



JOURNAL QUAESTIO IURIS

EDITORIAL FOR DEMETRIO DE FALERIO AND THE AGEING OF SOCIETY

ALEJANDRO KLEIN

University of Guanajuato, Guanajuato, México

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8216-345X>

E-mail: alejandroklein@hotmail.com



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.



Quaestio Iuris., Rio de Janeiro, Vol. 15, N.03., 2022- Dossiê Demetrio de Falerio y la sociedad de envejecimiento- Coordenação Dr. Alejandro Klein, 2022.

Alejandro Klein

DOI: 10.12957/rqi.2022.72216

All academic work on ageing today invariably begins with a quantitative approach indicating the growing percentage of older people on the planet. In this way, the social sciences, and especially demographers and gerontologists, want to point out that the advent of the ageing society is invariable and irreversible, just as certain natural events were once interpreted as signs of the certain advent of the Divine Apocalypse.

But, to tell the truth, the quantitative assures nothing. Quantitative, therefore, does not ensure the ageing of society. This naïve positivist, cause-effect approach should be reconsidered.

In Athens and Sparta the vast majority of the population was slaves and no one would have dared to say that they were in a slavery society. It was unthinkable. Slavery was not considered or seen as a social problem.

The best example is the census taken in 310 BC by the tyrant Demetrius of Phalerius in Attica, which showed that there were 21,000 citizens, 10,000 Metecians and 400,000 slaves. Let's say that slaves would be 90% of the total population and that does not mean that it was a slave society. Numbers, then, do not mark social trends, nor social concerns, nor social focal points. Each society invents the problems it complains about. Ancient Greece neither invented slavery nor complained about it.

But does this 21st century invent the ageing society and complain about it? Well, neither. Ageing was invented as a feature of ageing in the 20th century, because it is the first century in which people started to live longer. Thus, this 21st century receives the heavy inheritance of what to do and how to proceed with a growing population of older adults that requires change, new perspectives and flexibility. But this 21st century wants nothing to do with an ageing society. It does not recognise it, it does not notice it, it does not have or maintain the minimum social imaginary.

To tell the truth: the ageing society does not generate any interest. Perhaps, astonishment or boredom. Because what "exists" in our society is what entertains, what the eyes "catch", which is the very essence of the disciplining of the rectangular screen called mobile or mobile phone and within it the disciplining power of the "networks", accomplices with impunity most of the time of the so-called "communication" media. What gives pleasure in our society is "watching", "spying", "scrutinising", what others do and how they do it. And the ageing society certainly does not have much in the way of entertainment. Hence, I mentioned how the ageing society, when denied and



avoided, will provoke such political situations in the face of mutational changes that become indispensable¹.

And to further stir the waters we have the disturbing picture that has emerged from Covid-19.

During the last coronavirus pandemic, old people were imperatively confined and labelled as a "risk" group, even though the passage of time showed that all age groups were ultimately at risk.

At the same time, but underground and invisible (and sometimes not even invisible...), old people all over the world were left to die for lack of medical care. The definitive figures will probably never be known. It was not reported, it was not stopped, there was no change of plans. Faced with the need to prioritise because of the scarcity of health resources, priority was given to care for young people and adults, based on a perverse logic whereby it was "agreed" that a choice had to be made as to where the dwindling health resources would be prioritised.

It could certainly be argued that these "dwindling" resources are in fact the result of decades of neoliberal policies that see health (as in any other system that dignifies human beings) as a waste of money and resources.

And yet it is difficult to understand how older people have suddenly been stripped of their rights and guarantees and brought to this place of "sacrifice". It is also difficult to understand the cloak of silence that has been spread over a scandalous situation, bordering on genocide. Unless decades of gerontological production around resilient old age, healthy old age, the new key role of ageing in our society, is nothing more than a thin layer of parchment that shreds at the first strong wind.

