also considering the fact that Lombardia is the third Region in Italy for availability of centres for informal and vocational education.

Some conclusions might be drawn at this stage of our study:

- a) Agencies from all over the world define the demographic changes taking place now as a “demographic revolution”
- b) The planet is growing very old very fast. The oldest countries in the world are Japan and Italy, followed closely by other countries.
- c) Being top rank in this situation should give Japan and Italy a strategic advantage in order to adjust the pace and economics of a nation to new assets (2020 being the date in which the overall world population split into two segments where the 65 plus will weight more than the other)
- d) Italy could really become a “National Lab” searching solutions that might prove helpful to other countries in adjusting with a more bearable shock to this huge change.
- e) Italian Senior Citizens are a hugely growing number. There is no attention to their needs and they are considered outcasts and a burden. The sad part is that they consider themselves in the same way.

¹⁹ http://www.fipec.it/Documenti/ArticoliFF.htm#_Toc494761497
consultato il 13 Marzo 2004

- f) Efforts should be made on the part of Government and Institutions to change this state of affairs. Instead nothing is being done to change this situation that gets conveniently ignored.
- g) This study wants to address only two aspects of this situation: one is educational and the second one is the consequent empowerment of Senior Citizens. These two issues are nevertheless closely connected with the greater picture and there is no doubt that, should Senior Citizens appreciate their importance and weight within the economies of the country, massive reactions would take place within the overall economy of Italy.
- h) If the Senior Citizens now present and active on the Italian territory were to take stock of their strength in terms of votes, purchasing power and opinion and join forces the Nation would have to change somewhat the approach to Third Age.
- i) There are no choices but follow the indications of large and powerful assemblies of nations such as the Vienna Conference, Madrid conference etc. and proceed along those guidelines.
- j) The real and deep change must be one of attitude. First of all it has to take place at Senior Citizens level and then be spread to the entire community: to be 65 or more still means to be active, to have rights, duties and obligations like any other citizen. It means to be part of the present and the future, influence it and change it. The secret for success is to steer events not be subject to them.

Table 2. Regional legislation on the U3A passed in 1989. Financing amount expressed in Million lire.²⁰

Region	year	Law no. and date	Budget
Friuli Venezia Giulia	1989	Legge Regionale 11 dicembre 1989, n. 1. Interventi a sostegno delle attività delle Università della terza età in Friuli Venezia Giulia.	500 milioni di lire (1991)
Emilia Romagna	1990	Legge Regionale 5 maggio 1990, n. 42. Norme per la promozione dell'attività delle Università della terza età in Emilia Romagna.	300 milioni di lire (1998)
Marche	1991	Legge Regionale 29 luglio 1991, n. 93. Interventi per la promozione delle Università della terza età nelle Marche.	600 milioni di lire (1997)
Umbria	1991	Legge Regionale 9 agosto 1991, n. 22. Norme per la promozione e lo sviluppo delle Università della terza età e dei Centri sociali e culturali per anziani in Umbria.	300 milioni di lire (1997)
Sardegna	1992	Legge Regionale 22 giugno 1992, n. 12. Interventi a sostegno delle attività delle Università della terza età in Sardegna.	650 milioni di lire (1998)
Valle d'Aosta	1993	Legge Regionale 26 maggio 1993, n. 52. Autorizzazione di spesa per l'anno 1993 (...) per il funzionamento della cooperativa culturale regionale "Università valdostana della terza età".	30 milioni di lire (1997)
Lazio	1993	Legge Regionale del 20 settembre 1993, n. 53. Università della terza età.	250 milioni di lire (1998)
Veneto	1995	Legge Regionale del 30 marzo 1995, n. 17. Interventi a favore delle attività svolte dalle Università Popolari e della Terza Età.	300 milioni di lire (1998)
Abruzzo	1996	Legge Regionale del 11 settembre 1996, n. 86. Interventi a sostegno delle attività delle Università Popolari e della Terza Età.	70 milioni di lire (1996)
Piemonte	1997	Legge Regionale n. 59 del 24.11.97. Sostegno alle Università popolari e della terza età.	800 milioni di lire (1998)

²⁰ Ibidem

PART TWO: THE GREY POWER EXPERIENCE CENTRE

Section 1. Foreword

LIFE LONG LEARNING, CONTINUING EDUCATION, SELF HELP, KNOWLEDGE SHARING, FORMAL AND NON FORMAL EDUCATION, ADULT EDUCATION , ON GOING EDUCATION, LEARNING IN LATER LIFE.....

