

# VALUES AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN RELATION TO CHILDHOOD IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

INSTITUT EUROPEU DE LA MEDITERRÀNIA (IEMED)\*

Today, the Mediterranean area is seen as two plural and contrasted realities. A crossroads of diverse cultures and economies, the Mediterranean is struggling to achieve a synergy between tradition and modernity. A complex reality that represents both a bridge and a frontier, the Mediterranean forms an ecosystem. In fact, the innovative value of the ecological paradigm is that it does not have a centre and that it is self-regulated through its antagonisms. This perception can help us to break with the rigid logic of structures, in which the relations between the different actors are established vertically and the conflict is resolved with the belonging to one or the other. The new logic is that of the processes, a vision allowing multiple forms of relation and interdependence.

We are witnessing profound changes in the system of values, changes which, in the case of European societies, are taking place at the level of the system and are altering the individual values, beliefs and behaviours, and which affect the individual-society dynamic. In southern Mediterranean societies, the colonisation, modernisation, industrialisation and the influence of the mass media have brought about mutations in the traditional values and in the appreciation of the world, which result in growing aspirations for more democracy, more freedom and more social justice, but which can be frustrated and manipulated in a fundamentalist withdrawal.

In a moment when democracy in both the East and the South seems to be gaining ground, we risk falling into a sectarianism of intolerance towards the “other”. If the totalitarian process resolved the incompatibilities through elimination, open society, democracy, configures the creative potential of the cultural diversity of the peoples. In the Mediterranean there is no one single cultural expression; the life styles and behaviours, as well as the form of facing conflicts and decision making, are of diverse types in the miscellany of societies. Plurality is a natural and useful phenomenon, but nature is not exempt from eruptions. For this reason, new challenges are emerging: there is the danger that the new cultural frontier will remain in the South and that the ideologies will seek refuge in the religious fundamentalism or the fundamentalism with a human face that pollutes the democratic societies of the North.

Modern culture can only be understood in its whole and in its most conflictive and tense, yet most dynamic and visual, aspects. In this sense, Karl Popper reminds us that we must keep in mind that, although the diverse values enter easily into conflict, this does not mean that our morality or our agenda are inconsistent. Security and freedom enter very often into conflict. But to understand conflict within the framework of our values is the only way of avoiding a dogmatic ideology and of maintaining an open mentality, rather than dogmatically closing around a determined series of values. Moreover, not only are values not static throughout time but they are also not hermetic; they are influenced and influence the cultures they have contact with.

The contemporaneity of civilisations is an uncompleted process that needs dialectics and a morality based on responsibility, solidarity and tolerance of the diverse authors and culture for the reorientation of the new century. The desire for well-being and security is common to all cultures, a desire that must encourage the search for mechanisms in order to jointly make them a reality. In order to achieve this, it is fundamental to promote and maintain some minimums of shared ethics.

The Mediterranean is an area in which opposed dynamics of attraction-repulsion, coincidence and disagreement, coexist. Geographical closeness, interrelation of societies from both sides of the basin, the real existence of social and cultural exchanges in the present and in the past –and which will be perpetuated in the future– enter into contradiction with the insistent rejection of these exchanges by determined social agents. Often unconsciously, the system of values of a minority is interiorised and acquired as one’s own. It is a system of values that generates mistrust and confronts us with our neighbours because it emphasises the difference and the very controversial impossibility of finding common points. The reality is another, that of the street, of the daily life of people. And in this the unquestionable existence of a “shared memory” becomes evident.

To speak of values is not easy; for this reason we have not wanted to approach large systems of thought or shared identities but rather the mutation of individual values within concrete societies.

\*Maria-Àngels Roque, Laia Ferrer

## 1. Variables that interact with the family

Both in the North and in the South, the family is the most esteemed value and the social institution that generates more trust; for this reason, as an observatory of the changes taking place in a society and as a cell of socialisation closest to the individual, the family is the central element of our reflection. The role of its members, very especially that of women, evolves and in the final term conditions the values that children will gradually acquire throughout the educational and learning process until adulthood. As cultural anthropology tells us, the configuration of culture is defined by primary institutions, the family, which provide the origin and guidelines to secondary legal, political and religious institutions.

