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How young people experience elderly's use of digital technologies in everyday life

Leopoldina Fortunati

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to investigate how young people experience the practices of use of everyday life technologies by their grandparents and the elderly in general. In other words, our purpose is to look at elderly through the lens of youth. We choose the elderly as social group to investigate because in contemporary societies elderly increasingly matter. According to Fred Pearce, the UN's population the projections, which represent the standard source for demographic estimates, show that there are around 600 million people aged 65 or older alive today. That is in itself remarkable, although the percentage of elderly in respect to the total population accounts to 8%, which is not that different to what it was a few decades ago.

The world of elderly people is subject to several changes: nowadays, they tend to live longer, stay healthy longer, to be wealthier, and to have more education and time to spend than in the past (Kearney, 2013). Thanks to the media and the Internet, they can keep themselves updated and be informed about latest innovations and news. Finally, many elderlies are now experiencing the fourth age and, for some aspects like the income, they are in a better position than mature adults. According to Thomas Piketty (2014), the average wealth of 80-year-olds French is 134% higher than that of 50- to 59-year-olds, the highest gap since the 1930s.

In Italy, in 2014, from 55 years, in respect to the other age groups, the use of the Internet is lower: in the group 55-64 it stands at 46% (about 3.7 million people do not use the Internet), and after 64 years the share of users stands at 12, 5% (therefore approximately 10.7 million non-users) (ISTAT, 2015). After 55 years, there is still a large gender difference in the use of the Internet (31% for the males vs. 17% for the females). A worrying assessment concerns the rates related to the reasons of the lack of access to the Internet. For the oldest age group (65 and over) clearly prevails the lack of knowledge of the Internet (40% of responses), which, however, increases its weight percentage with increasing age.

In general, the changes involving the elderly are interrelated with the changes that involve all the generations (Sarrica at al., 2014; Petrovcic et al., 2015). In fact, the whole world of generations is currently undergoing a radical turmoil: for example, the extent to which young people from 18 to 24 years old should be considered youth or adolescents is an open question (Fortunati, Taipale & de Luca, forthcoming). An important aspect that concerns the elderly is the increasing number of them who live alone, because their young and adult children live away from them (Chattopadhyay and Marsh 1999). The proliferation of nuclear households (Gutmann 1987) and the erosion of traditional social norms, among which what Chinese call "filial piety", (Savelsberg, 2002) concur to make elderly' life difficult, globally. For example, Cheung & Yui-Huen Kwan (2009) found than even in China, where filial piety is one of the cultural bulwarks of Chinese society, now, when Chinese adult children take up jobs and live in places far away from their parents, filial piety is reduced (Sheng and Settles 2006; Silverstein, Bengtson and Litwak 2006; Ye, Sarrica, Fortunati, 2014).

In this new context, the diffusion and adoption of new technologies have contributed to generate further changes. One of the most striking changes is that the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next one has changed direction in some ways. Young people are now those who teach their parents and grandparents how to use digital devices (Lin,). This change, which has been already investigated in several research projects, has had a substantial impact on the prestige of young people inside the family.

Recently, Kennedy et al. examined the gendered distribution of expertise in the performance of 'digital housekeeping' required to maintain a networked home" (2015, p.408). They showed how the different and gendered role regarding the access and use to ICTs combines inside the household and expresses cooperation among the different members. This is a quite interesting glimpse to how digital families develop a cooperation that contrasts the digital divide. The digital

divide, in fact, involves the individuals belonging to different social groups inside and outside the house, but then inside the household they are required to overcome the digital divide through a more or less close and continue cooperation.

In this context, the diffusion and adoption of new technologies have in turn created further changes: now are **young people** who **teach** their parents and grandparents how to use the digital devices; the distribution of the digital expertise in the performance of **digital housekeeping** inside the family is not **only gendered but also intergenerational**, this change, discussed by time, has as consequence the increase of the **prestige of young people** inside the family and also the performance of more immaterial labor.

Here I argue that the distribution of this digital expertise in the performance of digital housekeeping inside the family is also intergenerational. Up to date, this kind of intergenerational solidarity was debated mostly as part of the teaching/learning process when this has changed direction from young people to the elderly. I would like to stress here the relevance of considering this process inside the context of the immaterial labour carried out in the households. Digital housekeeping, which is necessary to maintain a networked home, is one of the domestic tasks that has entered young people's agenda. The intergenerational digital housekeeping, however, could be a temporary task, at least in the countries where an increasing number of well-educated people is entering old age.