The list of terms and definitions could go on much longer. The abundance of nouns that stand for the concept of “Learning throughout life” is noticeable in the English language in spite of the all Anglo Saxon love for brevity. Truly the reason for this wealth of terms lies in the fact that the English speaking world has always paid the utmost interest to this particular sector of education which is undertaken voluntarily, purely for the sake of learning and without any particular interest in official qualifications .

The great divide between the Northern countries approach and the Mediterranean approach to this issue is enormous and it stems from a completely different view of the Third Age . The American attitude to this issue cannot really be discussed owing to the fact that the Third Age in the USA is now considered a splendid phase in life where people, learn, do, love and enjoy every aspect of life with an unsurpassed enthusiasm and incredible vitality. It is almost impossible to compare this attitude with our sad view of the Third Age.

In England, Sweden and Germany and in other Northern European countries the attitude towards the over 65 population is not one of veiled pity, not one of mere support –unless there is a need for it-. Senior Citizens are seen for what they are, and they do not feel inferior or inadequate. They are also much better prepared to this phase of life –much more autonomous and sometime solitary - as their off springs left home at the age of 18 mostly to attend University. In Latin countries children live with the parents for very long periods of time and they get out mostly when they get married thus creating an involuntary sense of dependence of the parents which leaves them in even greater difficulty when they finally go. That is normally the time when parents are getting to their Third Age thus adjusting much less easily to new circumstances.

Mediterranean grandparents live for their grandchildren. Northern grandparents have a more balanced attitude: they love them but have not made them the only reason for their existence. This means that they look for other interesting things to do.

In Northern countries it is a common sight to see Senior Citizen going dancing, frequenting fitness clubs, and why not falling in love again..... Southern countries do not disguise their unease at seeing Seniors enjoying themselves.

Northern countries encourage older people to approach new technologies, Southern countries do not. A very interesting study made by Forrester confirms that:
“ Southern European countries such as France, Italy and Spain are those which show a greater growth of the “internet population” **although from this trend Senior Citizens are excluded**”²¹

This study does not aim at offering a simplistic version of issues which were extensively studied by sociologists, psychologists, gerontologists etc. Some facts though cannot go unnoticed. **Senior Citizens in Italy are not seen with the dignity, respect and worth they deserve , therefore they consider themselves in the same way.**

The purpose of this project and the reason why we ask and actively seek help and support is that we want to offer Senior Citizens not only a way to continue their education but also offer them reasons and motivations to encourage them to retrieve their personal identity so that they can actively go back to contributing to the Country prosperity and progress .

This project is apolitical, non confessional and nothing in it can prevent anyone from participating actively. It calls for the support and endorsement of the Public Institutions and from financial sponsorship from anyone who believes in it. It will go ahead even if the Institutions will deny such support and eventually we believe they will benefit from it like everybody else. Companies willing to listen and contribute in whichever way they can are more than welcome.

Most of all the project needs to be understood, shared and publicized. After all we are working for our own benefit as one day we all will be old.

The words of a famous and wise man have been chosen to close this section..... they should make us think.

***“I prefer old age to the alternative”
Maurice Chevalier, Remark 1962***

²¹ http://i-dome.giallo.it/statistiche-in-pillole/pagina.phtml?_id_articolo=5386
consultato il 16 Marzo 2004