As an observatory, therefore, the family allows an analysis of a whole series of aspects which are considered basic elements of development and/or progress reflected in it: education, health, work, social participation... We can extract several conclusions from all these variables based on diverse indexes and indicators, some of them presented in *Charting the Mediterranean Child* (Fondazione Istituto Mediterraneo per l'Infanzia, 2004). Moreover, in order to be rigorous, one should bear in mind that values and culture condition the interpretation of the indicators. Authors such as the sociologist Ronald Inglehart think that there is a very close link between the system of beliefs of a society and its demographic and structural characteristics in general. He offers us as an example the fertility rate, which is explained by determined values of the citizens more clearly than through economic or social variables. In addition, many values are linked to the degree of democracy of that specific society. This author also explains that beliefs and values are in keeping with the reality in which people and/or communities live. Although modernisation, industrialisation and their relation with financial aspects modify this system of values and beliefs, there are more aspects to be taken into account; there is a more global explanatory system (Inglehart, 2004). Thus, the conclusions extracted from indicators produced in the same way for all countries should not be interpreted as a universal law but rather as a guide to orientate future national and international policies.

First, and so as to coherently approach the issues that affect childhood, it is very important to bear in mind that the variable age is a cultural construct, "as a social condition that assigns a status and a role and as a cultural image that assigns a set of values, stereotypes and

meanings. The vital phases of the cycle of children, preadolescents and adolescents by gender and culture generate a diversity of periods, categories and guidelines that varies in each cultural environment" (Quiroga, 2001). The rights of children and their legal protection vary in each society or group of these. Those individuals who for the West are "minors", in the Maghreb and southern Mediterranean in general, are "reproductive members of the family". Despite the risk of associating functions and attitudes to an age without considering the incongruities that this can provoke, age is the variable which allows us to speak of childhood because the classifications which are believed to be pertinent are based on age. Moreover, in this line of reflection, it is important to take into account the demographic phenomena, being aware of their link with the structure by sex and age. It is also interesting to evaluate other variables such as the residential area and the socio-demographic profile, which will allow us to make projections and plan strategies and resources limited to the context. The opinion that education is the form of transmission of values is unanimous, independently of the contents and the interpretations that may be made of them. An education that widens the concept of training and that, therefore, includes a wide range of fields of acquisition of it.

The family as the first field of transmission grants key importance to the figure of women. Their status is at the root of the changes taking place within this primary institution and their situation can condition the degree of children's well-being (mother-child health, literacy and educational level). The education that they have received is, therefore, determinant because it is on them that the functions of reproduction and education of children fall. In this sense, the discrimination of women and their backwardness involves the general backwardness of society. The changes in the roles of gender, to be specific feminine, are a good indicator of the evolution of the family institution and social modernisation. We realise how the education of women, potential wives and mothers, influences the relation to be established with the husbands and with the children. The roles of gender take on great transcendence in societies segregated by sexes such as those we are studying, as a sociological characteristic, but also because of their link with demographic dynamics and phenomena.

Malika Horchani, a Tunisian psychologist, gives special importance to the family as the main institution transmitter of gender identity, bearing in mind that identity is manifested in daily practices (Horchani, 1998). As a result of the link between the construct of the role of gender with social prejudices there are authors such as the Algerian Fatima Gallaire who believe that the

margin of manoeuvre that girls have to build up a future different from their parents is very small (Gallaire, 1998). In this sense, we would like to emphasise that the roles are constructed throughout the process of socialisation and are, therefore, modifiable from many other fields. The factors of modernity can modify cultural identity which, in its turn, conditions the transmission of values. Behaviours are the result of a process of adaptation and, in consequence, parents would cease to be the only referents for their children. Education, especially women's, appears as one of the best forms of progress of a society and of deconstruction of roles. When women identify what favours or discriminates them, as individuals or as a group, they are taking the first step to adopting an active posture. For this reason, the emancipation of women is provoking changes in the traditional family model.

The tendency to nuclear family establishes the first differences between the north and south of the Mediterranean. In the South, families are still structured on the rooted patrilineal logic and, in this sense, couples, the future parents, are subordinated to a wider domestic group, in contrast to northern societies in which couples and their descendants play a key role. The changes leading towards the reduced family are conflictive, especially in societies based on the group, in which the main relations are of kinship, which allows us to understand the value of the solidarity that exists within the group and the clientelism. The cohesion with the group, characteristic of patriarchal societies, means that this is a framework of reference for the individual, a trait that will not easily change even with the reformulations of family strategies. In this system of values honour and shame also assume importance, values about which there has been so much talk in Mediterranean anthropology. Honour, still prevailing in Arab societies, allows the perpetuation of the group integrity while perpetuating individual prestige. European societies are not alien to the inheritance of the patriarchy also expressed through the link and dependence between generations.

