

MEMOIR

THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES
FROM RE-GENERATIVE MENTORING

REGENERATIONS

REGENERATIONS

DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN
INTERNATIONAL
ITALIA



THE ROOTS DO NOT HAVE TO SINK INTO THE ATAVISTIC
DARKNESS OF THE ORIGINS, IN SEARCH OF AN ALLEGED PURITY;
THEY SPREAD OUT ON THE SURFACE, LIKE BRANCHES OF A PLANT,
TO MEET OTHER ROOTS AND HOLD THEM LIKE HANDS.

E. GLISSANT

MENTORING IS A TWO-WAY CIRCULAR DANCE THAT PROVIDES
OPPORTUNITIES FOR US TO EXPERIENCE BOTH GIVING
AND RECEIVING WITHOUT LIMITATIONS AND FEARS.

CHUNGLIANG AL HUANG, JERRY LYNCH

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The Re-Generations initiative aims at improving the support to young third-country nationals aged 18-21 by strengthening the presence of volunteer citizens (individual or groups) who accompany them in their integration process through mentoring programmes. The implementation of mentoring models will have direct impact on the young third-country nationals' lives in relation to these key dimensions and policy areas: employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship.

This publication has been elaborated by Defence for Children International Italy in the framework of the Re-Generations project, with the aim of favouring its possible replication in other local communities at national and EU level.

Main activities:

- Capacity building through training and support sessions to mentors and mentees;
- Exchanges through active participation in the framework of open thematic events designed by Organising Committees involving young people and local community members;
- Inter-agency cooperation through meetings with all the local actors involved in integration;
- Supervision and transfer of knowledge through transnational and national study visits and EU event.

Duration of the Project: December 2018 - May 2022

Partners:

Defence for Children International - Italy (Coordinator)

ARSIS – Partner in Greece

Punt de Referència – Partner in Spain



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	4
Re-Generations	6
Kindness.....	13
Attentiveness.....	21
Flexibility.....	27
Nurturance.....	31
Guidance.....	35
Service	42
Cooperation	47
Interdependence.....	52
Vigilance.....	55
Consistency.....	58

FOREWORD

We developed this memoir with the firm belief that human rights could be a source for a new human-centered cultural paradigm.

The RE-GENERATIONS project, conceived and implemented to initiate and support mentorship relations between young migrant persons and adult volunteer citizens, has been the right occasion to reflect and act along this possible path. From the very beginning of this initiative, we tried to question the usual symmetry that is determining the narratives around the relations of help and, almost casually, we found an old book that was proposing mentorship through the lens of Taoism.

We found these suggestions very close to the systemic and intersectional approach that is already embedded in our approach and methodology. In parallel, we also considered that human rights are often proposed and applied without the poetry and the integration that the very first lines of the 1948 Human Rights declaration clearly recall when affirming: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

We decided then to adopt these Taoist concepts to search a possible way to redefine mentorship, our specific programme and our reflections vis a vis the complex and often bluntly polarized reading of migration.

The attempt to value the fact of being a mentor or a mentee, as the opportunity to redefine the pedagogical, transcultural and civil relation with the surrounding world, becomes the angle to orient our intentions, our concrete initiative and our way to intend and develop mentorship throughout the programme.

This "philosophical" intention had to centrally consider of course the concrete situation of disadvantages that the young migrant persons have to face in an often hostile and discriminatory society far from their home and of course how the mentorship relations should have helped these youngsters to cope and interact in order to develop their life projects and perspectives.

Aware of this crucial urgency, we decided to invest our energies in the direction of discovering meanings and perspectives that could have helped in making what we were supposed to do practically more sustainable and "re-generative" beyond the three years of the project that we were supposed to develop.

The international dimension of the initiative involving partners from Greece and Catalunya and also young persons from many regions of the world inspired us to pursue this direction with the awareness that exploring new languages and ways to define things where necessary elements to go beyond the usual philanthropic rhetoric as well as the limited victim-aggressor paradigm that characterizes the protection-focused response to children in migration.

Besides the more technical report on what we have done and concretely achieved during these three years of the project, we then decided that it was necessary to reflect and share the essence of our initiative.

In this perspective the present memoir is intended as an exercise aimed at informing our future initiatives, and also as a contribution to other and diverse mentorship programmes that could find in an intersectional approach to human rights their foundation, their source of inspiration but also a new methodological path.

PIPPO COSTELLA

Director
Defence for Children International - Italy

RE-GENERATIONS

MENTORING AS A POTENTIALLY REGENERATIVE EXPERIENCE FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES.

From 2010, Europe has been registering increased numbers of migrants and refugees. Multiple causes explain this phenomenon, even if a large part of them is related to situations of conflict, deprivation and human rights violations.

According to Eurostat, the number of unaccompanied children among asylum seekers in Europe increased from 10,610 in 2010 to 95,205 in 2015, and then decreased to 17,890 in 2019¹. The increase between 2010 and 2015 can be partly attributed to the overall rise in the number of asylum seekers on the continent in those years. Eight per cent of all arrivals across the Mediterranean to Italy in 2015 were unaccompanied children, which climbed to 14 per cent in 2016. An estimated 90 per cent of all children who crossed the Mediterranean in 2016 were unaccompanied (UNICEF, 2017a). Between 2014 and 2020, at least 2,300 children died or went missing during their migration journey (IOM, 2020).

Persons under the age of 18 represent therefore a significant part of the migration phenomenon that Europe has lived in the last decade. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other Human Rights (HHRR) instruments as well as European and national laws, each child has the right to live in an environment that supports, protects and takes care of them and that promotes their development and full potential. Under this logic, na-

1. <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/child-and-young-migrants>

tional systems are increasingly equating the legal status of migrant children with those of national children. Consequently, migrant children arriving alone in Europe, are entitled to the same rights as European children and should have access to the services that allow the exercise of those rights. In most instances, this means that unaccompanied children are under the custody of public administrations, which delegate the care to the appropriate childcare institutions according to the applicable law and policies.

Within this regime, normally children should not only have all their basic needs covered, but should also benefit from a series of measures that ensure their development, protection and participation, including access to education and training, legal recognition and support, access to guardianship, access to health care, access to cultural mediation, among others.

Normally, all these safeguards are lost when children turn eighteen, and are no longer under the child protection system. The transition to the “adult system” tends to occur abruptly, without a proper preparation of the young adult and without a project able to capitalize those investments and services made available to them as children, to the detriment not only of the youngster but also of the system itself and more broadly of the hosting context.

IN FACT, ONE OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS OF YOUNG MIGRANTS ARRIVING AND LIVING ALONE IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IS THE TRANSITION TO THE AGE MAJORITY BECAUSE OF THE LIMITED POLICIES ADDRESSING THIS SPECIFIC PROBLEM AND THE POOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO INTEGRATE INTO THE SOCIAL FABRIC. THIS PERIOD, WHICH LEADS TO THE END OF A WHOLE SERIES OF GUARANTEES THAT COME WITH BEING A CHILD, IS EXPERIENCED BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN A VERY TORMENTED WAY AND ALMOST IN SOLITUDE.

While, on the one hand, young migrants find a reception system aimed at satisfying their primary needs and protection, in practice, they often find themselves living in a condition of “isolation”, in an almost parallel world with very

little interaction with the territory and with native youth of their age. There are also significant difficulties directly related with the fact of being “foreigners”, first of all the acquisition of an adequate language level that allows them to move easily in the new host context, the basically impossible access to qualified training courses that can lead to the job market as soon as possible, the total disconnection with the local community.

The Re-Generations project stems from the need to strengthen mechanisms for the social inclusion of the younger generation of migrants after the age of 18, through the involvement of the local community that welcomes them in the paths of reception from a young age. The involvement and support of members of the civil society who become “mentors”, i.e., reference points for these young people and bridges between them and the community, becomes an important element of inclusion and enhancement of skills, stories and experiences of these young people.

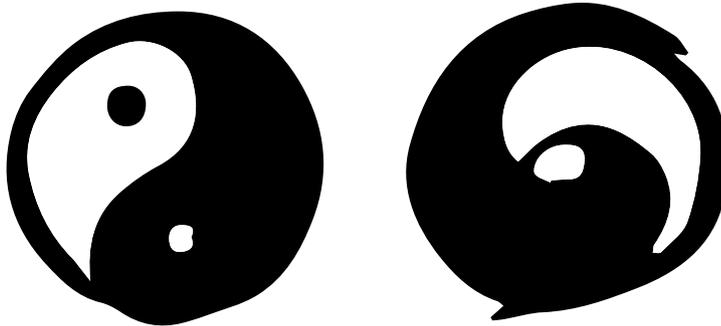
THE PROPOSAL IS BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT MENTORING, I.E., THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A MORE EXPERIENCED PERSON WHO TAKES ON THE ROLE OF GUIDE (MENTOR) OF A YOUNG PERSON IN THE PROCESS OF GROWTH WITH THE AIM THAT THE LATTER DEVELOPS MORE SKILLS IN THE EDUCATIONAL, OCCUPATIONAL AND SOCIAL FIELDS, CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE ACTION FOR THE INTEGRATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THIRD COUNTRIES.

Mentoring enhances the resources present in the community, because it is based on the civil commitment of citizens who voluntarily decide to bond with the younger generations with the aim of supporting their life project.

The experience of the project constitutes an attempt to validate this hypothesis and to apply it in practical terms. **This exercise has allowed to grasp the full nature of the problems and opportunities faced by young migrant people living in our societies and, at the same time, to refine the actions that our community can put in place to improve their integration, from the observation point that mentoring programmes provide us.**

By connecting reflections deriving from this exercise with broader trends affecting the quality of our systems in terms of processes and results, **the present work aims at sharing thoughts about how mentoring can constitute a powerful tool to overcome structural deviations of the socioeconomic and cultural system that determine vulnerable and unprotected situations.** The memoir looks at the case of young adult migrants as a starting point to come up with considerations that have a broader scope and can be thus used to orient different situations involving meaningful inter-personal relationships that tend to produce regenerative effects.

Hence the name of the project: Re-Generations², a word with multiple meanings and interpretations that can qualify the very notion of mentoring as a practice that produces new opportunities of relation in a broad sense and from different perspectives: the generational, the cultural, the social, the ethnical, the gender one, etc. Mentoring as a re-generative³ experience to all those involved directly or indirectly, of giving and receiving (C. Al Huang, J. Lynch, 1999). As an exchange that requires commitment and empathy. That allows entering new worlds and visions that nurture a path of shared learning. An experience able to regenerate⁴ also the surrounding environment and produce renewed dynamics and interrelations.