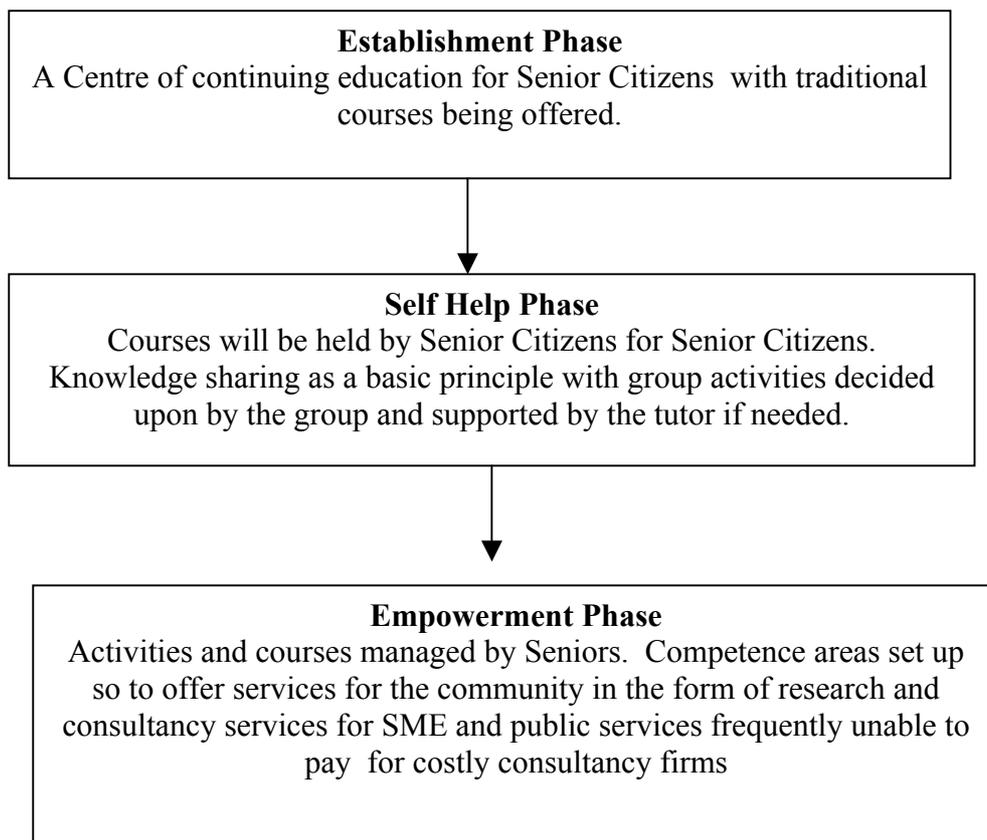
Section 2.

The Grey Power Experience Centre

Labels do not matter that much but in our case they are important. With this name we want to underline the willingness to differentiate from the model of the Italian U3A as derived from the French model. This because we are convinced that the difference will be made by a difference in the way in which courses will be imparted as well as other issues.

We want to start a poly functional centre and the project's difference will reflect the difference in the cultural stance. This structure should not just offer courses but gradually we will organize meetings, seminars and centres of competences so as to offer a real contribution to the community. This is an easily duplicable model and it has all the possibilities to expand on the national territory.

To become an innovative concern the Centre will change gradually from a structure which is familiar and well known to the Italian citizen (a traditional U3A) to one which is new and more difficult to achieve (a Centre of Experience). The development could happen thus :



The establishment phase

In this phase it will be advisable to keep to structures and modalities which are more familiar to the Italian Senior Citizens as they resemble at least in appearance the way of operating of traditional U3A. The reason for this choice is a simple one. It is difficult to transplant foreign models in a traditional and rigid culture like the Italian one which would not be ready to understand the change. This means that in the beginning phase the difference will be one of contents more than set up and traditional teaching will go ahead whilst some recruiting will be done among the public of those Seniors who are willing and interested to contribute more fully to the project.

The self help phase

In this second phase courses taught by Senior Citizens will go side by side with other ones taught by traditional lecturers. Activities will be carried out by groups and knowledge will be shared more than imparted. Each member of the group will have to actively contribute and share with others. Typical of this phase is the research activity managed by a group on the most diverse issues with a final general gathering and the presentation of the findings in front of their peers or any other public.

The change in attitude will start at this point when “students” realize that they can truly play a very active part in the process of teaching and learning so that, as Peter Laslett states “who teaches shall learn and who learns shall teach”

The empowerment phase

The most ambitious one and the one that gives a sense to our project. If we lead this project carefully and those willing to take part into it work towards our objective we could enable Senior Citizens to offer services and products to the community by using their competence.

An example might help the reader in understanding the concept: suppose that within the centre we have a retired bank employee, a lawyer and a land surveyor. These people could decide to start a project by joining their respective areas of expertise. This could result in the production of a manual aimed at future real estate owners. The manual would contain a series of tips and information cautioning people on the actual purchasing of a home, telling them what to look for, advising them on the legal requirements and helping them avoiding bad deals –a common occurrence in this country. Furthermore the manual could be offered to the Regional Administration as part of the services offered to citizens.

Other Senior Citizens might want to enter into consultancy activities in favour of SMEs that would need the service but cannot pay the astronomical fees frequently asked for such services. Also the public services could derive some benefits from this activity : in Norfolk the local Gas Board commissioned members of the local U3A a research on the usage of utility off peak times which apparently was more than well received.

This is our final objective. We envisage a School which develops into a Centre where people come and do work that they have voluntarily chosen to carry out for different purposes. This is how the community would benefit from the contribution of Senior Citizens who, in turn, would benefit themselves from their activities and not just in terms of personal satisfaction but also in terms of earning (now impossible owing to additional massive taxation on pensions received) thus relieving pressure on the State. It is tremendously difficult to change a system but there could be alternative and very successful ways to compensate Seniors for their efforts without necessarily having to penalize their pensions.

