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Preface

Demographic changes in our societies, such as aging population and an “disbalance” in population structure, as well as transformation of the needs of people, became a very relevant topic within public discourse and triggered a variety of discussions, sometimes even in a controversial manner. Various perspectives and differences in regard to this issue which exist between stakeholders in our societies (policy makers, social influencers, institutions, NGOs and general population), combined with diverse changes in recent years (loosening ties within the familiar context and dying-out of the social welfare state), underlines somewhat volatile and conflicting potential of this issue.

However, in various social contexts, such as that of collaborative and cooperative housing, there are diverse social experiments unfolding and developing, which often find their successful appliance in everyday life. Yet many of those innovative and indeed successful solutions are in many regards unknown to the wider public and do not play such a relevant role in ongoing public discussions.

Our goal was to explore exactly such examples of innovative approaches toward intergenerational solidarity. Our objectives were to map, analyze and summarize best-practices and experiences from this field, and based on our findings to develop a workshop model, which would enable dissemination of already gathered know-how in this regard beyond limits of such environments, thus enabling access to this knowledge and skills for wide variety of multipliers from diverse fields.

What we hope to achieve is not just to transfer existing knowledge in this regard, but to underline relevance and value of social solidarity models for any kind of future-related thinking, especially when pressing and even somewhat controversial social issues are addressed. Our hope is to empower local actors and communities in various countries in their tackling of relevant social questions and inspire civic engagement and participation, as well as further experiments related to this issue. In such a way we want to promote learning opportunities and innovative approaches, as well as to underline the relevance of grass-root expertise.

This Toolkit is an outcome of the project "Intergenerational Solidarity and Community-led Housing" co-funded by the EU Programme Erasmus+. The Project is implemented by Organizations Inwole (Potsdam, Germany), Pervolarides (Thessaloniki, Greece) and Ethos NGO (Odense, Denmark) from October 2024 until December 2025.

Further Information:

<https://www.inwole.de/>

<https://www.facebook.com/PervolaridesThessalonikis>

<https://ethosngo.org/>



Introduction

The workshop "Intergenerational Solidarity and Community-led Housing" serves as a structured exploration into how diverse forms of Community-led Housing and Living – often described also as collaborative, communal, cooperative etc. – can actively cultivate meaningful connections across generations. Moving beyond abstract ideals, this workshop provides a participatory framework not just for current or future residents of such spaces, but various community organizers, educators interested in group dynamics and questions of intergenerational solidarity, diverse policymakers, as well as all others genuinely interested into critically exploring the realities, challenges, and immense opportunities inherent in building resilient, intergenerational communities.

Starting point of the Workshop is Mapping of diverse practices related to intergenerational solidarity within the framework of collaborative Housing, conducted in Denmark, Germany and Greece. **Findings of the mapping** in three countries provided detailed insights into practices in three different contexts, which, analyzed and compared, enabled recognizing of various recurring patterns, and which could be further utilized for development of the Workshop. Additionally we have published a **comprehensive analysis** of both Mapping findings and Workshop applications.

The workshop's purpose is not merely to acknowledge generational diversity but to investigate and understand the multifaceted nature of intergenerational solidarity within the unique context of community-led housing. It recognizes that such solidarity is not automatic and requires intentional design, continuous reflection, and a commitment to mutual support. The workshop grounds this exploration in participants' lived experiences – drawing from their involvement in various groups, communities, and the diverse social roles they inhabit daily.

The Workshop seeks to **illuminate unique Contributions** by recognizing and valuating distinct strengths, perspectives and resources that each generation brings to a community (e.g., life experience, technological fluency, energy, historical perspective).

Its goal is to **unlock synergistic Potential**: Highlight the powerful possibilities that emerge specifically through intergenerational collaboration, moving beyond simple cohabitation to active partnership and shared purpose. Further it seeks to **bridge divisions**: Aim to overcome existing social distances and misunderstandings that can fragment communities, fostering genuine connection and mutual respect. Finally, it aims to **co-create resilient Structures**: Provide a space to envision and design concrete practices and structures that support long-term inclusivity, adaptability, and collective well-being.



Didactic Suggestions

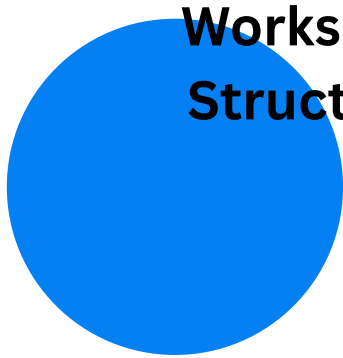
Hereby we would like to provide several didactic suggestions to all potential users, how to improve their experiences when applying the Workshop.

