

Regina Maroncelli Florio *"Families, circular economy, education and environmentally friendly habit formation"*

INTRODUCTION

'Our life itself is the education of our children' says Dario. With his wife and three children he cultivates a farm following the principles of permaculture and regenerative agriculture. "Every decision we make is aimed at minimising our impact. It's a matter of respect, of caring for the most vulnerable: the plant world, wild animals, the disabled, children'.

Dario's is one of the 7 stories we want to tell for a different narrative and to frame the unexplored potential that families with children can express. The power of their motivation makes them formidable 'key catalytic factor' for sustainability, as it is recommended in the Civil Society Declaration presented for the 30th Anniversary of the Day of the Family.

FAMILIES AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

For the European Commission, circular economy is an important means of achieving the climate targets. It also contributes to the SDG targets.

When we look deeper into the topic, we never come across the word 'family'.

Nevertheless, many circular economy concepts are related to the family: for example, the concept of 'cradle to cradle' (William McDonough e Michael Braungart), resilience and regeneration. 'Consume less, recycle, reuse, share, donate' are cornerstones of any healthy and sustainable family household management and have probably inspired circular economy philosophy.

But evidently family was 'lost in translation'.

THE ROLE OF FAMILIES IN THE SDGs

Nearly 90% of countries reporting their progresses in the 'Family-oriented Priorities, Policies and Programmes in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (authored for Undesa in 2020), made reference to families. 'However', most of the references connected families with poverty, reproductive health problems, inequalities and gender-based and domestic violence.

These topics are indeed relevant but they don't tell the whole story. According to the rapporteur Rosario Esteinou, only few countries have included in their development strategies 'specific family policies' or have embraced a holistic family view and

family impact lens perspective to address families' needs.' 'Despite its importance- says prof. Esteinou- the role that the family plays in social policies is not always visible, including the areas important for the achievement of the SDGs' where family 'may act as an interlocution or "co-designer" agent'.

ANOTHER STORY ABOUT FAMILIES

I have collected 7 stories on circular economy and families; they all share strong ethical, environmental and educational motivations and the desire to pass on values such as passion, perseverance, respect and openness through the example of life. They describe families as a driver of solidarity and caring, creativity, teamwork and mutual support.

REUSE AND SHARING, WITHIN AND BETWEEN FAMILIES

FAMILY PECIS, ITALY: Marialaura, mother of two, in over 30 years has lent her children's clothes to more than 15 different families, getting them back in order to lend them to more children: 'I just wanted to share my precious and dearest feelings with others, and be of example to my sons', says Marialaura.

RECYCLE

FAMILY IONESCU, ROMANIA -Nicoletta began with sewing clothes for her children from recycled fabrics and clothes. Under the label "Lilutesa", the family now produces and sells children's clothing and "no waste" items from leftover fabric. Their children are now their fondest testimonials.

SELF PRODUCTION

FAMILY BISCAN, CROATIA: Ivona and Tomislav moved from Zagreb to Slavonia to run the grandparents' farm, and breed 'Mangalitza pigs', a rare and endangered kind of pig. In 7 years, they managed to close the production cycle, become independent of meat consumption and make a small profit. The 5 children - aged 7 and under - help out on the farm: "We wanted them to learn the value of work right from the start. If you want to live in peace with others, you have to learn that you have to do what is necessary and not what you feel like doing." In a year's time, they want to open up the farm for educational activities.

REGENERATIVE FARMING

FAMILY TEANI, ITALY : in 2017, Dario and Francesca founded 'Demetra' in the city of Bergamo, an agricultural activity with a regenerative system developed with permaculture, a holistic agricultural management approach that mimics the activity of nature. Together with their 3 children, they sell vegetables they produce themselves, from seeds to fertiliser obtained by composting the farm's vegetable waste. Rainwater provides irrigation and no electricity is used on the farm, that is run in a closed cycle. 'Our life itself is the education of our children', says Dario.

DONATE

FAMILY BERGAMINI, ITALY : Pauline is the chairwoman of the local "time bank", an informal organisation where people share their skills and time and exchange services, without exchanging money. With over 50 members of the club, she enjoys free English and art lessons or cat-sitting, while she offers car rides and Polish lessons, while her husband Marco offers banking advice and her daughter Giulia (9) swaps clothes and toys. "When we came here, we did not know anyone and had no family. The bank has helped us to build a rich and helpful network. I hope

that this experience will teach our daughter that there is another way to get together and relationships do not depend on money. "

COMMUNITY BUILDING

TASTE THE CARE- In 2020, Noe, the Hungarian Association of Large Families, distributed around 100 automatic preserving machines throughout the country: these devices make it possible to preserve fruit, vegetables and food in a healthy way without the use of preservatives. A certain amount of preserved food was then distributed to large families living mainly in Budapest, far from orchards and gardens. The initiative has succeeded in bringing people together and strengthening local rural communities around a common project of solidarity and mutual help.

AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

MINI VADEMECUM FOR FAMILIES THAT WANTS TO CHANGE THE WORLD. Young people from the Italian large families Association Anfn have published a small booklet with information and advice for a sustainable life: 'As large families, we are aware of the importance of a sustainable and responsible use of natural resources so that everyone has a fair chance to live a good life on planet Earth'. The youth group is also distributing a flyer on the questionable assumption that having children is against the sustainability of the planet: 'The main cause of the climate crisis and environmental degradation is not population growth, but overconsumption in industrialised countries.'

CONCLUSIONS

Fernando Castro, founder and the first president of the European large families Confederation I have the honour to chair, often reminded us that "the family is not the problem, but the solution".

It is time to include families as active and reliable co-creators in the shaping of our common future, in the sense of subsidiarity.

7 are the stories that I share today, but many more could be told and many more should be encouraged.

We call on policy makers, the business world and the global community to put the empowerment and well-being of families at the center of their efforts, to listen to their needs and to take the "family lens perspective" in order to leave no one behind.

The Civil Society Declaration provides a clear roadmap: we recommend the upcoming 'Summit of the Future' to take good note of it.

No future is possible without families.