2. *Regeneration (n.)*, etymologically "act of regenerating or producing anew," "a being born again," "make over, generate again," from re- "again" (see re-) + generate "bring forth, beget, produce,". Originally theological, "radical spiritual change in an individual accomplished by the action of God;" of animal tissue, "power or process of growing again".

3. *Regenerative (adj.)* etymologically "having the power to cause flesh to grow again".

4. *Regenerate (adj.)* etymologically "reborn, reproduced, restored."

The objective of this work is therefore to share relevant considerations useful to orient thoughts, actions and measures that attempt to improve social inclusion from a rights-based perspective. Assuming an approach based on rights means recognizing the principle of collective responsibility to the challenges facing the world, in opposition to an increasing self-centered approach that leads to a compartmentalized perception of reality in which individuals feel deprived of their capacity for action. The memoir attempts to deconstruct this chimera and to show the power of human relationships as change agents.

The project Re-Generations, co-funded by the AMIF program of the European Commission (CE) was implemented from December 2018 to May 2022 in three European locations. Defence for Children International Italy coordinated the action from Genoa. They set up the first mentoring programme in the city with this project, which took advantage from the experience gained over the past years around the role of the volunteer guardian, recognised and prioritized by Italian Law 47/2017 that establishes volunteer guardianship for unaccompanied children with the involvement of private citizens properly trained and appointed by the judge.

In Greece, ARSIS has similarly created its first mentoring programme in connection with the residential care facilities and other socio educational centers managed by the association. The involvement of ARSIS's volunteers and educators in mentoring paths represented an added value to enhance the support they were already offering to young adult migrants.

Lastly, Punt de Referència from Barcelona, has acted as the "mentor" of the Re-Generations initiative. With more than 20 years of experience in mentoring programmes addressed to young people at risk of social exclusion, it has informed and assisted the above-mentioned processes taking as the main reference their programme "Referents".

The present work reflects also the learnings of these experiences that have qualified the project's assumptions, strategy and actions. This document is structured in short chapters, each one of which entitled with the name of an attribute that, according to the Re-Generations initiative, every mentoring relationship should meet⁵. Taking the chapter's name as a starting point, each chap-

5. *The chapters' titles have been taken from the book Tao Mentoring, which reinterprets and revitalises the concept of mentoring by incorporating Taoist teachings.*

ter will develop key topics that are particularly relevant to orient successful mentoring experiences. All of them are properly supported by theoretical references. Each chapter is entitled with the name of a Taoist attribute with a double meaning: on the one side to build a skeleton of attributes that shape the role of a mentor; on the other, to represent the content of each chapter through a keyword.

KINDNESS

Human Rights: the cultural and operational reference to put mentoring into context.

ATTENTIVENESS

Considering the centrality of each person as the focus of every mentoring experience.

FLEXIBILITY

The transcultural approach as a core element of any mentoring relationship.

NURTURANCE

The pedagogical intention of mentoring involving young persons in transition.

GUIDANCE

The role of a competent mentor.

SERVICE

The function of mentoring in the context of migration.

COOPERATION

Making mentoring a sustainable practice.

INTERDEPENDENCE

Connecting mentoring with the surrounding context.

VIGILANCE

Mentoring as an opportunity to exercise active citizenship.

CONSISTENCY

Ethical considerations intrinsically involved in mentoring actions addressed to young migrant persons.

This memoir is a middle ground between a narration about an experience and a guide for mentoring action. It attempts to propose a possible reflection aimed at disseminating a culture of meaningful relationships: relationships between generations, cultures, citizenships, genders, contexts, stories, under a Human Rights-based paradigm.

This work must be read in relation to the context in which it is framed: mentoring addressed to young boys and girls coming from foreign countries and leaving the child protection care system. At the same time, it proposes considerations that aspire to go beyond this specific case and be therefore applicable to all kinds of mentoring relationships.

The memoir attempts also to understand and represent the perspectives of mentors and mentees with regards to the different keywords that we are using as memory parameters, so as to point out which are the possible elements of shared memory useful to qualify the specific experience of Re-Generations as well as mentoring as the method that has determined it.

KINDNESS

HUMAN RIGHTS: THE CULTURAL AND OPERATIONAL REFERENCE TO PUT MENTORING INTO CONTEXT.

Mentoring relationships many times interact with multiple factors that determine the need for that mentoring relationship to take place. The capacity to read this reality varies and, in any case, requires references and orientations that lead to a greater understanding of phenomena and their causes. However, we can assume that the better we comprehend things, the better we can relate to them.

Talking about mentoring means talking about very complex human stories and situations that are directly affected by dynamics generated at the micro, meso and macro levels. These dynamics are not directly dependent on the individual's behavior even if the latter is strictly conditioned by them. These dynamics may determine positive situations but they structurally create conditions of vulnerability and unprotection that affect a great part of the world's population. When we talk about mentoring, we refer to an action that involves *in primis* two persons that establish a relation that is framed within a context determined by certain conditions. Being able to understand these conditions, its causes and consequences may help in shaping a relationship that proves effective for both the parties involved and the environment where this relationship is developed.

However, in order to avoid discretion, we need to find references that are universally applicable and that are comprehensive enough to grasp the complexity of every single situation from different perspectives. This is the case of the

Human Rights paradigm. A platform that provides a multidimensional map to analyze, understand and make our actions operational, including mentoring.

Human Rights (HHRR) are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status⁶. Human rights are held by all persons equally, universally and forever. Human rights are universal, that is, they are the same for all human beings in every country. They are inalienable, indivisible and interdependent, i.e., they cannot be taken away – ever; all rights are equally important and they are complementary (Council of Europe, 2020).

The HHRR system and corpus, firstly represented by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, lay down the obligations of Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups. Even if we are talking about law, HHRR may not only be taken from their legal dimension but as a multidisciplinary system that allows merging different perspectives oriented by the objective of promoting the possibility of every person to express his or her identity, his or her life project at the fullest.

HUMAN RIGHTS REFLECT BASIC HUMAN NEEDS; THEY ESTABLISH THE BASIC STANDARDS WHICH PEOPLE NEED TO LIVE IN DIGNITY. HUMAN BEINGS NEED FOOD, SHELTER, PROTECTION FROM A VARIETY OF RISKS, ETC. AND ALL THESE ELEMENTS HAVE EVOLVED TO A STATUS OF RIGHTS.

Human rights can be understood as collective ethical imperatives that we have set into legal frameworks but that we can use not only from a legal perspective but also from a multidisciplinary perspective and for different ends such as education, social intervention, or even policy reform.

It is worth underlying that the recognition of needs is very important and not alternative to a human rights paradigm. But it is equally important to consider what this paradigm shift entails:

6. United Nations' definition, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>

NEEDS BASED	RIGHTS BASED	PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS (IN MENTORING)
Works toward outcome goals	Works toward outcomes and process goals	Focuses on accountability
Emphasizes meeting needs	Emphasizes fulfilling rights (respected, protected and fulfilled)	reinforcing capacities. Addresses the need for capacity building of duty bearers
Recognizes needs, which do not imply duties or obligations, as valid claims. Extremely discretionary	Recognizes that rights always imply duties and obligations of the collectivity and the State	Identifies rights gaps and claims for their respect – we do have HHRR mechanisms allowing us to claim for our rights
Meets needs without empowerment It is like if the person was recognised as a passive subject	Recognizes that rights can only be realized with empowerment Recognises the person as an active subject	Supports young people's agency
Ranks needs in a hierarchy of priorities	Considers the indivisibility and interrelatedness of human needs and rights	Adopts a holistic understanding of the person. Avoids atomized approaches and interventions. Respects and builds on cultural diversity
Accepts charity/ philanthropy as the driving motivation for meeting needs	States that charity is insufficient and biased motivation	Considers mentoring as an exercise of civil positioning and active citizenship
Involves narrow sectorial projects. Fragmentation	Involves inter-sectorial, holistic projects and programs	Builds on the assets of the local context
Focuses on immediate problems with little emphasis on policy	Focuses on social, economic, cultural, civil and political context, and is policy-oriented. Recognizes and analyses root causes of phenomena	Reinforces and supports local protective mechanisms

Table 1. Implications of adopting a HHRR approach

We can summarize the table above with the following key considerations of what a HHRR-based approach implies:

- Focus on process and goals
- Activation of resources
- Recognition of (collective) duties and obligations
- Empowerment and reinforcement of capacities
- Holistic consideration of the person and of the interrelation of things
- Objectivation of causes and behaviors
- Development of inter-sectorial and comprehensive strategies
- Recognition of the political dimension

These considerations have a lot to do with the approach that mentoring programs and mentors may adopt if they aim at achieving long-term and sustainable change. Human Rights provisions can be used also as a reference to orient mentoring programs from an operational point of view, to establish the objectives that each mentoring relationship should reach and to determine possible ways to achieve them. There are different ways to classify the extensive range of articles that shape the HHRR corpus. Starting again from the recognition of human needs, and placing the person at the center of our discourse, we can identify four dimensions which rights can fall under:

BASIC NEEDS

Right to life, safety and freedom

Appropriate standard of life
(shelter, food, water, hygiene)

Right to health

Protection of family unit

Right to seek and
access asylum

Freedom from torture or other
forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading
treatment or punishment

PROTECTION

DEVELOPMENT

Right to education

Right to work

Sustainable life project

Right to equality before the law

Freedom of opinion, expression
and association

Right to participate in the cultural
life of a community

PARTICIPATION

1. BASIC NEEDS

Primary biological needs of human life (shelter, food, health, clothes...)

2. DEVELOPMENT

All aspects related to the cognitive, educative, emotional, social and cultural development of the person (education, friendships, game, work, life project, hobbies, spirituality, identity...)

3. PROTECTION

All aspects deriving from the particular vulnerabilities of a person in relation to his/her particular situation. The notion of protection also includes the levels of prevention, rehabilitation and empowerment (safe place, cultural mediation, listening, professional skills, family, special measures for particularly vulnerable situations, access to justice, access to social services, support services...)