The project starts off at Leibniz Open University, pilot centre for this project and from here it might spread on the territory.

Section 3. The Organisation

Grey Power Italia will be a non profit organisation.

To start off we need the following:

Communication:

An essential component of the launch of this organisation, the way to spread the initiative in a correct manner. This means:

- Be endorsed by reliable and trustworthy organisations. Endorsements cost nothing but do a lot for this type of initiative as they vouch of their correctness and good intents.
- Present ourselves well to public and private institutions to get support
- Present ourselves correctly to the press so that curiosity is aroused
- Equally present ourselves correctly to associations and other organisations that might see in this initiative a positive cooperation
- Find testimonials. The right face, the right image will do for our cause more than all the rest.
- Talk to all those who are interested, spread the idea, search for exposure.

Funds

Usually the sore point. We need funds like anyone else.

- We have a Centre thanks to the intelligence and sensitivity of the people in Leibniz. That is a step forward.
- We look for sponsors. Of any kind without any preclusion.
- The Organisation will be set up in the form of an association and we will get minimal funding from subscribers.
- It is our intention to explore the possibility of getting European funding. The EU guidelines heavily promote this kind of initiative and we hope to get some support.
- Regional authorities will be requested to contribute although they already denied help to the author of this study.....

Human Resources

We need people as much as money. In particular we need lecturers at first who are willing to dedicate sometime for next to nothing as we will not be able to pay fees. We also need people who promote this initiative and in the short period if the Centre takes off we need some support staff. The staff in Leibniz is more than willing to contribute. We welcome anyone who wants to help along these guidelines.

In the end

Empowerment is what we look for. We are perfectly aware that it will be a long and slow process and one full of hurdles. The State itself will not help unless some of the fiscal pressure applied to retired people who want to work relents. We see it as a necessary step to take in order to sustain the economy of a country that will not make it otherwise. It is our sincere hope that this realization happens before it is too late.

CONCLUSIONS

“In the lifelong-learning archipelago, the youthful segment seems currently favoured in terms of financial investments, number of interventions and population reached..... For the adult segment, it is necessary to distinguish continuing training, where technical-occupational and transferable skills are acquired in the workplace, from adult education or learning, where the basic skills necessary for active citizenship are acquired in non-working or formal situations (Permanent Territorial Centres and evening courses in Grade II educational institutions) or non-formal ones (for example universities for senior citizens).....”

Lifelong-learning interventions have also had considerable success in the non-formal segment, since Italy now has 741 universities for senior citizens, with 180,132 people enrolled in 2000-2001.”²²

“More in general, it is considered that the non-formal sector acts as a powerful driving force to re motivate people and steer them towards pathways. It is very common for adults and older people who have participated in training pathways to be induced to enrol in other courses in later years. This explains the success of universities for senior citizens.....”²³

This study wanted to offer an overview of the demographic revolution that will hit the planet in the next 20/50 years.

All the text quoted in the study and all the ones which were consulted to compile it lead towards the same conclusion: they indicate and address the problem of the ageing of the planet as an absolute priority. Italy and Japan are at the forefront of this revolution and they could become real living labs to experiment solutions and lead the way ahead.

Italy has not caught on to this fact and in this country the Third Age is seen as a sad moment of decline and one for which there are no solution but abandon, lack of concern and care. This should not be so. Senior Citizens are not only citizens like any other but are also a voting force and they possess purchasing power. In a hyper marketed society such as ours this idea has not yet developed, a fact which is surprising to see when one considers the hords of marketers trying to please American Senior citizens in any possible way whilst their Japanese counterparts are actively opening up stores dedicated to the Third Age that sell more than those dedicated to young people. In Europe only Northern countries are pursuing the right path. Other countries do not seem to want to consider the issue. This statement is a provocation and it is meant to be one. We only hope it serves a purpose.

²² Implementing Lifelong Learning Strategies in Europe: Progress report on the follow-up to the 2002 Council resolution *Reply to the Commission questionnaire- The European Union, Directorate General for Education and Culture*

²³ Censis, *36° Rapporto sulla situazione sociale del Paese*, 2002

Our objective is to make the difference and show that something can be done. If we are successful the idea will spread and it might improve the life of many.

Our deepest gratitude goes to all those who will support us.

Daniela Venturi MBA
Milan, March 2004

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