Relation to everyday experiences of participants: Perceive and integrate various attitudes and experiences of participants into the workshop flow. No matter what their specific background is, each and every participant has some attitude and previous experience in regard to this topic, and their perception and integration into the workshop would certainly trigger participants imagination and creativity and improve the overall experience with the Workshop significantly.

Collaborative learning: Even though the workshop emphasize the working in small groups, which could compete against each other, please keep on your mind, its purpose is to foster collaboration, not a competition. Collaborative approaches could trigger participant's creativity and encourage development of diverse complex solutions far better than any competitive process could.

Encourage the exploration: Goal of the workshop is not to contemplate if certain solutions are „realistic“ or not, or why they could not be implemented, but to boost participants imagination and motivate them to go beyond certain limits they (may) encounter in their everyday lifes, and thus encourage them to contemplate the nature of various limitations themselves and innovative ways to traverse them.

Experiential education: We highly recommend to connect implementation of the workshop with other forms of practical learning, such as Case-study explorations. Namely, topic-specific visits of Co-housing projects and/or specialized projects for intergenerational living could complement theoretical inputs and creative simulations conducted within the Workshop itself, thus significantly improving the overall perception, knowledge and various skills related to the its main topic.



Workshop Structure

The model unfolds in a structured, collaborative sequence:

1. Diverse Group Formation: Participants divide into small groups (3-5 participants), intentionally mixed across ages and backgrounds to mirror the intergenerational dynamic being studied.

2. Focused Exploration (30 mins): Each group investigates core concepts and dimensions of intergenerational solidarity/support within the collaborative housing context. Key questions, theoretical frameworks (like Bengtson's dimensions), and practical challenges guide their discussion. Ideas are captured on flipcharts.

3. Group Presentations (5-10 mins per group): Teams share their insights and findings, fostering collective learning.

4. Plenary Synthesis & Deep Dive: A facilitated whole-group discussion builds on the presentations, reflecting on uncovered facets of solidarity.

5. Provocation for Action: The workshop culminates by challenging participants to translate insights into tangible actions within their own communities, framed by the question: "How can we contribute to creating structures that strengthen intergenerational solidarity?" This structure ensures that theoretical understanding is immediately linked to practical application and personal reflection.

6. Conclusion: An Epilogue or a Beginning?

The workshop explicitly positions itself not as a definitive endpoint, but as a catalyst. Its closing provocation – "Epilogue... or just a beginning?" – underscores that understanding intergenerational solidarity is an ongoing process. The true measure of success lies in how participants translate the workshop's insights, frameworks, and collective energy into concrete actions within their own cooperative housing communities. It aims to empower residents to become active architects of communities where generational diversity is not just present, but is harnessed as the very source of strength, resilience, and enduring human connection. The workshop provides the tools and the spark; the community builds the fire.



Workshop flow

This flow is designed so that any practitioner – from social workers to community volunteers – can run the workshop, even without advanced facilitation training.

Each stage includes:

- ✓ Purpose
- ✓ Step-by-step instructions
- ✓ Timing
- ✓ Tips for mixed experience groups
- ✓ Optional extensions

1. Welcome & Framing

Duration: 10 minutes

Purpose: Establish safety, clarity, and shared expectations.

Steps:

1. Welcome participants and briefly present the aim: For example, “Today we will explore what intergenerational solidarity means and how we can strengthen it in our communities.”
2. Introduce the agenda in simple steps (introduction → group work → presentation → collective reflection → next steps).
3. Explain key principles: participation, respect for different experiences, no right/wrong answers.

Tips:

For mixed-age groups: emphasize that all experiences matter equally.

2. Warm-Up: Stories & Roles

Duration: 10–15 minutes

Purpose: Activate personal experience and lower social barriers.

Steps:

1. Ask participants individually: “Which roles exist in your life?” (elder, student, worker, caregiver, unemployed, volunteer etc.), as well as “Think of one moment when you received help from someone of another generation – or when you helped someone yourself.”
2. Continue sharing short stories in pairs or small groups.

Tips:

If participants hesitate or are shy: use paper cards instead of verbal sharing. For vulnerable groups: allow drawing instead of talking.

3. Mini-Input: The Six Dimensions of Intergenerational Solidarity

Duration: 10 minutes

Purpose: Provide a shared language.