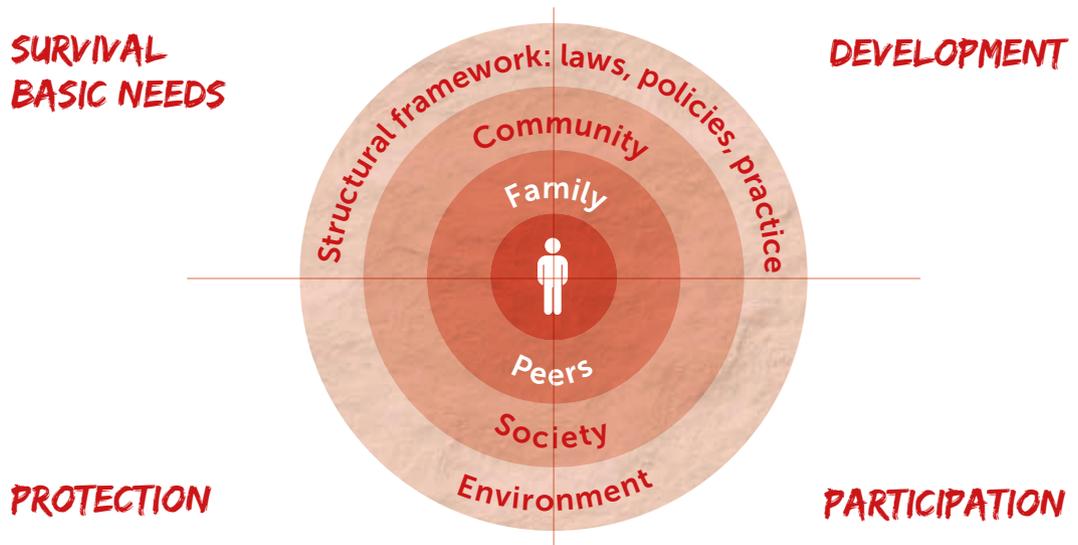
4. PARTICIPATION

Those aspects linked to the possibility of expressing one's identity in the surrounding environment and exercising one's own competences in determining one's current and future condition (papers, information, social orientation, legal assistance, language, affiliation to associations or social initiatives, capacity and space to make decisions...)

Even if it is a simplification of the complexity proposed by the interrelated rights provisions, **this map helps in qualifying the holistic consideration of each person and defining mentoring projects that take it into account.** Although if we are involved in specific kinds of mentoring, such as for example labor focused or educational, **we cannot avoid considering all the other dimensions and aspects of the mentee's life so as to contextualize our specific action in a comprehensive framework that responds to the holistic vocation of mentoring.** For example, in the case of social mentoring, we cannot consider just one aspect of the mentee's life such as education without considering that a change in the educational dimension of the mentee's life will affect also other aspects, such as access to work, socialization, self-esteem, maybe mental health or participation into the community. And at the same time, all the other

life dimensions affect the one we are specifically working on. Human Rights propose therefore a possible map to help us considering all these aspects.

But there is an important evolution of this map, which is the ecological approach applied to human rights. Having a look at this other image, we can see a person in the middle (the centrality of the person) and the four dimensions, and a series of concentric circles that represent the different levels of the context, from the micro to the macro.



This highlights the importance of considering the different levels of the context and their relation with the person's situation, the impact that these different levels have in the life of a person. If we consider the relation between the person and the context, we will be able to find sources of support but also potential vulnerabilities.

The ecology of rights suggests that stronger links between each system of circles result in children and young people having healthier connections through positive relationships with their human and natural environment, which in turn leads to greater resilience and healthier individual and community development outcomes. Conversely, in situations of social and political breakdown in which these supportive and protective mechanisms are eroded or damaged, children's or personal developmental outcomes will be

negatively impacted. In the case of Re-Generations, we are addressing young people who come alone from another place and therefore have no adults of reference. Mentoring becomes thus a measure to re-establish a function normally developed by the family dimension, and this may reduce young people's exposure to vulnerability (i.e., social exclusion).

ACCORDING TO THE RE-GENERATIONS HYPOTHESIS, MENTORS AND YOUNG PEOPLE CAN ALSO BECOME CHANGE-MAKERS IN RELATION TO THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE CONTEXT (BY DENOUNCING RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, SOLICITING OR CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LOCAL NETWORK, REPRESENTING A RIGHTS-BASED CULTURAL APPROACH WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITY, ETC.).

This interconnection among all the different elements of the map responds to a systemic vision that is needed to avoid fragmentation and consider not only the different areas of the map but above all how to reach them.

Having considered the importance of understanding the environment in which mentors and mentees find themselves in and having noted how often this environment is hostile for the person's healthy development and growth, it is crucial to consider mentoring as a different space. As an attempt to do things according to human values that in principle the world has universally agreed upon. Human rights are about equality, dignity, respect, freedom and justice. And these values constitute a guidance to establish a kind relation among mentors and mentees. **A relationship based on mutual respect and recognition as a necessary prerogative to create a bond of trust.**

Through the experience with the young people participating in the Re-Generations program, we noticed that in many cases young people are not familiar with the feeling of being treated with kindness. Many times, at the beginning of a mentoring relationship they find it hard to believe the motivations of the mentor and they ask themselves: Why does my mentor treat me so well? Does he want something from me? **We observed that in many cases kindness it is the key for the young person to feel safe in the relationship.**

**I'VE FOUND A VERY KIND PERSON, SHE'S HELPED ME
IN DOING MANY THINGS, GETTING TO KNOW THE CITY,
THE SCHOOL, HOW ITALIANS LIVE**



MENTEE, ITALY

Adopting an approach based on HHRR requires a personal, existential, professional positioning that becomes not only an ethical safeguard but also a key element of individual credibility, also in the eyes of mentees.

When it comes to mentoring, it may constitute a practical way to translate human rights principles and provisions into practice considering these as a capital of humanity ready to be shared as a common and straight forward transnational culture. A language that could structurally help us to qualify relationships among persons, among their stories and at the same time to systemically orient the definition of any mentorship scheme. Related to this is **the title of the chapter**, which **responds to the attempt of suggesting that mentoring can express a space of sincere humaneness in an often excessively hostile life context.**

**KINDNESS IS THE DIMENSION THAT MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO
ACKNOWLEDGE AND CARE FOR THE DELICATE AND SACRED
NATURE OF EACH HUMAN BEING.
IN THIS SENSE WE COULD CONSIDER THAT THE PROMOTION OF
HUMAN RIGHTS SHOULD ALWAYS BE ACCOMPANIED BY A KIND
SIGHT AND A KIND ACTION.**

ATTENTIVENESS

THE RELATIONSHIP: CONSIDERING THE CENTRALITY OF EACH PERSON AS THE FOCUS OF EVERY MENTORING EXPERIENCE.

The etymology of the word mentor comes from the Odyssey: Mentor was the trusted friend and advisor of Odysseus, who, before leaving for Troy, asked Mentor to take care of his son Telemachus and prepare him to succeed him on the throne. Throughout the poem, the Goddess Athena takes the form of Mentor to guide, protect, and instruct Telemachus during his travels. In this role, Mentor acts as teacher, guardian, and protector, instilling wisdom and providing advice.

Mentoring is today commonly known as a special kind of one-to-one relationship in which a person with specific skills and competences (the mentor) accompanies another person (the mentee), normally younger or less experienced, to develop his or her own. Thus, the primary tool of mentoring is the “mentor-mentee” relationship.

In general terms, a mentoring relationship is characterised as follows:

- **Exclusivity (ad personam):** mentoring is a one-to-one relationship
- **Informality:** mentoring is a non-institutionalised action
- **Learning:** mentoring is an educational process
- **Networking:** mentoring involves the local community
- **Orientation:** mentoring provides guidance
- **Autonomy and control:** mentoring favours empowerment but has its own limitations
- **Empathy:** mentoring implies a sensitivity to the feelings of others

ACCORDING TO THIS DEFINITION, WE CAN ASSUME THAT MENTORING IS A PEOPLE-CENTRED TOOL FOCUSED ON THE INTERACTION AMONG TWO INDIVIDUALS.

Everyone is unique and diverse as is every mentoring relationship. Recognizing this uniqueness, is crucial to create meaningful mentoring relationships that are able to generate sense and respond to specific needs. **A very important component in every mentoring experience is the recognition of this tailored, one-to-one approach.** This intrinsically implies recognizing and valuing diversity as an opportunity of acquiring new knowledge and perspectives.

In a world of human relations, considering the centrality of each diverse story is the approach that may help to avoid standardizations of methods and results and prove effective for a functioning relationship. **This holistic approach means also considering the person in his or her entirety and considering also this person in his or her relation with others and with the surrounding environment.**

Placing the centrality of the person at the core of the mentoring relationship means adopting a certain attitude. Establishing a new human relationship is something very spontaneous and its results are unpredictable. However, there are some considerations that may help understanding the conditions that enable mentors to build positive links with mentees and also stress the potentialities and limitations of the mentoring relationship.

The construction of an attentive mentoring relationship can, in addition, be qualified by some other considerations.

- MATCHING

When it comes to mentoring relationships developed in the framework of a structured program, the step of the "matching" becomes significant to facilitate the tailored approach mentioned above. **The procedure of "matching" requires attention and consistency in order to carefully consider the characteristics and special needs of the mentee and combine them with the re-**

sources of a mentor. For example, if a mentee identifies a need in relation with the educational dimension, it would be reasonable to connect him with a mentor having experience in educational paths. **Other criteria that apply to the matching are: time availability and compatibility, location, languages, hobbies, personal characteristics, gender, age, preferences.** Considering all these aspects means contributing at creating the conditions that favor the development of functioning relationships.

- **STORIES, BIOGRAPHIES AND NARRATIONS**

Mentoring offers the possibility to pay close attention to stories and narratives as a dynamic dimension that is key to consider the centrality of the individual. Talking about biographies means talking about our human dimension, regardless of our social or professional role. It means putting at the front of our interaction something that we all share but that is different for each one of us. And it means giving space to the uniqueness of our stories. This is very much linked with considering the centrality of the person, his or her needs, expectations, potential. When we refer to narrations, we refer to the way we make sense of our reality and it is dynamic in the sense that it is constantly changing in our relationship with the environment, just as every narrative is produced by someone who is narrating and by someone who listens.

FROM THIS EXPERIENCE WE COULD DERIVE THE FACT THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO CONSIDER THE CENTRALITY OF THE PERSON WITHOUT TRYING TO UNDERSTAND HIS OR HER NARRATION.

Considering the stories may help also at avoiding stereotypical thinking or at grouping people into categories primarily identified with their needs. Of course, we can identify general patterns, but they will always take on a different meaning when related to the real experience of individuals. In this respect, **men-**

toring can constitute an important space for narration that can offer a real opportunity of participation and expression, which are fundamental HHRR values.