In the cities of the south of the Mediterranean there is also a tendency towards the type of reduced family in which hierarchy is losing significance. Fruit of the new dynamics experienced which are characteristic of the evolution of societies and often introduced by international migration and from urban to rural areas, the population has been altered and has adopted diverse strategies which confer a new socio-demographic profile on the family, slowly on the rural areas. It is important bearing in mind that the majority of the population in the Maghreb is found in rural areas and this reality –and note that the motor of changes are the cities– can generate the false feeling that in the area of the Mediterranean

modernisation is not wanted. The alterations produced by capitalism and the productivist logic are very rapid and have been experienced on both sides of the Mediterranean. The new forms of organisation lead indefectibly to the adoption of new values which, moreover, does not involve abandoning the previous values, at least not in their totality. The appearance of the value of material goods and the tendency to individualism is a catalyser of great changes in this system of values. Although they are highly cited and debated values, in the criticism of current consumer society it is important to refer to them again in an analysis such as this. Their consequences are felt on both shores. In the Maghreb, among the youngest collective, this will for personal autonomy is conflictive because it often means separating from the family with the objective of searching for what young people desire and know can be achieved even far away from their homes, often in the north of the Mediterranean; they escape in search of freedom and democracy that they see have not been achieved in their countries. In the North there is also a debate started in the classrooms but which affects the whole of society. Individualism is beginning to wreak havoc among children and preadolescents given that it is not recognised that the sufferance and joy of others is the sufferance and joy of oneself.

Finally, in this process of individualisation the evolution of women towards a position as autonomous individuals, but also as a group that demands equality, is becoming evident. As a consequence of this process a new type of family is being increasingly consolidated: the feminisation of the home, currently also in southern societies, the result of widowhood and divorce. Other family strategies are finding a place, above all in northern societies; we refer to cohabitation, single parent families and little by little homosexual couples struggling for the adoption of children<sup>1</sup>.

On this path towards the autonomisation of individuals, democracy also plays a key role. In north-western Mediterranean countries, democracy has favoured women because it has granted them some rights they lacked. This social and political system has been influencing lifestyles in favour of this new situation, in which women take a role as citizens, although the weight of culture still inflicts certain discriminatory behaviours on them. On the southern border, the situation is different: the women in the Maghreb and in the southern Mediterranean in general still suffer this status of legal inferiority –in parallel to social inferiority–. Although in some states reforms of their personal and family status have been introduced (this is the case of Tunisia and

---

(1) Option legalised in Spain in October 2004

Morocco), one should bear in mind that they are reforms difficult to put into practice when women are in a precarious economic situation.

Political equality and domestic equality have not found a point of balance. We find more flagrant cases of these contrasts in the South than in the neighbours of the North. The Maghreb provides a very illustrative example: here women have joined the political field as well as scientific and business spheres in key positions but, in contrast, in the private social environment they have quite an unfavourable situation.

Although democracy as a socio-political organisational system is not emerging so clearly in southern societies, there are certain dynamics which can be the first steps to achieving this such as the appearance of a committed and participatory civil society, with a significant role for women's organisations fighting for their rights as citizens and which are encouraging slowly implemented reforms.

There is an erroneous reading of modernity when this is inflexibly associated with the loss of traditional values. And, moreover, an analysis that simplifies modernisation and progress to the adoption and acceptance of democracy and individualism would not be realistic. Each society is based on a cultural substrate and forces of change as well as powerful classes and economic interests that determine the evolutionary line followed and, very clearly, its values.

In this sense, Arab populations are the most harmed. As a result of the concern of the powerful classes to perpetuate their position, manipulative values are taking root, based on which tradition is mixed up with stagnation. In this context, education is highly valuable, although traditional education is often used as a way of perpetuating the transmission of manipulated moral and religious values. Thus, for instance, the conservation of the value of honour in Muslim societies leads to perpetuating the taboo of virginity that directly affects girls and sexuality in general, especially feminine.

Freedom of choice is not completely achieved, either in the north or the south of the Mediterranean. The transmission of values is filled with intentionality on both shores –supported, as we will see, by religious or legal institutions–. Thus, still today, despite the mutation of the values, determined cultural guidelines whose origin lies in a specific type of structure, in this case the family structure, survive. As an example, we will say that, despite the adoption of new family strategies, marriage remains as the most widely chosen environment for the care of children (a factor that should be taken into account when exploiting and interpreting demographic data, in this case on fertility). Is it really a choice

conviction or is it the most legally secure option? This fact provides us with more information on the manipulation of our behaviours.