Steps:

1. Present the six dimensions (Structural, Associational, Affectional, Consensual, Normative, Functional).
2. After each dimension, give one simple everyday example (e.g., sharing a kitchen = structural; daily greetings = associational, etc.)

Tips:

Allow one minute for clarifying questions. Avoid academic jargon; adapt explanations to the group’s literacy and experience level. Use images or icons for each dimension.

4. Main Activity: Group Exploration

Duration: 35–45 minutes

Purpose: Help participants connect theory with lived experience and community context.

Group Formation: Create small mixed-age, mixed-background teams (3–5 persons).

Task A – Understanding the Dimensions

(10–15 min)

Each group receives a simplified card set with the six dimensions and should discuss the following: Where do they see this type of solidarity in their lives or communities? Where is it missing?

Encourage concrete examples, not abstract concepts.

Task B – “Weak Ties” Discussion

(10–15 min)

Introduce the idea of weak vs. strong ties with a short explanation (1–2 min).

Each group should discuss the following: What weak ties exist in their community? Which ones could help strengthen social cohesion?

Tips:

Printouts help less experienced facilitators follow the flow without improvising.

In the case of participants low literacy use diverse photos showing examples (neighbors greeting, shared repair, lending tools, childcare circles).

5. Group Presentations

Duration: 15–20 minutes

Purpose: Structured peer learning.

Steps:

1. Each group has 3 minutes to make presentation, which should include a) Which solidarity dimensions they experienced in their lives, b) Which barriers they have experienced, and c) One suggestion how to make improvements
2. Facilitator captures key points on flipchart.

Tips:

Keep time tight to maintain energy. Validate all contributions—especially from vulnerable groups.

6. Synthesis & Facilitated Discussion

Duration: 15 minutes

Purpose: Identify collective themes and link to the research findings.

Steps:

1. Highlight common points across presentations.
2. Make 2–3 references to Mapping findings from Greece, Germany and Denmark. For Example: “Several groups mentioned the importance of shared spaces. This matches what we observed in Germany and Denmark where shared kitchens or gardens create natural opportunities for solidarity.”
3. Ask questions, such as what surprised them, or what is one thing their group could try next?

Tips:

Avoid long lecturing, always highlight possibilities, not deficits.

7. Action-Oriented Conclusion

Duration: 10 minutes

Purpose: Transforming reflection into intention.

Steps:

1. Participants share one idea or concrete action they could do and which could have strengthening impact related to intergenerational solidarity. They could either write it on flipchart or on card.

2. Facilitator closes Workshop by summarizing:

Solidarity is a dynamic process, not a static condition; Small-impact actions really do matter; Communities can intentionally design supportive environments.

8. Optional Add-Ons (for advanced facilitators)

Mapping exercise (15–20 min):

Participants draw a map of their cooperative housing/community and mark where each solidarity dimension appears physically.

Role-play scenarios (10–15 min):

Groups act out short scenes (e.g., intergenerational conflict, shared decision-making, repair café).

Barrier analysis (15 min):

Identify obstacles (legal, cultural, financial) and brainstorm solutions.

Digital version:

Use an online board (Miro/Padlet) for hybrid workshops.

9. Materials Checklist

Printed dimension cards

Weak/strong ties illustration

Flipchart or large paper

Post-its or small cards

Pens, markers

Timer

Optional photos for low literacy groups

10. Workshop-at-a-Glance Table

Phase	Duration	Method	Purpose
Welcome & framing	10'	Facilitator intro	Set tone & expectations
Warm-up stories	10–15'	Pair sharing	Build trust
Theoretical input	10'	Mini-presentation	Shared language
Group work A	10–15'	Small groups	Explore dimensions
Group work B	10–15'	Small groups	Explore weak ties
Presentations	15–20'	Plenary	Peer learning
Synthesis	15'	Facilitated discussion	Link findings & practice
Action commitments	10'	Individual writing	Move toward practice



Links & Literature

Useful links:

<https://www.un.org/youthaffairs/en/news/harnessing-power-intergenerational-solidarity-global-transformation>

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/articles/inter-generational-solidarity-within-eu-connecting-generations-fostering-intergenerational-dialogue-justice-and>

<https://www.age-platform.eu/solidarity-between-generations/>

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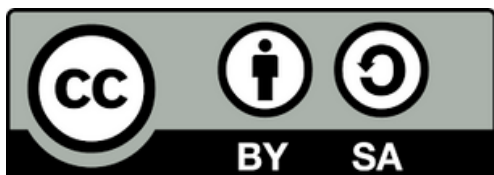
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