But this has not been the only reason to carry out this research. Other reasons are that the world of elderly people has been subject to several, different changes: they have more health, wealth, education and time to spend freely than in the past; thanks to the media and the Internet, they can update themselves and being informed about the novelties and the news, many elderlies nowadays experience the fourth age.

For several aspects, the elderly today is often in a better position in respect, for example, to mature adults (Sarrica at al., 2014; Petrovcic et al., 2015). The changes involving the elderly are interrelated of course with the changes that involve all the generations. Given the rise in average life, now we distinguish three different groups of elderly: young elderly, elderly, and Elders. But more in general it is the whole world of generations that is subject to a radical turmoil: [for example, today to what extent young people from 18 to 24 years old may be considered youth or adolescents is an open question (Fortunati, Taipale & de Luca, forthcoming).]

The paper is organized as follows: the next section will be devoted to the description of the methodology applied in this study. Then the third part will be dedicated to the illustration of the results. A final section will include the discussion of the results and some final remarks.

Method

The aim of this paper is to investigate how young people experience the practices of use of technology by the elderly over the last four years. On the whole, I involved almost one hundreds of students in this research. In 2012 I asked a selected group (N=23) of undergraduate studying for a Bachelor in Multimedia Sciences and Technologies at the University of Udine to describe their experiences in a written essay, a method which was already successfully applied in several recent research studies (Fortunati & Vincent, 2014; Fortunati, Taipale, Farinosi, 2015; Taipale, 2014; Farinosi, Lim & Roll, 2015). Four years later, in 2016 I asked a group of 86 students, who was expected to be particularly sensitive to the issue of digital technologies as understanding their features and functionality is part of their course syllabus. I invited the students to act only as key informants who observed their grandparents' ICI use and to reflect, as privileged observers, on how elderly use new technologies. However, the sample of youth included in the study does not consist of students per se, but of youth who have been recruted for being part of a family that includes elderly. Perhaps the essays should not be considered as windows unto "reality" but as articulations of experiences, attitudes, emotion and behaviour. Those categories with relatively low frequency but possible importance to the clarification of some points of our analysis were also retained and discussed, as Silverman (1997) advises. This allowed us to trace a conceptual map of participants' experience of how elderly make use of the digital technologies

in their everyday life and to build a classification scheme providing an analytical description of the most important issues. This style of the content analysis is a notably non-intrusive and flexible methodology (McNeill and Chapman, 2005). Students were not supplied with any other instruction on how to write about this issue, as our purpose was to collect their spontaneous thoughts. The decision to develop a research tool with this feature was motivated by the will to have an instrument minimally influenced by the interaction between the researcher and the object of study. From a formal point of view, the texts obtained in this way usually allow more self-expression and spontaneity of content than a classical interview. Qualitative content analysis has then been applied to assess the texts: they were broken down into discourse categories in order to capture the most relevant discursive frames (Altheide, 1996). The category frequencies were calculated and the most frequently occurring categories singled out.

Results

The results emerging from these interviews concern mainly some areas of interest that I report below.

There are elderly and elderly

Often the discriminant is between the elderly who have familiarized with the new technologies during their work life and those who have spent much of their lives without encountering digital technologies. There is elderly who are at ease with new technologies and others who are resistant.

There are also differences within the elderly: the grand olds have of course specific needs. Chiara declares:

> *I live with my grandmother who is 96 old since I was born. In her everyday life the most important problem is the DTT, because sometimes it happens that because of bad weather or some other difficulty in receiving a clean signal the channel programming is bust. As a result, she not being able to reprogram the television and cannot follow the programs in her favorite channels, such as Telechiara, RAI 1 and Channel 4.*

The elderly in these essays is depicted at their ease with the analogue technologies such as the old media (e.g. the radio) and the domestic appliances (washing machine, iron, and oven). Thus, elderly's problem is not the technology in itself but the digital technologies. In effect, they tend to treat the digital technologies as they were analogue (with the DTT they look always at the same channels and programs; they use the smartphone only to make and receive mobile calls, etc.). With their basic use they simplify the technological artefact, de-digitalizing it.