From all that has been previously mentioned, two dynamics should be taking place which seem to adopt opposed directions but which are complementary: family systems as forms of maintenance of traditional values and, at the same time, loss of the weight of this system as a result of the new prevailing values.

Although the female role has been valued with the modernisation of family law, social relations reveal the conservatism of this behaviour and even of values. This is because, as we said, although socialisation, education and care of children are currently the responsibility of both parents, above all in the North, it is finally the mother who really has, and perhaps feels she has, most responsibility, and the weight of being the factor of stability falls on her. In the equality of gender lies the catalyser which can help the youngest generations to acquire as their own the new values. As the anthropologist and specialist in the Arab world Malek Chebel says "Maghrebian mothers will only really overcome (misogyny) when their sons are educated in total equity with their daughters. We will certainly lose the supermen that we had but we will gain many responsible and productive individuals" (Chebel, 1998).

The mass media as transmitter of culture and values is also an aspect to be born in mind. It allows the increase of knowledge but often in a way decontextualised from the reality of its users or by establishing retrograde models.

Considering the diversity and velocity of information that it offers, it is very important to identify the educational profile of the viewers, listeners or users in general, as well as their ages, in order to recognise their capacity to select the information for their own benefit. Above all, children, adolescents and illiterate or poorly trained people are more easily influenced and manipulated.

The case of women can be paradigmatic because they have often had less access to training. The mass media allows them to increase their expectations but it also stresses contradictory thoughts and behaviours. The contradiction in customs is especially important in the Maghreb, and in general in the whole Mediterranean south, given that the advance of the mass media, resulting from the modernising process, is often important, decontextualised, because they are countries which lack the economic and political structure that guarantees their own creation and/or the diversity of options and media opinions. In the Arab population, and we would say also to a lesser extent in the northern

Mediterranean, as the Moroccan sociologist Khadija Amiti tells us, the conflict of values resulting from this situation can be constructive or violent and mean a loss of identity, depending on the tools that people have, but in one way or another it will have an influence on their personality, values and attitudes (Amiti, 2002). It is clear that European women are not exempt from the problematic deriving from the mass media when it perpetuates sexist values and with a high level of violence bearing in mind, moreover, that they are codes that are gradually taking root among the youngest generations.

The advance of technological innovations and their promotion is often an element of threat to the cultural diversity that is so often defended. Everything depends, however, on the scale of analysis that we use to evaluate their degree of danger. The reasons for criticism vary from one shore to the other. In the North, emphasis is placed on blaming technology for the most recent family deconstruction as the cause of the decrease of communication between parents and children and as a transmitter of values which are considered inappropriate for the youngest age group. In the South, in contrast, it is seen as a tool of indiscriminate attraction towards the West for the mass of young people. However, a greater literacy among women means that they have the tools to choose the programmes dealing with their problems and also to get access to the information which helps them overcome the enclosed environment of the home, so that we can increasingly speak of users who can be less manipulated. Health, but also health education and very especially sexual and reproductive education because of its link with women, takes on key importance.

Gender identity also includes sexual identity. The poor knowledge that women have of their body and, by extension, of sexuality keeps them in a state of prolonged childhood. The ignorance of society in general also involves the perpetuation of a set of customs based on the attempt to control women's bodies and sexual relations, characteristic of patriarchal societies. The objective is the control of sexuality, but the mechanism is the control of the figure of women. Undoubtedly, this affects childhood and its values.

There is a before and an after of the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994 because for the first time in an intergovernmental meeting the importance of sexuality and reproductive health was stressed as an indicator of social development, as an indicator of the value attached to persons and no longer as demographic behaviour. Although this approach has been gradually incorporated into the diverse social and health policies of the countries the situation is not normalised, above all in Arab

societies in which determined values linked to the family and sexuality, such as honour, virginity are used to manipulate the population and in which determined practices are not accepted, such as abortion.

The notion of reproductive health put forward by this meeting surpasses the strict medical framework, which considers the health of mother and children, in order to emphasise the importance of freedom and the responsibility of people and groups for their behaviours so that they can realise themselves as persons, as well as involving not only women but also men, adolescents and public powers. And this is not just because it is a question that affects the masculine and feminine genders but also because in this way women will have the capacity to negotiate with their partners in issues of sexuality (contraceptive measures...). In many societies of the South and in less cultivated sectors of society in the North and South they still depend on the authorisation of men.