- TRUST AND LISTENING

Based on the Re-Generations experience, trust and listening are essential aspects for developing a positive meaningful mentoring relationship.

Trust is a complex notion that depends on many factors. It may be created or not. It cannot be ensured *a priori*. However, trust can be offered, can be given, if there is motivation to do so. The more one is able to offer trust, the more s/he will be able to make the other remember about it and about the motivations that allow him to overcome obstacles. **Trust is more easily generable when one has received it.** It is about deepening the experiences that we have gone through and detecting also what has been missing in our biography. Trust needs to be trained, also by identifying it in relation to our own experience. It takes time and requires the attitude of being present.

INITIAL TRUST WAS ONE OF THE MAIN DIFFICULTIES.
FINDING COMMON POINTS OF INTEREST. GOLDEN
MEAN IN COMMUNICATION. THE WAYS OF DEALING WITH IT:
CONSISTENCY IN OUR COMMITMENTS, ROTATING ISSUES
UNTIL THEY ARE FOUND.

MENTOR, GREECE

Building a trustful relationship cannot be done without an attitude of active listening. Listening is more than just hearing what the other person is saying. **Active listening is based on empathy and acceptance.** It is based on the creation of a positive relationship, characterized by a climate in which a person can feel empathetically understood and, in any case, not judged.

When you practice active listening, instead of adopting attitudes that are traditionally considered "good observers", it is more appropriate to make yourself

available to really understand what the other person is saying, even highlighting possible difficulties in understanding. In this way, it is possible to establish relationships of mutual recognition, respect, and learning. To become “active”, listening must be open and available not only to the other person and what he or she is saying, but also to oneself, to listen to one’s own reactions, to be aware of the limits of one’s own point of view, and to accept not knowing and the difficulty of not understanding.

The main elements that characterize active listening include:

- **Suspending value judgments and classificatory urgency**, trying not to define a priori one’s interlocutor or what s/he says in “categories” of known and codified meaning;
- **Observe and listen**, gathering all the necessary information about the contingent situation, remembering that silence helps to understand and that true listening is always new, never defined in advance because it renounces an already acquired knowledge;
- **Put yourself in the other person’s shoes** - demonstrate empathy, trying to take on the point of view of the person you are talking to and sharing, as far as is humanly possible, the feelings they are experiencing;
- **Verify understanding**, both in terms of content and of the relationship, reserving, therefore, the possibility of asking open-ended questions to facilitate the exposure of others and improve your own understanding;
- **Take care of the logistics**, paying attention to the physical and spatial context of the environment in which the communication takes place in order to facilitate the interlocutor and make him feel as comfortable as possible.

**MENTORING IS LISTENING TO, NOT BEING ALONE,
HAVING SOMEONE TO ASK FOR ADVICE OR HELP.**



MENTEE, ITALY

These are orientations that may help at predisposing appropriate conditions to develop a positive mentoring relationship tailored to the needs and interests of the persons involved, considering that in mentoring programs both parties (mentees and mentors) voluntarily decide to engage in this kind of practices.

Attentiveness is therefore an attitude that allows to be focused and to be present. In the Re-Generations experience, very often mentees find themselves in environments of institutional care where the proposals they receive are highly standardized and hardly ever adjusted to their specific needs or expectations, or that have little consideration about their personal dimension. The presence of a person that is willing to put their attention at the disposal of the mentee can contribute to optimizing the resources that the context may offer and personalize them through the mentee's participation. As each person is unique and presents personal resources, attentiveness allows to detect limits and possibilities, to reach tailored objectives from an informal human dimension.

Every mentorship relation should be based on the awareness that each individual has a story and mentorship could intervene in one way or the other on this life story. **At the end, the mentoring couple has the possibility to generate a circular movement that will modify both stories, the mentor and the mentee's ones.** In addition, this central movement may become a vector of change in relation to the surrounding environment.



The meaning of relationship is therefore only limited to the relationship between mentor and mentee but conceived as the relation between two worlds and two cultures of belonging to a given context. The relation between mentor and mentee with a context that very often appears in opposition with the genesis of meaningful relationships, reducing them to bureaucratic procedures. **The notion of relationship can be read as a unique dimension to point out possible common senses, directions and meanings between two persons that belong to different worlds but who encounter each other to face the present together.**

The attentiveness of the mentor is an essential dimension to nurture a reciprocal care relationship based on the recognition of the diversity of every story and the precious uniqueness of each human being.

FLEXIBILITY

THE TRANSCULTURAL APPROACH AS A CORE ELEMENT OF ANY MENTORING RELATIONSHIP.

Every mentoring experience is likely to deal with a diversity of cultural and social backgrounds. Cultural diversity is meant here in a broad sense and not only from the point of view of the “national culture”. Two persons can have different cultural identities and be from the same city or even from the same neighborhood.

Actually, the consideration of the cultural diversity is a right embedded in HHRR instruments, which recognize the right of people to cultural life, to practice their own religion and spirituality and to use their own language, in order to allow mutual respect.

Mentoring practices should be therefore able to interact with diversity as an existing element which is intrinsically present in every relationship. This involves an exercise of mediation as an essential effort to qualify new relationships with unknown persons, regardless of their origin. Mediation is understood as the set of functions that allow the connection and integration between the person and the general and specific context in which they carry out their experience (Defence for Children, 2010). It has a lot to do with the communicative dimension even if it is not only a matter of understanding the other in an open and neutral mood, without being conditioned by one’s own cultural modalities, but it is also about trying to be understood by the other.

IT IS ABOUT FINDING TOGETHER A WAY OF COMMUNICATING THAT REPRESENTS A BRIDGE BETWEEN DIFFERENT CULTURES AND BACKGROUNDS.

And not only. **The transnational approach suggests to grasp universal meanings to transcend cultural boundaries and find common senses.** The aim would be to explore dynamic connections among cultures and narrations that generate understanding and therefore can be translated into improved efficiency of actions and responses. A mentoring relationship should be perceived as relevant by all those involved, even if they belong to different cultural codes. In this perspective, considering the differences and diversity of each person should always be a key dimension in designing mentoring schemes and “translating” them into culturally sustainable and relevant models and practices.

Given the different cultural backgrounds of the mentees involved in Re-Generations, the role of transcultural mediation in mentoring represented an essential dimension to efficiently orient the processes of accompaniment to mentees. **This means for mentors to consider other ways of conceiving things and other possible meanings, which brings to recognizing the relativity of one’s assumptions and perceptions with a spirit of openness and flexibility.**

The intention of valuing diversity, inclusion, appropriateness and also effectiveness of the action we perform, cannot avoid to always question and evolve our way of building knowledge which often is limited by stereotypes tending to cage diverse realities in rigid boxes unable to grasp differences as well as relations among things.

According to the Re-Generations perspective, mentoring relations should be always flexible enough to leave space to the unknown, to the invisible. A mentor should be able to leave room to something that is diverse and sometimes also divergent from his own experience. In this sense, **mentoring proposes a constant exercise of decentralizing our cultural way of seeing and valuing things and getting closer to other conceptions.** This of course doesn’t mean giving up values or beliefs but simply to constantly consider that they might not be the same for other persons. Qualifying this suspension of judgment might be a

crucial challenge that could open up new windows and opportunities and, at the same time, refrain from a tendency towards discrimination or paternalism.

The settings which the young mentees tend to find themselves in seem to have precluded the possibility for them to genuinely express their own identity. In many instances mentors have represented an opportunity to enable a channel of genuine expression of mentees' views and perceptions. **This helps mentees to question themselves and recover a dimension of autonomous thinking, which is not common within systems of migration management where migrant persons succumb to a mechanism for which they tend to act according to what the system expects from them rather than to what they really feel.** This is very much linked to the rigidity of the rules that characterize, for example, residential facilities that bring young people to relate in a distant manner with educators whereas with mentors they find a more informal context that makes them feel more understood and at ease. Therefore, mentoring represents an opportunity, because it is a space outside institutional settings that are culturally conditioned. **From mentors and mentees experiences it seems that informal moments are essential to begin the relationship and also to find channels of mutual recognition and understanding.**

In light of this, in mentoring experiences, mentors could try to:

- Pay attention to understanding the identity and the broader socio-cultural and relational context which the young person feels he or she belongs to;
- Support the mentee in the (re)construction of meaningful contacts and relationships in this regard;
- Support the mentee in the definition of modalities and activities that allow the valorization of his or her cultural needs and expressions.

The relationships that are developed through mentoring experiences are a unique opportunity to encourage and promote encounter, enrichment, and mutual growth through intercultural exchange for the realization of the last point listed. In view of diversity, **personal knowledge can create closeness (Eldelstein, 2006) and proximity can bring sharing and trust.** And from this

interaction between different cultural experiences, new, novel elements can emerge, creating common languages and visions in diversity.

**FROM THE MENTORING EXPERIENCES I TAKE WITH ME
IMAGES OF A DIFFERENT EVERYDAY LIFE,
THE RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY, CULTURE. ALSO,
INSPIRATION FOR HER BRAVERY**