What is problematic for the elderly in the digital technologies? From these essays two different reflections emerge. According to Claudio P. one of the problems is that the digital technologies are speed while the rhythm of the elderly is slow. Differently from the analogue instruments that had few and very simple key button to make them work, digital technologies require a precise path to be used. This shift towards a lack of immediacy in their use and an increased complexity of the use is what is problematic for the elderly.

Then the elders have of course specific needs. Chiara S. declares:

> *Since when I was born, I live with my grandmother who is 96 old. In her everyday life the most important problem is the DTT, because sometimes it happens that the channel programming is bust because of the bad weather or some other difficulty in receiving a clean signal. As a result, not being able to reprogram the television she cannot follow the programs in her favorite channels, such as Telechiara, RAI 1 and Channel 4.*

Another problem is the use of the mobile phone.

Manuele DM. reports that the cousin of his grandfather who is 91 uses the computer to make economic research, given that he always worked in a bank.

The practices of use of information and communication technologies
According to Giulia C., her grandparents use the digital technologies in a very limited and repetitive way, because they do not have energy to invest in learning and adapting to novelties. By contrast, Alberto C. stresses that the question is not the lack of energy, but of interest. He reports that

> *His aunt learned in a short time to use Skype and Facebook, maybe better than a young person, to stay in contact with her children who were been transferred far from home.*

A different perception of the Zeitgeist
Living requires the capacity to be aware and to deal effectively with the changes of the course of life as well as the perception of the continuous transformation of the Zeitgeist. Two different processes –one psychological and the other sociological- intertwine here. Here, our interest goes towards the second, as in many elderlies the perception of the Zeitgeist deadens. Massimo DR. points out that the elderly often does not feel the need to update the technologies they have. He writes:

> *My grandfather has a mobile phone that has a decade. He uses it to keep in contact with friends. In addition to make and receive calls, he is able to read SMSs, but not to answer or write his owns. The technologies that the elderly have are old because they become old with them*.

In addition, there is not the same symbolic for the various generations. Elderly seems to not attribute the same symbolic to the new technologies than the other age groups. For young and adults, the new technologies represent a «window on the world», a way to be in tune with the zeitgeist. On the contrary, according to several essays, for this elderly the new technologies represent a way to feel youth. Chiara De P. for example reveals that:

My grandparents own a mobile phone each for two years. At the beginning they asked me how to send messages or simply to call. They have learnt quickly, maybe because they were really motivated or to "feel young".

Gender issues
There are gender differences about the propensity towards different types of technologies: women are more familiar and at ease with the domestic appliances and men are maybe more with the digital technologies.

> *My maternal grandmother, writes Mariateresa M., is 82 years old and has a good relationship with technology, especially for household appliances. She knows very well how to use the dishwasher, washing machine, microwave oven and vacuum cleaner. Yesterday I asked my grandmother if she would be interested in learning how to use computers and, to my surprise, she said yes. I think she is perfectly capable to do it, with a little patience and lots of training.*

Another interesting grandmother is that depicted by Stefano C., who reports:

> *on one side, my grandmother, housewife, is moderately clever and curious about the communication tools; on the other, my grandfather, bank employee now retired, is almost totally unprepared to use the most modern technologies. My grandmother tries a real fun in driving a car, reads many books, know well how to use the technologies of the house (telephone, television, washing machine, dishwasher, microwave, etc.). She has also a mobile phone, which with she is able to call, send messages, take pictures, put the alarm clock and so on. On the other hand, she does not know to use almost for nothing a computer and is not able to solve problems related to poor tuning of the digital terrestrial channels.*

Simone C. recounts:
"My grandmother is 96 and is a very lucid and intelligent person. She read the newspaper every day, follows the television and is attentive to all the news. She uses a mobile phone for years and a bit even the tablet to see my photos. Some months ago she amazed me: she asked me to teach her how to use computers and the Internet because she wants to keep up with the times and wants to see the world that she has never seen in her life since she only worked."

Not always, a more limited use of new technologies concerns old women. Stefano C. in fact says:

> *While my grandmother, although she has always worked as housewife, is capable and curious towards the communication tools, my grandfather, who is a retired bank employee is almost unprepared to use the new technologies*.