This conference also made the health concern clear and the existence of a whole socio-political movement headed by women's organisations from both shores of the Mediterranean.

The reality is quite different on both sides of the basin in matters of sexual and reproductive health; also between western and eastern Mediterranean Europe. In the South, there is no enjoyment of sexuality because it continues to be linked to reproductive functions. The segregation by sexes that exists in the Mediterranean, but much more obviously in the South, means that the members of society are the victims of the system: not only women but also men. This phenomenon is very clear in the sexuality of adolescents and young people, because they are deprived of it. The sexual act is not allowed outside marriage. However, once again, as a result of the patriarchal society in which the man clearly holds the power, women are worse off because if they transgress there can be physical consequences, and it is they who maintain the family honour, with the injustice that this generates. Honour in Arab societies, as we said, is closely linked to the virginity of young women.

Moreover, we erroneously associate with religion customs that harm the human rights of the individuals and even the physical integrity of people, when on many occasions they are ancestral customs which, as they affect women within patriarchal and authoritarian societies, are not spoken of.

The southern Mediterranean societies are gradually becoming aware of determined customs and values which do not allow them to develop freely and healthily. In relation to Morocco, Enric Royo tells us that "Moroccan youth, mainly urban, experiences sexuality as

a breakdown between two contradictory cultural models. It seems that the young are moving towards the autonomisation of sex, towards the constitution of an a-religious space" (Royo, 2003). The contradiction between adolescents has, as a result, a sexuality experienced with guilt and with risk. As in many other aspects with which they express disagreement, for young people it is a "silent revolution", paraphrasing Inglehart's idea. As Enric Royo points out, the relation established between Islam and sexual freedom means that the western liberal model prevails, nourishing, once again, the dichotomy that is doing so much harm to Arab-Islamic societies: Islam-tradition, West-modernisation.

In relation to issues specific to maternal health the inequalities from one country to the other become evident. The maternal mortality is an indicator of development and is closely linked to the availability of resources of the country or region and the situation of women.

Access to health services is very important. These must be accessible, because it has been demonstrated that the difficulty of access affects the health of the mother and the child. A statement corroborated by several authors such as Turmen (Bonnet & Guillaume, 1999).

On many occasions, emphasis is placed on the need to increase the resources addressed to the care of very young children, but also previously and simultaneously public resources should be destined to prenatal health so as to improve or safeguard the health of the mother and the child.

In order to give it the importance that it deserves we note how the decrease in the maternal mortality and morbidity rates and infant mortality rate is closely linked to the training of the mother which becomes evident with the awareness of the risks related to pregnancy and health customs. Moreover, the weight of these variables is a good medical and health indicator as well as of the value given to this health infrastructure at a state level.

Abortion, like almost all the issues related to women and sexuality, such as contraception and family planning in general, is a very contradictory issue in Arab society, which reflects the dual sexual morality intrinsic in patriarchal societies. A morality that in the West has progressively been managed to achieve balance from other social spheres. Above all, but not only on the southern shore, abortion is only authorised for reasons of health, specified by the state, rather than by free choice. We should be aware that legality does not increase demand and that, in contrast, illegality generates health risk situations.

With reference to family planning, although it does not have a direct effect on health, it is linked to it. We

observe the importance of the existence of responsibility within the family, a responsibility which starts in the couple in terms of family planning, the right of both to decide on the optimal number of children. The decrease in fertility, a characteristic feature of the new family model, is common to the North and to the South, although at different rates and closely linked to the rural or urban field. In terms of family planning, however, the most solid structure in this sense is found in the North. Bearing in mind that southern Mediterranean countries have greater shortcomings in this sense, we would like to be more specific. It is important that the population has the opportunity to choose and that the method is not imposed from outside; it is then when the rejection of determined measures, above all those related to sexuality (contraceptive methods...) is stressed; and always accompanied by the appropriate information.