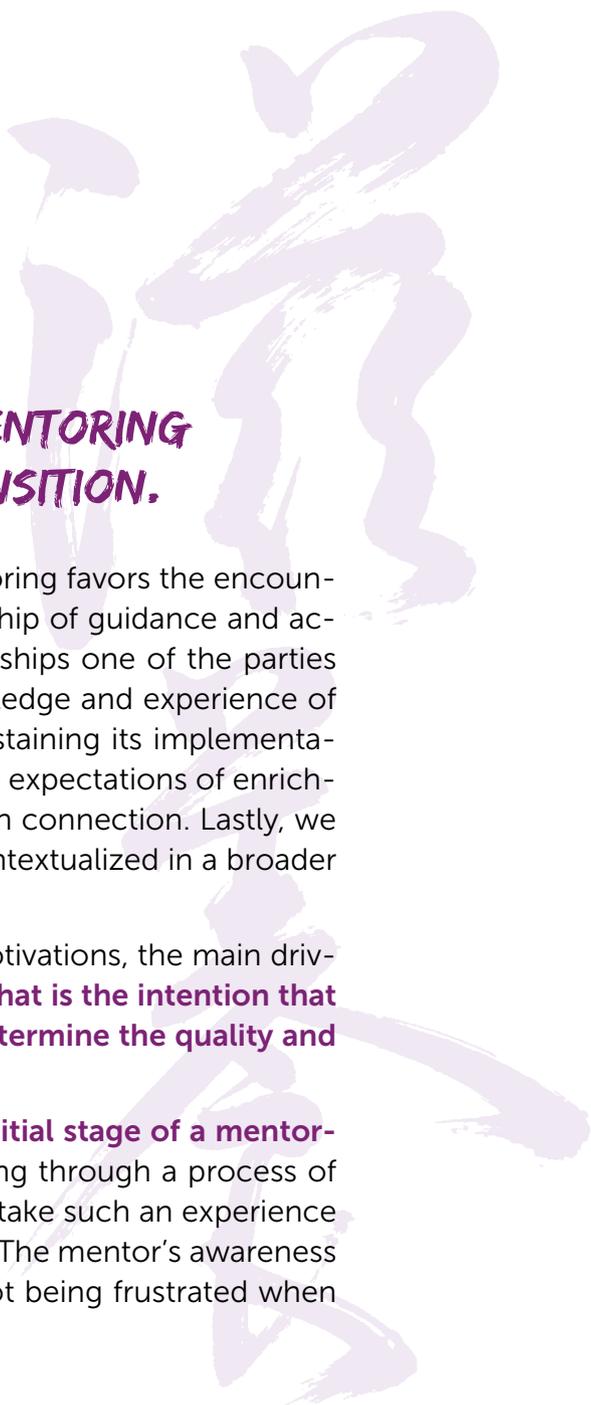


MENTOR, GREECE

Linked to this and broadening the perspective, it is also worth reflecting on how to relate to a diverse in a world where the symmetry of relationships is highly conditioned by power and subordination dynamics that also condition the way in which all of us act. In this sense, mentoring could represent also an opportunity to deconstruct some of the certainties of our collective thinking which may be based on biased prerogatives concerning the macro relations among cultures.

Flexibility allows to consider to create new contexts and discover new interconnected relations among things. It allows both the mentor and the mentee to rediscover and revitalize their positioning individual and mutual relation in the world.

NURTURANCE



THE PEDAGOGICAL INTENTION OF MENTORING INVOLVING YOUNG PERSONS IN TRANSITION.

As we have presented in the previous chapters, mentoring favors the encounter of two persons for the development of a relationship of guidance and accompaniment. It is expected that in mentoring relationships one of the parties involved, i.e., the mentee, can benefit from the knowledge and experience of the mentor in orienting their own life project and sustaining its implementation. The mentor, from their side, also has her/his own expectations of enrichment and discovery that could derive from this human connection. Lastly, we have also highlighted how this relationship can be contextualized in a broader dimension that involves the surrounding environment.

However, it is worth reflecting upon which are the motivations, the main drivers, that may bring someone to become a mentor. **What is the intention that stands at the core of this role? Can this intention determine the quality and efficiency of the mentoring relationship?**

These questions are of primary importance at the initial stage of a mentoring path. Mentoring candidates should not avoid going through a process of “self-assessment”, by asking themselves why to undertake such an experience which is not exempt from complexity and challenges. The mentor’s awareness of their intention is proportional to the chances of not being frustrated when carrying out a role that has its own limitations.

Possible self-assessment criteria for mentor candidates:

- Motivation
- Knowledge or awareness of the mentees' situation
- Personal circumstances (absence of significant worries or difficulties)
- Family situation
- Characteristics of their own social network
- Good knowledge of the local context
- Interests, habits and hobbies
- Personal character and competences
- Emotional stability
- Time availability
- Being able to identify a mentor in their own life experience

Whereas it is hard to determine which motivations are “right” or “wrong”, is possible to share some considerations that may help mentors from the beginning to understand the nature and implications of mentoring.

The Re-Generations initiative recognizes in mentoring a structural connection and overlapping with the core elements of pedagogy intended as the process of learning and evolving personal knowledge and comprehension of the reality considering also the interactions that take place during learning. Mentoring, in fact, represents a growth experience both for the mentor and the mentee, again making reference to the circularity of this process. Without this availability and openness to learn, mentors could interpret their role from a unidirectional point of view, which would preclude the exchange dimension as a core element of mentoring.

THIS POSSIBILITY OF GETTING TO KNOW OTHER CULTURES AND OF BEING IN THE RECIPROCALITY REPRESENTS A MODEL TO BE GIVEN TO THE SOCIETY. BEING ABLE TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE OFTEN WANTING INDEPENDENCE AND WANTING TO SHOW THAT THEY ARE CAPABLE

MENTOR, ITALY

IN THIS LIGHT, AVAILABILITY AND OPENNESS TO LEARN SHOULD BE A FUNDAMENTAL INTENTION OF A MENTOR'S CANDIDATE.

Very often this intention goes hand in hand with a spirit of curiosity, understood as a willingness to understand and deepen other realities. This feeling of curiosity, however, has to be qualified by a sense of commitment and responsibility. Likewise, **solidarity is a complementary driver of many mentors, albeit it has to be distinguished from the need of healing the sense of privilege that some citizens of our western societies may experience.** While it is a legitimate self-recognition, mentoring would then risk to become an action of philanthropy which clashes with the rights-based approach presented earlier. In the Re-Generations actions, we rather tried to present mentoring as an exercise of civil commitment or active citizenship so as to highlight the transformative power of mentoring at multiple levels and not only from a narrow perspective that considers the mentee as a mere recipient of help. Mentors tend to express a willingness to contribute to a fairer society by being actively involved and making their time, skills and resources available. Linked to this, it is fair noting that a significant proportion of mentor candidates have previous experience in volunteering activities or have already been in contact with young people in related socially committed initiatives.

This awareness of the empowering effects of mentoring as a non-philanthropic action is facilitated when mentors try to find in their own biography the elements that could qualify their motivation. By thinking about themselves when they were younger, and the needs and challenges they faced, they see more clearly what they can offer to the mentoring experience and eventually assess the appropriateness of this choice.

When proposing the biographical exercise “thinking about a mentor in your life”, persons have defined their mentors as persons who had the availability to recognize in you something special, unique. One of the feelings that connect a mentee with a mentor is precisely the feeling of being in some way important and relevant. **For the mentor creating this special space often corresponds to the openness to learn, to get involved in an exchange that is relevant for both.**

I FEEL MORE INDEPENDENT NOW. I CAN DO THINGS ALONE. I FEEL STRONGER.



MENTEE, GREECE

Lastly, it is worth mentioning the voluntary nature of mentoring. By being voluntary, mentoring is and becomes a community development intervention. Studies show how mentors rediscover themselves in a new social role. Research demonstrates that when mentors approach this programme, they really want to spread positive values, they better understand themselves and the community. Mentoring is thus bridging social capital. Communities are characterized by different forms of social capital and mentoring is a type of bridging social capital: it connects groups from different cultural, socio-economic backgrounds.

From the perspective of the mentee, the fact that mentors perform their role voluntarily and free of charge is a strong demonstration of the genuine interest that these citizens devote to them. This contributes to enhance the credibility of mentors in the eyes of mentees, which in many instances are surrounded by adults who recover professional roles in which other interests take priority over the interests of the mentees.

THE MENTOR IS A PERSON WHO IS COMMITTED TO HELPING YOU VOLUNTARILY, FOR ME THIS IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER CASES.



MENTEE, GREECE

This is the meaning of the word of nurturance, the title the present chapter. Nurturance understood as the act of caring, offering inspiration to grow, as part of an educational process.

GUIDANCE

THE ROLE OF A COMPETENT MENTOR.

When talking about structured mentoring programmes, we have seen the importance of setting proper foundations for a successful mentoring relationship. Since mentoring has the final goal of accompanying a process of personal growth for those involved, it becomes essential to make sure that all the prerequisites for a positive experience are met.

We have talked about the approach that could help putting mentoring in context from a human rights perspective. We have also shared a series of considerations to qualify the mentoring relationship by considering the centrality of the person. We have also reflected about how mentoring interacts with diversity and which are the core intentions for mentors to undertake a such experience. But which are the specific functions of a mentor and which requirements should a mentor meet in order to be competent enough to carry out their functions without becoming a specialist or a professional figure?

The title of this chapter synthetizes pretty well the general role of a mentor. Guidance, accompaniment, orientation, advice, are terms that indicate the function of a referential figure. Someone who is close and who sincerely cares about the other, without asking anything in return but being ready to learn and receive. Mentors are normally asked to contribute to the mentee's autonomy, by standing next to them and assisting them in better defining and realizing their life project.

THE MENTOR HELPS YOU IN DOING MANY THINGS
WHEN YOU NEED THEM, THEY EXPLAIN THEM TO YOU
OR THEY GO AROUND WITH YOU.



MENTEE, ITALY

From the Re-Generations experience we have derived a series of **attributes that could characterize a “good mentor”**:

- **Present but not invasive**
- **Proactive in orienting the mentee** from an educational perspective with a critical and analytical capacity
- **Listens to the young mentee** and is able to support their own expression
- **Respects the mentee’s opinions, values, views** without substituting to the mentee
- **Focuses on understanding the needs and expectations of the mentee** while having the capacity to look for alternatives if appropriate
- **Gives space to the possible difficulties that may emerge** during the mentoring experience with a certain detachment, without being overwhelmed by them
- **Is available to ask for help or advice** and to share their experience with other mentors or professionals
- **Is able to question their own performance** and adapt it when necessary
- **Conveys serenity and positive thinking**

I WOULD DESCRIBE MY EXPERIENCE AS AN IMPORTANT PRESENCE, NOT INVADING, I WAS THERE WHEN THERE WAS A PROBLEM THAT THE MENTEE COULDN'T TACKLE ALONE.

MENTOR, ITALY

Based on the Re-Generations experience, we can see how often mentors are overwhelmed because they find themselves to deal with complex situations that are difficult to solve in the short term. Mentors don't have superpowers, and they are not asked to have them. This should be clear to them but also to all those who interact with them. Accepting the limitations of this role is fundamental to avoid frustration but also to understand the nature of this position.

At the same time, mentors should be provided with tools to best perform their role. When mentoring takes place in the framework of a program, there is a procedure that every mentor and mentee must follow. When it comes to mentors, normally there is an initial step, that can be done through face-to-face interviews or written questionnaires, aimed at selecting appropriate candidates.