On the same vein, Alberto A. writes: "*my grandfather was a skilled craftsman, and no one would have imagined how much difficult would have been to teach him to make a mobile phone call. My grandmother, on the contrary, has been much faster to learn how to use the mobile phone*."

Also, according to Claudio L., his two grandmothers are more proactive towards technologies, especially the mobile phone.

Francesco B. reports that

> *his grandmother realized the need to have a mobile phone when she believed that the only way to talk to children and grandchildren was to call them at home, via mobile phone. But when she realized that she could call them by using the landline, her mobile phone became a knick-knack*.

Stefano C., for example, reports that his grand mother

> *having seen that he owns a Nintendo console DS for playing videogames asked him if she could try to use it, proposing some videogames that he didn't know and that she had discovered thanks to TV advertising. By contrast, my grandfather has a mobile phone, but it does not use it, has a computer but he often prefers to use a writing machine for making documents.*

In these essays, the first comparison is between the grandparents by father with those by mother. Matteo S. writes.

My grandfather by mother likes to use the computer (he has two of them: a Notebook 15" and a Netbook) to write documents, prepare labels, but what is more important to ***play various card games****. In addition to the computers, my grandfather (85 years old) owns a mobile phone, which is more advanced than mine. He uses it to make and receive calls and sporadically to* ***read some SMS****. Sometimes, however, it happens that the message folder contains even a dozen of unread messages.*

He also has learned by himself how to use the DTT (Digital Terrestrial Television). My grandmother (85 years old) uses with great ease domestic appliances such as oven, washing machine and iron, devices that I would have some difficulties to use with the same ease, while her relationship with devices such as stereo, television, mobile phone, and air conditioner is quite problematic. To resolve the problem, she writes the fundamental instructions to make them work.

> *On the contrary, my grandparents by father use the DTT, radios and mobile phones without being too concerned about learning new functions.*

Of course, these essays suggest contrasting data. According to Riccardo M.,

> *a certain resistance on the part of his grandmother towards the mobile depends on the fact that this device has been 'imposed' to her for any emergencies and therefore remains in her eyes a big unknown. Despite being a model specifically designed for the elderly, she only uses its basic functions (making and receiving calls). Instead, she has acquired a certain mastery in the use of television and the various remote-control functions as she makes a strong use of it.*

Alex O. reports that

> *Despite living in a small town of just over one thousand inhabitants, both my maternal grandparents have welcomed with open arms any type of technology that would facilitate their life. They know how to use the phone, the digital decoder and appliances.*
>
> *In particular, my grandfather still works as a surveyor (despite more than 70 years) and, as soon as they started to spread the projects realized on the computer, had ADAPTED to the new working techniques to stay on the market; Now, after many years of use, he has become proficient in using the computer like any other young person.*

According to Elena L.,

> *If my grandfather understands that a technology can be useful to him, then he strives to understand it and can learn quickly to use it enough. This happened with the microwave. Now he knows all its buttons and functions because they come in handy every day to cook.*

Morena C. reports that "*my grandfather interacts badly with technological innovations, while my grandmother tries her best to use them*".

The long tail of domestication

In the last decades, many studies have adopted the domestication theory (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996; Haddon 2001) as a point of reference to explore users' role in making sense of and appropriating new media in veryday life. But, rightly, in a personal communication in 2012 Maria Bakarijeva asked:

> What happens to the domesticators once the domesticated technologies have become deeply and intimately incorporated and inscribed into the spaces and rhythms of their daily lives? Do activities, relationships and roles in the household remain fundamentally the same, or may be some cultural and even civilizational changes take hold? Does the private sphere retain its basic structure, or does it undergo a significant re-configuration?

While these questions are more than legitimate to understand the post-domestication world, in the case of elderly they are not the rightest ones. Elderly in fact is still domesticating ICTs in their everyday life with some progress and some resistance. The progress is under the eyes of all: as we mentioned before, the most recent surveys show that the use of the mobile phone among elderly increases at a very quick pace and the computer follows close behind (Eurobarometer,). However, the elderly resist against the new technologies for some very good reasons. They were not introduced to the new media until late in their life. This means that they can demonstrate to themselves that it is possible to live without these technologies, as they constructed a life wherein ICTs did not have a place. Furthermore, when with the advent of these technologies the patterns of personal, familiar and social behavior and practices were already set and the ritualization in their daily life was established (Ling, 2008).