Where are the intellectuals, the activists, the thinkers, denouncing the barbarity of what has happened? They are not there. Silence and prudishness are the norm. While there is a great sensitivity towards other minorities and social movements, suddenly old people cease to matter, despite the fact that we are paradoxically approaching a demographic situation that is described as an "ageing" society.

Probably one way of approaching the current social context is to point out how the social welfare state is becoming increasingly impoverished, in the face of the repeated application of neoliberal policies, which consolidate the emergence of a precarious tertiary proletariat replacing

¹ Klein, Alejandro (2022) "Opening up the debate on the ageing society. *Preliminary hypotheses for a possible mutational and post-mutational society*". The Netherlands: Springer Publishing Company

the industrial proletariat and of an impoverished middle class replacing the traditional middle class, while the affluent classes become a territorialised class in terms of walled fortification.

The promises of a consumer society, capable of guaranteeing an always continuous and unlimited consumption, are undermined by this extreme "pauperisation", so that in reality the figure of the consumer is revealed as that of a chronically indebted person, whose only option is to indelibly renew his chronic and mortifying indebtedness.

On the other hand, there is a shift from a unifying imaginary around a consensual social contract to a situation of generalised de-contractualisation, where the schizoid and the spaltung predominate, in accordance with the impossibility of dealing with social conflicts in the form of compromise.

Suddenly and without warning, everything changes. What was secure becomes insecure. What was predictable becomes unpredictable. Stable systems go haywire and drive us crazy with their clatter. Things do not announce their arrival or their departure. They simply implant themselves. And the subjective, familiar and everyday consequences cease to matter, in the face of policies that time and again only seem to "despair" of fiscal balance, the adjustment of state accounts and prestige in the eyes of the international and European community.

Thus, I maintain as a working hypothesis that the current socio-economic conditions harm ageing people, not only in economic terms, through poor pensions (when they exist), but also through the consolidation of a culture of violence that spreads everywhere and in all directions, a paradoxical issue in a society that "prides itself" on the achievements of its respect for and integration of minorities. A new promise of a disconcerting modernity that, however, does not reach ageing people.

On the contrary, in an age where everything that is aggressive or sexual is fiercely disciplined, overcoming the sexual repression of Catholicism, violence is directed institutionally, in relationships and in the family, towards old people. And in reality, it cannot be directed at anyone else, because everything is controlled and monitored by the State, to the extent that it is instituted, for example, and as a symbol of our progress, that any child can easily denounce his parents... From this point on, it is impossible to maintain the insignia of any kind of authority.

Why, then, is violence directed towards ageing people? Quite simply: it is the only social group that does not denounce the violence it suffers. In a society of denunciation, where everything is denounced, where anyone can be denounced, where paranoia is the predominant bond structure (replacing the contract and the social bond), the only group that does not denounce is ageing. The price they pay for this is therefore very high....



From here on, then, what is to be done? For years I thought that one solution was the empowerment of ageing people through the citizen's vote, to influence the political class.

The coronavirus has made me realise that this option is too naïve. Today, on the contrary, I would say that perhaps the only form of political power to which old people can aspire is not so much the political power of a citizen who votes, but to become more of a *clan-tribe structure*, which is how power is distributed today², capable of denouncing and asserting their territoriality (and not their rights, since the current form of power is not through the acquisition of rights, but through the support and expansion of social, cultural and economic territories).

It should be thought of without a priori prejudices, without being tied to the current totalitarianism of the political and social correctness.

Dr Alejandro Klein, Oxford, 4th November 2022.

Sobre o autor:

ALEJANDRO KLEIN

Associate Professorial Fellow- Oxford Institute Of Population Ageing

University of Guanajuato, Guanajuato, México

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8216-345X>

E-mail: alejandroklein@hotmail.com

² Klein, A (2021). TANATOPOLÍTICA, NEOLIBERALISMO Y CORONAVIRUS, UN RECORRIDO POR LOS EXCESOS. Intersticios Sociales, El Colegio de Jalisco, Año 11, número 21, marzo-agosto 2021, pp. 99-124