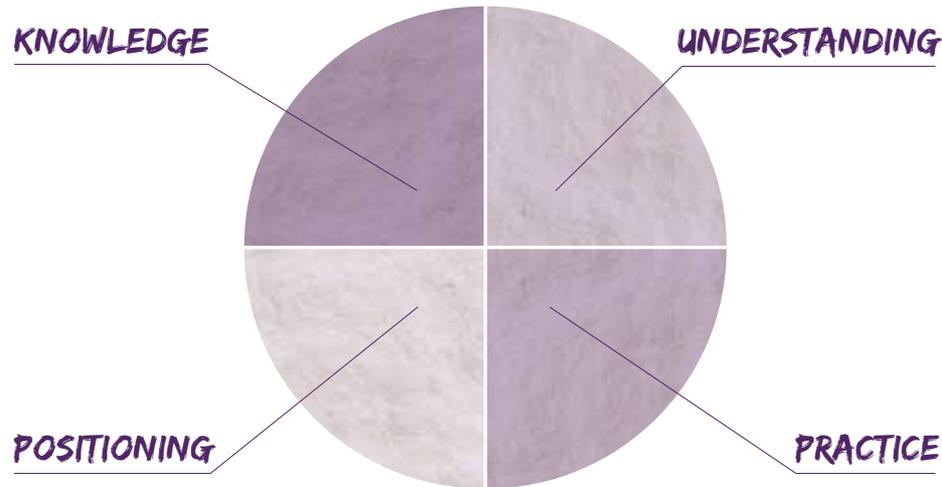
Selection criteria used in Re-Generations to help discerning the appropriateness of candidates:

- **Motivation for volunteering:** the mentor has a clear motivation for volunteering and knows how to properly communicate it, it is a thought-through decision. The motivation can be reconducted to internal and external factors.
- **Knowledge and contact with the reality of mentees,** awareness of the main features of the mentorship beneficiaries.
- **Situation of personal solidity:** autonomous person, with personal and professional stability. Open and transparent attitude when explaining their own life project.

- **Characteristics of the family network and relation with it.**
Open and transparent attitude to share his or her family network.
- **Characteristics of the social network and relation to it.**
Can identify different groups or persons with whom they relate to the local context.
- **Healthy interests and habits.** Identifies hobbies and things they do during the free time.
- **Features of the character, skills and attitudes:** positive before situations, active listening, capacity to face a criticism, transparency, leadership, sincerity in communication.
- **Mentors in their own biography.** Identification of persons that have had a mentor-like role in their life, as well as what they have brought into their lives. If he or she can identify these persons of reference in different areas of his or her life it would be better (not limited only to the family dimension for example).
The incapacity to recognize a mentor in her or his life could be an element of exclusion if not properly justified.
- **They as a mentor:** what could they provide to the young person, what would he or she like to share, which aspects would be easier and which others would be more difficult of the expected mentoring relationship.
- **Time availability:** at least 2 or 4 hours a couple of evenings or mornings a week (or weekend), as well as the possibility to participate in training and follow-up sessions.
- **Flexible schedule:** assess it case by case because it is a particular situation that sometimes can facilitate the relationship but other times can make it more difficult.

Mentoring programs should avoid selection processes which are purely formal, merely procedural. They should see the candidate more than once and leave time for reflection so as to generate a process of self-assessment in mentors.

Following the steps of selection and recruitment, **mentors are normally asked to attend a training course. This training is not professional but helps at equipping mentors with knowledge and tools that may be useful to perform their role competently.**



Objectives of training according to the Re-Generations experience:

Knowledge: favoring the acquisition of essential information derived from the different disciplines through which the mentor will be able to identify and qualify their function in relation to the child and the context that surrounds them.

Understanding: the possibility to relate the new information received and acquired to the personal, cultural and professional experience of the mentor.

Practice: the acquisition of practical tools, methodologies and techniques to “connect”, communicate and act effectively with and for the mentee and with the different actors and functions relevant to promote their interests.

Positioning: the ability to solicit questions and facilitate the possibility of answers in relation to the role that the mentor will acquire, which will necessarily involve the need to defend the rights and interests of the mentee but also the need to re-evaluate and re-determine the civil, ethical and cultural positioning of the citizen who decides to take on this role.

The overall objective of the training course as it has been conceived within the Re-Generations project **is to provide a structured framework of reference with theoretical and practical elements based on international and national standards and guidelines.** The training must be structured through an interactive approach that actively involves participants with the aim of fostering links between different disciplines and specialized subject areas.

In methodological terms, the Re-Generations training module was organized along the different thematic areas necessary to exercise the role of mentor and its theoretical and practical dimensions. **Trainers were trained on different disciplines and areas of expertise;** they interacted with participants through lessons, sessions, reviews and group work.

The course followed an inclusive methodology that seeks to enhance and integrate the experience of each participant in each of the various sessions.

TO THIS END, TRAININGS ALWAYS TOOK PLACE WITHIN A CIRCULAR SETTING WHERE PARTICIPANTS WERE SEATED IN A CIRCLE. THIS SETTING STIMULATES THE EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES AND SKILLS TO DEVELOP A MORE COMPLETE COLLABORATION.



The training method drew inspiration from adult education theories. It aims to connect acquired knowledge and skills with the real world through empirical analysis. The method works on the assumption that people learn best if they exchange experiences, engage in discussions and practical exercises, discover new aspects and analyze them together.

According to the Re-Generations methodology, the base-line course should provide a solid introduction to elements and dimensions that should afterwards be reinforced during an ongoing process of long-term mentoring training and supervision. By developing a general framework with participants, the course also aimed to solicit and facilitate a constructive peer learning and mentor relationship.

In terms of contents, the training was structured in four modules based on four main topics:

MODULE 1 - An Ecological Mentoring Approach Based on Respect for Human Rights

MODULE 2 - Understanding and Interacting with Stories Beyond Borders

MODULE 3 - Human Vulnerabilities, Resources and Relationships

MODULE 4 - The Mentoring Context: The Reference System and the Life Project

The Re-Generation training for mentors aimed at conveying a framework that could prepare mentors for their guidance role and, at the same time, support them when performing it. Of course, each mentoring programme should adapt the contents depending on its target group of mentees, but in terms of method, ensuring the meaningful interaction of participants could apply in any kind of mentoring training.

Lastly, considering the characteristics of the role, at the end of a mentoring training is good to leave a space of reflection. **It is very important that mentors are fully aware of their suitability to be engaged in such an experience.** An exercise of self-assessment is therefore a good way for candidates to integrate the notions that have been shared in the preparatory phase and at the same time to exercise this self-awareness that would bring them to decide whether to continue or not the mentoring experience.

THE AVAILABILITY AND THE OPENNESS OF A PERSON TO BE GUIDED IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE ACTUAL POSSIBILITY TO GUIDE SOMEONE ELSE.

The notion of guidance should therefore be intended as a reciprocal attitude as well as a courageous position in a complex world where we do not have all the answers.

SERVICE

THE FUNCTION OF MENTORING IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION.

Even if this memoir has a “universal” vocation, is true that the Re-Generations experience has been substantially marked by the migration context which mentees found themselves in. Having a consistent understanding of the specific phenomenological context it is of paramount importance to:

- **Share a common framework of reference** that provides orientation to read the reality;
- **Set the limits and possibilities of the mentor's action** to avoid frustration from the one side and to avoid behaviors that may lead to undesired results for the mentee's project;
- **Find strategies to overcome possible difficulties.**

The Re-Generations initiative is grounded on HHRR and the understanding of migration is informed by this paradigm. Using HHRR as the lenses through which we interpret social phenomena is an interesting exercise to try to connect ourselves and our actions with that given phenomenon even if we don't perceive to be part of it.

When it comes to migration, for example, the following considerations show that by deepening our reading of the reality we may grasp points of connection between apparently distant life situations.

- How was the life of the mentee in his country of origin? Which

were the motivations that explain their departure? Which is their connection with his context of belonging? How these aspects affect their present and the way they interact with the hosting context and with us?

- How is this person recognized by our system? Which is their legal status and how does this determine their right to citizenship understood in broad terms? Is there an overlap between person and status? How can mentoring represent a space of humanity within a migration system that may lead to the bureaucratization of the human existence?
- How do we consider the global dimension of migration, its causes, and the collective responsibilities? How can the social function of mentoring go beyond the relationship between two individuals?

Mentoring is very often proposed to “repair” situations of social exclusion. But what do we mean by integration or social inclusion? There are different approaches that respond to this question. **According to a linear approach, social integration is the process by which an ethnic or cultural group (in ethnographic terms) adapts to a larger group (comparable to the assimilationist approach).** However, in this case, the host or dominant society remains intact.

The fusional approach, instead, sees integration as a slow and progressive process of fusion or reformulation of various systems of premises that incorporates attitudes, perspectives, and approaches that produce transformations aimed at amalgamation and thus at a homogeneous result. This approach provides for change in both the migrant and host populations. However, an amalgamation involves the loss of one’s heritage, the renunciation of one’s origins, roots, and identity.

IT IS AN EXPERIENCE THAT CHANGES ONE'S OWN POINT OF VIEW ON MANY ASPECTS OF MIGRATION, OF (RECIPROCAL) INTEGRATION AND ON HOW OUR COUNTRY IS BEING TRANSFORMED.

MENTOR, ITALY

An alternative would be **the circular approach**, that **conceives integration as a social change that involves both the migrant community and the host society in an interactive and reciprocal process that introduces new common elements without having to give up their identity of origin, making use of the richness of diversity**. This approach implies a process of macro-social change through encounters, exchanges, mutual knowledge of individuals and their stories, personal contact. Mentoring would fit in this last model, which sees in the exchange between different communities an opportunity for evolution and enrichment. Mentoring can become an asset to qualify the hosting of migrant persons in the community of arrival.

Going back to the function that a mentor can develop when the mentee finds him or herself in a context of migration, it is worth trying to contextualize the general tasks of mentoring in the specific situation of that given person.

As we have said, mentoring is about guiding, orienting the life project of a person and contributing to their process of autonomy.

LIFE PROJECT IS THE TERM USED TO DEFINE AN INDIVIDUALIZED AND SHARED PROJECT TOOL, TIME LIMITED, THAT REPRESENTS A JOINT COMMITMENT BETWEEN THE YOUNG PERSON AND THE ADULT OF REFERENCE, THE MENTOR IN THIS CASE.

The life project is normally aimed at:

- The social insertion of the young migrant;
- Their personal growth;
- Their cultural development;
- Their right to housing, to health, to education and to vocational training and access to work.