Many students in their essays observe that their grandparents live very well without computer and smartphones since these perceive these technologies not useful for their life. Mariateresa M. writes, for example:

My grandmother lives very well without iPod, if you want to listen to music turns on the radio or stereo.

Jolanda B reports that her grandmother lives well without the new technologies as she was used to live and Lucia B. says that "her grandparents are not interested at all to use the new technologies and she believe that this happens because for the majority of their life they lived without, whereby they do not feel the need to learn how to use them."

Claudio L. adds:

My grandparents do not see the real utility of the new technologies and are convinced that being lived for most of their lives without these devices may continue to do so. Only to repent of not having with them the mobile phone when, for example, they have found themselves in a busy street with a machine failure.

All this makes the motivation to the purchase and use of these technologies quite weak. This also explains why often the elderly become owners, for example, of a mobile phone because their children give it to them for Christmas.

A frequent strategy applied by this elderly to domesticate digital devices is to treat these, as they were analogue. Alex O. reports that:

my paternal grandparents' home is devoid of any kind of electronic system, except for the television and the mobile phone. Their relationship with these tools are completely passive, they do not absolutely want to make the effort to understand the logic that governs the operation of mobile phones. All they do is to note down the various keystrokes to make the necessary actions only.

Piero M. writes:

My grandmother, having 83 years, only uses the TV watching the usual channels always, even if it has digital.

Graziella EF notices that the grandmother of her friend makes call via Whatsapp and also hares photos and videos.

Among the new media, the real problem is DTT

The television is a well-used part of the information and communication repertoire of elderly. In this repertoire the landline too plays an important role. But, whereas the television has been modernized through its digitalization, the modernization of the landline has happened outside his device, through the advent of the mobile phone. The landline phone continues to be a wellestablished part of their life and maybe is the most important channel through which family and social relationships are maintained. As to the mobile phone, they are domesticating it.

In the elderly's everyday life, the queen of technologies is the television. As the circle of people with whom elderly have a significant relationship narrows, the need to be entertained and informed by a unidirectional mean of communication and information like television increases. Television is a medium that simulates the human presence excellently. The real problem is the television, as it switched from the analogue mode to the digital one by public and political decision. First, television was a crucial device with which the elderly had organized and shaped a consistent part of their life, before the digital. Second, the television is a device that is at the core of media consumption among the older people. Digital Terrestrial Television had to be domesticated somehow. Linda S. writes

it was my grandparents who solicited the relatives to install the DTT. As it is easy to understand, an elderly couple passes a lot of time looking at the television. With the shift to the DTT, elderly risked losing some channels or not to have a good vision. Thus, my grandparents bought immediately the DTT, but only to be able to look at the television in the same way that they were used to do in the past.

There are of course some exceptions. Michael S. reports that his grandmother who lives alone in a rural area on the mountain never appropriated either of the analogue television. She uses only the radio when she is in the kitchen. Adds Michael:

> *Furthermore, she uses a dial landline not more than twice a week and she use it only when she needs to make exceptional purchases, given that food is delivered to her because she lives alone.*

The problem with the elderly points out Piero M. is that while they were all forced to switch to the DTT, their use of the television continued to be exactly like in the analogue regime. They look at the same channels they were used to see before, without taking any advantage from the digital.

Sometimes, reports Elena L.

> *the use is inhibited by the lack of confidence in these technologies. For example, she adds, my grandfather does not trust the saving modality of messages. For this reason, he copies each message he sends and receives in a copybook.*

Ownership and use: not an automatic relationship

Another interesting issue that these essays show is that ownership and use of a device not always coincide. As it happens for other age groups, some elderly formally owns a device but they do not make use of it.

Having a new technology does not mean to use it as such. Valentina B. says:

> *My grandparents, who are between 80 and 90 years, after having purchased a mobile phone, have used it rarely and after a few attempts have not tried to use it anymore. They are not interested at all to domesticate the mobile phone.*

By contrast, some elderlies do not possess a device personally, but they make use of it all the same through their children and grandchildren.

Andrea F. reports:

> *My grandmother is 92. Last month my brother went to Spain in Erasmus. Thus, I set up a skype call between us and him. Also, my grandmother participated. She was serious and excited as she was participating to a new and important event for her.*

Stefano C. points out:

> *Having seen my grandmother that I own a Nintendo DS console for playing videogames, she asked me if she could try, proposing some videogames, I did not know and that she discovered thanks to TV advertising.*

Other elderly makes use of some technology through their children or grandchildren. Andrea A. writes:

> *My grandmother is 93 years and when I go to visit her, we look together photos and videos on my smartphone or seek information on the search engines: I make her participate in what I do. She loves my cell phone.*

Caterina F. in the same vein adds:

> *My grandmother is 94 years old and even when she was younger, he never wanted to learn ow to use computers. She said: I do not care because they would not serve me nothing. Instead, she had to change her mind. When my cousin Andrea left for Portugal in Erasmus, the only way to see him and stay in touch was through Skype. The first time she was very excited, but then she got used immediately to this and every week asked my uncle to organize a Skype call.*

Manuele D.M. says that "often his neighbor who is 65 years old asks me to download them with my computer the results of some medical visits made to hospital."

Erika F. states that her grandparents sometimes ask her to go on Facebook to have information of their relatives who live overseas and to see their pictures and to see how their great-grandchildren have grown.

The role of youth in the digital housekeeping of elderly people

In these essays, we touch firsthand how intergenerational solidarity works regarding digital media. Several students report that they have taught grandparents the use of DTT, mobile phone and computer/Internet. They not only have taught how to use these devices, but they take care of these devices all the time that the DTT needs to be reprogrammed, or the sound in the mobile needs to be reactivated etc. What these youth do is more properly a digital housekeeping work that they do in the house where the elderly live.

From a structural point of view, the family is the center of the reproduction of individuals. As such, it is a center of plus-value production and thus a center of alienation and commodification (Fortunati, 1981). Even if women are the bulwarks of the domestic and care labor, every member of the family has to express his/her labor force as capacity of marital, paternal, maternal, filial and fraternal labor force. These labor forces are commodities that cannot circulate in the free market, but only inside the family to which these individuals belong. In other words, the family constitutes the obligatory market in which these must circulate as presupposition and condition of existence of the "free" exchange in the labor market and of the "free" exchange between the woman and capital through the man. It is precisely in the compulsory nature of their circulation, and therefore of the exchanges they generate within the family, that lies the aspect still slavery of this production. In this context, the relationship between parents and children is particularly problematic because the exchange between them contains many elements of uncertainty. First of all, while parents are clearly owners of their capacity of parental reproduction, children are such only partially. The exchange is in part immediate and unaware but in part is deferred to when the children have grown and have become adults.

Various family members establish between them a more or less informal contract that regulates what does and gives who to the other/s members of the family. For example, the marriage formula establishes by law the reciprocal engagement between the future husband and wife. This contract works on the basis of the division of labor between the spouses. Spouses are in the condition to verify continuously during their relationships if this contract is honored by the other. A different condition concerns the contract within the family between parents and children since this is the only one which is deferred over time and thus it is the least controllable by the contractors. It is based on the hope that their children will take care of them at material (if necessary) and immaterial level.

However, not always this is made possible for a series of reasons. For example, the increasing work or residential mobility of their children, children's family commitments, the unexpected social change that has brought in many cases to an unequal distribution of public resources favoring the elderly, become a serious impediment to honor this exchange by taking care of the parents.

This contract is operationalized through expectations and actuations around the roles of parents, children and grandparents and grandchildren. Bengtson and Oyama (2007) have described the content of this contract by recurring to the expression of "intergenerational solidarity". This construct at the family level is characterized by "the behavioral and emotional dimensions of

interaction, cohesion, sentiment, and support between parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, over the course of long-term relationships".

Giulia C reports that:

> Her grandparents ask often for help to their children and grandchildren when they are dealing with a new blender or with the digital terrestrial decoder. I remember when my grandfather asked me how a cell phone, how do you call and typing the numbers, I was very surprised. I tried to explain in a simple way, but she could not understand how, if there is a keypad, you can dial a phone number.