All these areas constitute a possible framework within which the objectives of the mentoring relationship could be defined. It may be the case that the mentee has a prevalent need in relation to these areas. This would represent the main objective to be reached. However, complementary objectives involving other areas may also be identified if we want to consider the person holistically. **For example, a mentee could identify the need to find a job as their more urgent need but this cannot be isolated from other aspects such as the social contacts (that may help finding a job) or documents (that may allow to be regularly in the labor market).**

From a methodological perspective, the direct active participation of the mentee in defining the life project is essential. They must deeply understand the scope of the project and get involved in the possible strategies that may lead to reaching the objectives.

Defining the life project and its objectives in the framework of a mentoring relationship is also a good way to keep track of the progress achieved during the mentoring experience and to measure its impact.

Evidence shows that in the majority of cases impact is reached during the mentoring relationship.



Possible impact of a mentoring relationship in relation to the mentee's life project:

- Improved language skills;
- Enhanced self-esteem;
- Enlargement of the social network;
- Continuity of educational paths;
- Enhanced access to work, health services, housing, education programs;
- Improved knowledge of the local context;
- Increased opportunities for cultural and leisure activities;
- Better understanding of social norms and bureaucratic procedures.

THEY HELPED ME TO KNOW MORE THINGS AND ABOUT MY INTEGRATION. I SPEAK BETTER ENGLISH AND GREEK WHEN I SPEAK WITH MY MENTOR AND WITH YOU (THE MENTORING PROFESSIONAL).

MENTEE, GREECE

In the particular context of migration, having a private citizen who sincerely cares about you and puts their resources at your disposal can make the difference for a young person who finds themselves alone in another country, far from their home, in a new context that tends to recognize migrant persons first as migrants and only after as persons.

THE HUMANITARIAN ASPECT MARKED ME MORE IN THIS PROJECT. SINCE MY ARRIVAL IN THIS COUNTRY, IT IS THE FIRST TIME THAT I HAVE FELT TO HAVE SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS ME AS A BROTHER OR A PARENT.

MENTEE, GREECE

The notion of service requires individuals to find a meaningful space in their lives to concretely act for the life of someone else. It recalls how essential it is to conceive another person's specific needs as something that includes everybody's needs.

COOPERATION

MAKING MENTORING A SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE.

It has been mentioned repeatedly in this work how mentoring is focused on the relationship between the mentee and the mentor but always in connection with the surrounding context.



The different levels of the context

This includes in primis the closest level of connection of a mentoring pair, which is the mentoring programme within which they develop their relationship. In this case, mentor and mentee interact with a structure primarily aimed at supporting them individually and as a tandem. **The key assumption is that the support that mentors and mentees receive from the mentoring program is proportional to the degree of sustainability of the action both regarding the single relationships and also the mentoring program as such.**

Mentoring programmes should therefore count on dedicated operators with appropriate technical skills aiming at:

- Overseeing all the steps of a mentoring process;
- Acting as points of reference for mentors and mentees;
- Providing specific advice and support to the pairs;
- Ensuring compliance with the commitments that both parties have agreed upon;
- Activating specific external expertise to address specific challenges, problems or needs that may appear during the mentoring experience.

The support and follow up that mentors and mentees receive from mentoring programs can take different shapes, but they should cover all the steps of a mentoring process:

STEP	SUPPORT FROM MENTORING PROFESSIONALS	
	MENTEES	MENTORS
PROMOTION	Promote mentoring programmes in those places where the target group of mentees can be reached (shelters, youth associations, NGOs, schools or other education institutions, centers of non-formal education, etc.) through meetings, offline material, word of mouth but also on social media.	Promote mentoring programmes in those places where the target group of mentors can be reached (civil society organisations, NGOs, universities, general promotion) through meetings, offline material, word of mouth but also on social media.
RECRUITMENT	Receiving and meeting interested candidates and informing about the program while trying to understand the suitability of the candidate to get involved. Answering possible doubts.	Receiving and meeting interested candidates and informing about the program while trying to understand the suitability of the candidate to get involved. Answering possible doubts.
TRAINING	In the case of mentees, more than a training course, it may work to set a few propaedeutic meetings for operators to have a good understanding of the mentees' situation and make sure they understand the nature, functioning and implications of mentoring.	Organizing a basic training course and being present during its implementation in order to observe the group of candidates, the dynamics and respond to possible doubts. After the training, operators may suggest a self-assessment exercise to candidates in order to foster awareness and reflection about their suitability to get involved in the program.
SELECTION	Operators may arrange a meeting with the mentee to confirm their willingness to get into a mentoring relationship. If this is the case, the operator should gather from and with the mentee the relevant elements that allow predisposing a good matching with a mentor.	Operators may arrange a meeting with the mentor candidate to confirm their willingness to get into a mentoring relationship. If this is the case, the operator should verify the relevant elements that allow predisposing a good matching with a mentor, including time availability.
MATCHING	Mentoring professionals may try to find, for each mentee, the mentor candidate that best suits their specific needs and characteristics. It may be advisable to symbolically commit to the mentoring program by signing, for example, a letter of commitment.	Mentoring professionals may try to assign to a mentee, a mentor whose strengths and characteristics meet what the mentee requires. Mentors should sign a document that expresses their commitment to the mentoring program.

(continue)

SUPPORT	The operator helps the mentoring pair to define a mentoring project, identifying the main objectives and strategies to reach them. The mentoring professional should arrange regular online or in presence meetings with the mentee and sometimes together with the mentor. The operator always reiterates their availability to solve any doubt or concern that may arise during the mentoring experience, either concerning the mentor or any other issue that the mentee would like to share. In case of need, the mentoring professional may activate external resources to support the mentee.	The mentor helps the mentoring pair to define a mentoring project, identifying the main objectives and strategies to reach them. When needed, the mentoring professional arranges online or in presence meetings with the mentor to exchange views and offer useful information or advice. The operator always reiterates their availability to solve any doubt or concern that may arise during the mentoring experience, either concerning the mentee or any other issue that the mentor would like to share. In case of need, the mentoring professional may activate external resources to support the mentor in his guidance role.
FOLLOW-UP	The mentoring professional should be proactive in organising complementary social, cultural or community activities with a group of mentees and/or mentors in connection with the local context.	The mentoring professional should organize training follow-up sessions with the community of mentors in order to deepen specific aspects that may be collectively relevant. The mentoring professional should also be proactive in favoring peer-to-peer exchanges among mentors.
CLOSURE	The mentoring professional assists the mentee in managing a serene closure of the relationship. They help the mentee in undertaking a final assessment of the mentoring relationship and, if appropriate, asks to fill in an evaluation questionnaire adapted to the mentee's capacities.	The mentoring professional assists the mentor in managing a serene closure of the relationship. They help the mentor in undertaking a final assessment of the mentoring relationship and asks to fill in an evaluation questionnaire.

The above considerations aim at sharing basic “tips” that could orient mentoring experiences in setting up a program that considers the support to mentors and mentees as a crucial aspect for a successful and sustainable action. These possible mechanisms of support could substantiate the role of mentors notwithstanding the absence of an institutional apparatus that frames mentoring programmes and the difficulties usually represented by contexts of action that deal with situations of fragility and social exclusion. Providing appropriate supporting tools also helps consolidating the mentoring relationship and building it in an environment of respect and empowerment so that it can be maintained in the future, outside the framework of the mentoring programme that is time limited.



VERY POSITIVE LIFE EXPERIENCE THAT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO SHARE WITH OTHER PEOPLE AND THAT IS NOT ENDING WITH THE CONCLUSION OF THE PROJECT. POSSIBILITY TO REFLECT AND ENRICH TO COLLECTIVELY FIND SOLUTIONS FOR THE FUTURE.

MENTOR, ITALY

Cooperation among the different parties involved is therefore a key value to ensure that joint efforts lead to desired results. **This spirit of cooperation is very much favored when there are peer support mechanisms in place.** These are efficient ways to promote mutual help among mentors, exchange of experiences and resources but also to nurture the collective dimension that mentoring can assume both as a collective voice that can claim for improvements but also as a space of community gathering and conviviality.



STRESS WITH SOME BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURES WAS A BIG CHALLENGE. WE DEALT WITH IT BY ASKING OTHERS ABOUT THE BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURES AND BY TALKING TO EACH OTHER.

MENTOR, GREECE

The holistic dimension of mentoring often requires interacting with different life dimensions, above all when it comes to mentees that are in the path of reaching their autonomy. It becomes therefore important to be able to look for specialistic support when necessary, even outside the mentoring program. In this sense, **the mentor and the mentoring professional could also be seen as "activators of contacts" with actors of the referral system**, as we will see in the following chapters.

The willingness to connect our diverse minds and action generates the possibility to cooperate and shape new meanings and new words together.

INTERDEPENDENCE

CONNECTING MENTORING WITH THE SURROUNDING CONTEXT.

We have seen how mentors and mentees relate to the closest level of the surrounding environment, this is the mentoring program. However, as it has been pointed out before, mentoring must be considered also as an action within a complex system and not as an isolated practice. Insisting on this has proved crucial for the Re-Generations experience in order to enhance the impact and efficiency of the mentoring action.

When dealing with persons or groups in disadvantaged situations there is a growing tendency in concentrating on the specific need or urgency that they present, while forgetting the element(s) of the context that determined or are responsible for the problem that the person is encountering. Often this tendency leads to identify the person with the need or the specific disadvantage they are manifesting. More and more frequently collective narrations boosted by mass media and by marketing messages propose situations of disadvantage without appropriate explanations on the causes and the responsibilities that determined them. Disadvantaged persons or groups are therefore uprooted from the real story that caused their problems. Re-Generations proposes not to lose the idea that the vulnerability a person may represent is determined by the systemic conditions of the context and implicates certain responsibilities. **This interdependence between causes and consequences;**

between contexts, actors and relations; between multilevel processes has to be detected and considered.

Taking as an example the Re-Generations target group, i.e., young unaccompanied migrants leaving care, we can see how the words that compose it correspond to categories that generally speaking suffer from a discrimination in our system that structurally creates vulnerability:

- **Young**
- **Unaccompanied**
- **Migrants**
- **Care-leavers**

This puts the mentee in a real need for support, but a kind of support that needs to be intelligent enough to challenge the standardization of the measures institutionally proposed to this group and find more efficient alternatives to enhance mentees' capacities and resilience.