Davide B. observes: "*are now five years that we have given to my grandmother a mobile phone and at any family party or get-together I find myself having to explain always the same things "Down Arrow: phone book; right arrow: called*".
Often youth in the family rightly or wrongly are considered the true experts on technology and thus are those who have the official task to assist patiently the elderly of the family in their relationship with technology. The most frequent tasks is for Matteo C. "*to help retune the television or tune-up the mobile phone, check if it still has credit or if it has received messages or even to erase received messages. Other times the help is needed for the purchase or installation of new appliances that have become too complicated for an old person. More rarely I help my grandmother look for something on the Internet, such as recipes or information, or to purchase train tickets to go and find some sister who lives far away*."

How youth see the elderly and the elderly see digital generations
In turn, we can capture a lot about the reasons and motivations behind elderly's resistance against new technologies by analyzing how the elderly experience youth's use of digital technologies in everyday life. For example, Alex O. reports:

> *Despite being two educated and bourgeois persons, my paternal grandparents have an conflictual relationship with each type of technology. Their attitude I think is dictated by an aversion (which they have always had) against everything that "belongs" to the new generations. I am pretty sure that they identify the new technologies as one of the many aspects that characterize young people in whom they have no faith and even despise.*

We can understand that from the conflict between these two different generations emerges elderly's hostility against digital technologies, as this is a distinct sign of new generations.

Another attitude, opposite to the previous one, is idealization. Elisa A., for example, who has a grandfather of 98 years, declares that she has precious memories of when she went to see him or at the bar where every day he was used to talk and play cards with his friends, or while he was having a walk. She notices that,

> *"Although his disinterest towards the new technologies, her grandfather's life was much more "true" and direct than that of her generation. Discussions were not interrupted by some telephone, and nobody was hidden him/herself behind a screen. They look inside their eyes, giving weight to the words that they say. The charm of the elderly is that they remember to us a lifestyle that now we no longer share under different points of view, especially from that of the technology, which is ruining increasingly the way of relating the others"*.

Daniele B. notices elderly's negative judgment on the effects that the technology has on youth. In particular, his grandmother –he reports- is used to say: "*You guys are always fixed on the screen, and you do not communicate with anyone*." Viginia C. in the same vein reports: "*When I'm with my grandmother on his mother of course I always tell me some negative word when they are on the phone. She believes that the mobile phone is an object that ruins today's teenagers, affirmation that I cannot blame him, because I think the anti-socializing*."

Daniele DP reports that his grandmother (90 years) comments" I like the new technologies but not the new generation, because I see many youths losing a lot of time to play with those devices, the mobile phones."

But in some cases, from youth also some reflections arrive like these:

> *One of the causes of the conflict relationship of the elderly with technology is the lack of user-friendly interfaces also in products made especially for them. As example, often they do not understand how a navigation menu in a mobile phone changes the function of keystrokes depending on the context, and instead they seek an unchanging pattern of operation. Another cause is the lack of clarity of the available functions.The questions that my grandparents ask me most often are: "Which button do I press to make go away the writing on TV? Or" What buttons do I press to ensure that the light on the phone to stop blinking? Elderly are not interested to find the cause of why something happens (for example, the flash cell of the light is connected to an unread message) but they try to return everything to normal as soon as possible.For older people it would be important to use intelligent voice functions that respond to the questions on their own operation. Another thing I really miss in technological products for elderly are clear instructions that explain in a simple and understandable functions and that take as a reference the old user. A very trivial example would be the explanation of the functions of all the buttons on a remote control of a television set*.

Morena C. shares this analysis and adds *"few keys, given that often are those that send them to confusion, clear display with written also larger to help in the case of a sight or the possibility of an automatic reading of the settings, high technology object drop resistance, which are not uncommon given that the socket is no longer very firm and finally a few controllers maybe scattered around the house*."

Camilla G. adds suffice few tips to help an elderly person to use the mobile phone: size keyboards more than normal, very high ringtones and ringing tones, higher brightness.

According to Adriano A., the three old ladies that he interviewed stated that looking at the use that youth do of the new technologies they were convinced that the mobile phones instead of maintaining people in contact can create inopportune and impolite situations (call while one is eating). These ladies furthermore argue that "*new technologies and above all social networks are creating quite a stir among the youth and are making them slaves of a virtual world in which you no longer need some manners or have direct contact with their own kind*."

Marco G notices that the elderly who have grandchildren are the most technological.

Sara M writes that her grandfather each time that they went to visit him did put all the mobile phones in a drawer because he did not want, they interfere with their meetings.

Mauro T writes that his grandfather is convinced that technology has ruined youth who are increasingly stuffed on mobile phones and tablets. No one plays more out in the open space, no one goes out, all stay indoors in front of screens.

What new in 2016 in respect to 2012?

More new media are entering in the technological ecology of the elderly. Andrea A. talks about the cordless that his grandmother (93) uses normally. Davide A. reports that it is not rare "*to find elderly who, to keep pace with the times, send their best wishes on WhatsApp or put a "like" on a post in Facebook*." Elderly is realizing that their children are too engaged in their everyday life (work and their family) and often live faraway to have the possibility to be present in their life. And, thus, they are considering more seriously to activate technologies that enable them to stay in contact with their children and grandchildren, somehow. "*I know*, writes Elena B., *many young elderlies* (65 years) *who are They are adapting to new technologies, so that*

they learned to use a smartphone, Facebook, WhatsApp. Some also have an iPod and listen to much modern music than me (I listen mostly 60s music strictly on CD)." Simone B. reports:

> *My grandfather (75 years) has remained in constant update with respect to the computer, at the beginning with my brother and mine teaching, then very self-taught. In the following years he has installed in his house the first ADSL Internet connection and started to use the Internet more often, just for personal research on hotels and hotels and especially for the management of the Internet site of the association where he works. It owns a smartphone with which he communicates via WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter.*

Not always their use of the new media is appropriate. GianMarco A. reports: "*having discovered these technologies late in life they are not really aware of what they use. It often happens that they publish pictures of small children or private photos in their Facebook page naively, not knowing that it can be dangerous*".

"*My grandmother*", writes Sara B., "*uses always the mobile phone and has recently learned to use the DVD player. Last Christmas I gave her a box set with three CDs of Il Volo, of which she has fell literally in love. Even cleaning had become more fun for her if accompanied by those songs*." Eleonora B. has a similar experience of her grandmother, who ask her for help regarding the use of WhatsApp and so on.

Adriano A. has interviewed two friends of this grandmother: the average age of these three ladies is 75. He was surprised that two out of three have a smartphone, one out of three has a computer and an email account, and two out of three have a flat screen TV with integrated digital terrestrial.

Andrea G. reports that at Christmas they decided to give him a Tablet Samsung. He uses the bank app to check his account, his emails and some games.

Gloria N says that her grandmother by mother Gioia is 77 years old, has the console Nintendo Game Cube for 2000, with which she plays Super Mario and other games. Two years ago we have given her the iPad to play cards when alone, since it is her passion. She enjoys very much and is climbing the world rankings of some games.

Discussion

We would like that all authors think and discuss how their findings challenge a traditional Mannheimian approach to generations, which considers youth as a main formative period for generational consciousness. What other transformative factors, especially related to various life stages, influence the formation of generational identity in the content of ICT use?

From these essays, it comes out that the real reason behind elderly's weak willingness and readiness to domesticate the new technologies is the lack of motivation. Before encountering them, elderly have been able to manage their everyday life effectively. Thus, they perceive these technologies as something superfluous, not so necessary.

Conclusion and some final remarks

From this research some interesting points emerged. We need still more qualitative research on the relationship between elderly and new technologies in order to better understand the profound reasons of their current detachment from them. And we need to carefully monitor the moment in which adults with a «normal» familiarity with the new technology will enter in the age group of the elderly. What emerged from this study is an interesting fresco of the diversification of everyday use of ICTs in elderly households, which is also reflected in official data (ISTAT, 2015). One of the most interesting results is that for this elderly the problem is not the technology in itself, but specifically the digital technologies. As expected, it emerged that in rural areas the elderly's relationship with the digital technologies was even harder, because in several cases the grandparents of these students did not move to towns and cities to accompany their children and live with them. They have remained in the countryside, isolated by their children and

grandchildren. Many times, students stated that they helped their grandparents to learn how to use these technologies by acting as savant teachers.

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