This doesn't mean that the mentor should act alone but they should act differently from what they see doesn't work in the mentee's environment and promote change. Interdependence means also that changing one part of a system may affect other parts or the whole system. Thus, the difference a mentor can make if, for instance, they instill an improvement in the way a professional does his work, or if they help the mentee at achieving a result that could establish a precedent of significance for other mentees.

The suggestion would be then to operate at the micro level and respond to the urgency or address the specific problem that needs immediate solution but relating this level to a macro perspective that may provide clarity and sense to the mentoring action (*What I am doing and why am I doing it?*).

IT IS THIS CONNECTION THAT COULD ALLOW TO DEVELOP APPROPRIATE ACTION AND, AT THE SAME TIME, CONNECT THIS ACTION TO A WIDER RELEVANT DIMENSION.

In this sense we could say that in order to develop sustainable relations of support there is a necessity to consider what generated a certain need for support. It is this consideration that could allow us to generate more sustainable solutions and at the same time open up our mentoring experience to a wider level of analysis and action.

This systemic and ecological approach can also be translated into practice by focusing on how the mentor relates to the other actors of the different levels of the context in which the mentee finds him or herself in and which actions can the mentor undertake to achieve relevant results.

Linked to this, **it is interesting to reflect also upon the “neutral” position of the mentor in the system.** As an outsider actor, the mentor has an independence that may place them in a privileged position to act also to address or denounce possible dysfunctionalities of the system.

THE NOTION OF INTERDEPENDENCE INDICATES USEFUL PERSPECTIVES TO GENERATE NEW CULTURES AND GROW OUR POSSIBILITY TO RESHAPE OUR PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE STORIES.



VIGILANCE

MENTORING AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXERCISE ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP.

Engaging in a mentoring program can be seen as an engagement in an action of active citizenship. Active citizenship means people getting involved in their communities and democracy at all levels from local to national and global. An active citizen promotes the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political process developing a combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to work to make a difference in the society.

MENTORING MAKES YOU OPEN UP YOUR EYES AND HEART ON THE WORLD. IT MAKES YOU PERCEIVE HOW MUCH YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT A YOUNG PERSON GROWING UP. IT IS AN EXPERIENCE OF RECIPROCAL ENRICHMENT, WE COME OUT OF IT MORE AWARE. BUT YOU DON'T LEAVE IT, AFFECTION REMAINS.

MENTOR, ITALY

The political side of mentoring, as we have previously pointed out, implies considering it as a micro and as a macro action vectoring a very clear positioning strictly linked to a human rights-based perspective and focused on considering

collective biographies. According to the Re-Generations approach the mentor is a person, a citizen, that undertakes a cultural, a political as well as an existential positioning in the current world.

Through mentoring, citizens take an active role and accompany a young person on the road to independence. Through this they have the opportunity to see many gaps and bad practices of the system and it may be the first step to be able to make moves to change them. The most important thing is that **they directly see for themselves the difficulties that are created and function as a link between the state system and young people.**

MENTORING BECOMES AN EXERCISE OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP BECAUSE THERE IS A CLEAR WILLINGNESS OF CHANGING THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT AND THE SOCIETY WHERE WE LIVE. IN THIS CASE, IT IS ABOUT AN ALTRUIST ACTION WHERE THE MENTOR PUTS AT DISPOSAL THEIR TIME AND ENERGY TO ACCOMPANY ANOTHER PERSON WHO IS IN A SITUATION OF VULNERABILITY WITH POOR SOCIAL SUPPORT.

Moreover, one of the underlying objectives of mentoring relationships is the empowerment of the mentee with the purpose of helping them becoming active citizens and keep improving the society.

If mentoring programs become more and more frequent, the community of mentors could be reinforced and become a collective voice to claim, denounce or advocate for social or political improvements. And this is a clear reference to the democratic engagement that the direct participation of citizens in their communities represent.

Both mentors and mentees need to be vigilant not only of the events that occur in the life of a young refugee or immigrant, but also of the mentoring relationship itself. This of course does not mean that they should be in a constant state of anxiety, but that **they should try to identify and give space to what**

may arise. We see that mentor pairs who have these characteristics are very helpful to themselves and for the course of the relationship.

Talking about vigilance means talking about being focused. It means having the capacity to act as a watchdog over the processes and actors of the system in which the mentee is included. It means taking action when things are not going in the proper direction and try to reconduct situations that are deviating from what is legally and politically established.

In many instances mentees suffer from the consequences of systemic dysfunctions but they are not in the position to claim for their rights. **Mentors can help in raising their awareness on their rights, on the limitations of exercising them but also on the possible action to undertake in order to overcome the shortcomings of the system.** The mentor should have very clear which may be the consequences of their "activism" in the mentee's life and try to balance the determination of achieving social justice with the principle of "do no harm".

**IT IS AN EXPERIENCE OF GREAT HUMAN AND CULTURAL
VALUE, INDEED REGENERATING, A REALITY CHECK.**



MENTOR, ITALY

Trusting that someone close to us is vigilant of the situation allows the possibility to lower anxiety and experience a more fulfilling present.

CONSISTENCY

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS INTRINSICALLY INVOLVED IN MENTORING ACTIONS ADDRESSED TO YOUNG MIGRANT PERSONS.

The principle of “do no harm”, which is one of the main HHRR prerogatives, should cross-cuttingly inform mentoring programs.

“Do no harm” is to avoid exposing people to additional risks through our action. The mitigation of possible negative effects may not only involve target beneficiaries but also the wider environment.

This awareness requires permanent monitoring and assessment of the mentoring programs but also putting in place safeguards to ensure that the highest standards of protection are ensured to all those involved in the mentoring program. This is very much linked to the ethical dimension of any intervention involving particularly vulnerable situations and the need to ensure consistency between our discourse and our action, also in the eyes of mentees, especially if they have gone through unstable and hard situations. Is it possible to create a relationship of trust and sense without a clear ethical positioning?

We have previously suggested how adopting a HHRR perspective can represent an important safeguard from an ethical point of view. The underlying idea is that **a mentoring program grounded on HHRR must intrinsically be oriented by the HHRR principles.**

HHRR principles applied to mentoring:

UNIVERSALITY AND INALIENABILITY

mentoring is a universal and trans-cultural practice that can occur anywhere and cannot exclude anyone unreasonably.

INDIVISIBILITY

the mentor assumes a holistic approach; even when focusing on a specific issue, they take into account all aspects of the mentee's life (material conditions, education, work, health, housing, social contacts, cultural and spiritual dimensions, etc.).

INTERDEPENDENCE AND INTERRELATIONSHIP

the mentor takes into account the interdependent set of factors and contexts that influence the life of the mentee (cultural background and personal identity, relationship with the family of origin, relationship with the host community, regulatory framework of the host country).

PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

mentoring promotes participation and strengthens the mentee's ability to make decisions and improve their autonomy.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

the mentor must act and treat the youth without discrimination of any kind.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND RULE OF LAW

formal mentoring relationships are overseen by a professional organization that provides guidance and develops support mechanisms.

TRANSPARENCY

mentoring is a transparent relationship based on mutual trust and understanding that respects the right to privacy.

A HHRR perspective can also qualify the need to ensure that the action of mentors does not respond to other interests than the one of promoting the best interest of the mentee. Actually, **the characteristics of mentoring such as voluntarism, independence or training, constitute per se safeguarding mechanisms to avoid situations of conflict of interests or other problems of ethical grounds**. If mentors have a clear understanding of these principles and of the mentoring program's rules and theoretical framework, they will more likely act accordingly.

Still, considering the ethical dimension of our program must be unavoidable, above all when involving fragile groups such as young migrant persons leaving the care system. Carefully ensuring the appropriateness of proposing a mentoring experience to a mentee is a crucial step to be done by mentoring professionals. In fact, when selecting mentees, there are considerations very much related to this ethical dimension. The attempt is to avoid having to deal with situations that the mentoring program, and more specifically mentors and mentees, may not be able to sustain or may affect the feasibility of a mentoring relationship itself.

In the case of Re-Generations, for example, the program avoided to involve young people who didn't have the basic needs (such as shelter or food) covered. The reason is that these urgent and primary needs are prevalent and would have required another kind of action of social intervention. In this sense, it is worth being aware of the limits of mentoring to be able to distinguish when it is applicable and when not. Another case in which mentees may be excluded is if the mentoring professional detects that they have an economic expectation from mentoring. Of course, money is important and very often a need for mentees. However, this is not the kind of response that mentoring offers. It must be clear for all parties since the beginning to avoid misunderstandings or false expectations.

Another important caution is the gender perspective. This dimension has to be taken into account when matching mentors and mentees. It is important understanding at this phase if the mentee or the mentor could feel uncomfortable with persons from the opposite sex or if there is any gender issue that may worry them.

Lastly, it is particularly important to foresee specific ethical considerations and safeguarding provisions for mentees under the age of 18. In such cases, reinforced ethical considerations must be done and gathered under a child protection policy that each mentoring program addressed to children should have in place. **"All organisations whose work affects children need to develop a clear child safeguarding policy that prevents harm to children and outlines what measures are in place to respond when safeguarding concerns arise"**⁷. A child safeguarding policy must be developed to advance the highest standards of personal behavior and practice, in order to ensure that no harm occurs to children and adolescents during their involvement in mentoring activities.

HUMAN RIGHTS ARE DETERMINING A VERY ARTICULATE AND COMPREHENSIVE MAP THAT COULD ORIENT US IN GAINING CONSISTENCY BETWEEN WHAT WE THINK, WHAT WE SAY, WHAT WE DO AND WHAT WE ARE, ALONE AND TOGETHER.



⁷. *Keeping Children Safe, "Child Safeguarding Standards and How to Implement Them", p. 17*

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The Re-Generations project stems from the need to strengthen mechanisms for the social inclusion of the younger generation of migrants after the age of 18, through the involvement of the local community that welcomes them in the paths of reception from a young age. The involvement and support of members of the civil society who become “mentors”, i.e., reference points for these young people and bridges the gap between them and the community, becomes an important element of inclusion and enhancement of skills, stories and experiences of these young people.

This memoir is a middle ground between a narration about an experience and a guide for mentoring action. It attempts to propose a possible reflection aimed at disseminating a culture of meaningful relationships: relationships between generations, cultures, citizenships, genders, contexts, stories, under a Human Rights-based paradigm.

This work must be read in relation to the context in which it is framed: mentoring addressed to young boys and girls coming from foreign countries and leaving the child protection care system. At the same time, it proposes considerations that aspire to go beyond this specific case and be therefore applicable to all kinds of mentoring relationships.

Partners



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