We would like to point out that both in the North and in the South there are shortcomings in relation to the promotion and protection of reproductive rights and there is an unmet demand. The casuistic is diverse. In the North the limitations to exercise this freedom are of an economic nature while in the South it is the lack of information and services. The *labour market* is also a gate to the emancipation of women. It has been so and is still today in the north and is starting to be so in the south of the Mediterranean. The process is not exempt from difficulties, precariousness and obstacles, but it is a fact. Economic autonomy, but also as an element of introduction of women into a new socio-cultural space, represents a change in the referential framework of women and their attitude and relations towards the persons surrounding them. Work outside home involves a new organisation of the time that women spend in this space and making their productive and family functions compatible (including the care of the very young). This element allows us to speak very clearly of changes in the family institution, in its structure and organisation. And in this way we can find an explanation, at least partly, to the variations in the demographic data from one generation to the other (marriage age, fertility rate...). In the Mediterranean women's entry into the labour world means a decrease in the number of children. First, because of the difficulty of combining the two functions and, later, when the tasks come to be balanced between genders, as is taking place in the north of the basin, women's decisions start to incline towards personal and professional development. The delay of the first child as a result of the delay in marriage should be also taken into account –noting that the framework of care of children, as we said, is marriage, despite the liberalisation of the relations—. In this sense, there are many differences between the North and the South, given that in the second case a child outside marriage is considered

illegitimate and still carries important consequences, such as the desperate situation of single mothers who cannot give their name to their children. The structure by age, the late entry into the labour market and the economic difficulties are some of the elements that explain this delay of the other aforementioned phenomena.

The desire to be a mother should be combined with the desire to fulfil oneself as a person in this increasingly materialistic world. It is here where the control de la birthrate is evaluated as a result of a process of modernisation, associated with urbanisation, extended schooling and so on.

## **2. Other institutions linked to childhood**

Apart from education and health variables, to which we have devoted a special space because of their direct link with childhood, we find other institutional aspects that give particular features to the family and which influence the values of children: religion, school, public administration, friends.

The State is the institution in charge of guaranteeing good distribution of the resources and efforts destined to the well-being of the population, very especially in education and health –which we have defined as basic elements of this development and of quality of life–, closely linked to gender and childhood. In this sense, when the socio-economic level of a country does not explain the institutional shortcomings in relation to these aspects of well-being we must conclude that there is a bad distribution of these resources. For this reason, the role of the state conditions the role of the family within society, bestowing on it the unique role of transmitter of values or widening it to functions of social protection.

In northern Mediterranean states, especially in the north-east, this function of benefactor state is very clear following the development of the welfare state. In this sense, when the role of the state as public sphere has been strengthened other intermediate spheres are weakened such as local community and family. It is above all in this geographical area in the north of the basin, with a patriarchal inheritance, where the relation established between the role of the state and that which the father traditionally enjoyed is clearer.

In the south and north-east of the Mediterranean although the welfare state is inexistent or its presence is very weak, moments of more or less intense state involvement have been experienced. In the case of Morocco, for instance, although in the 1960s there was an intrusion of

the state, the last few years have made clear its incapacity to mobilise resources in order to meet social demands. The emancipation and feasibility of civil society is partly based on reaching places that the state does not reach.

However, for several reasons the same dynamic is taking place both in the north and south of the Mediterranean. On both shores the family has never lost its importance as a form of social protection. Closely linked to it, the citizen mobilisation in the South has started to be involved at the same time as a recent governmental strategy which, in the case of Morocco, seeks to reduce the regional disparities in matters of development, improve the living conditions of people with limited incomes and help disadvantaged people, giving special emphasis to the participatory approach of development, political pluralism, ideological development, the strengthening of women's role and so on. In the last few decades, civil society through the NGOs is starting to take part because the efforts made by public powers for the eradication of poverty are increasingly more centred on population and the disadvantaged areas. In the north of the Mediterranean this already started participation is being consolidated before the withdrawal of the welfare state and the gap left by it. Civil society is using again the traditional networks in order to construct a participatory community and offer the public services it lacks.

Family solidarities to which we have referred have been evolving as a consequence of migration and foreign influence but above all, as the French author Ravis-Giordani tells us, in those countries where the welfare state has existed (Ravis-Giordani, 2001). However, one should be very prudent when speaking of family, because the state in the Latin Mediterranean has encouraged the incorporation of women into the labour market but has not managed to substitute (with economic or social assistance) the role of the family and above all the role of the mother in the care of dependant people, or has done so with many shortcomings. In this context, conflictive situations are generated which demand new solidarities in the extended family, when it seemed that it had lost importance (in the North there are still aspects which recall it, such as the role of grandparents in the care of children), and outside the specific family (immigration of women from southern countries who assume these functions given that in the case of Mediterranean countries such as Italy or Spain women's immigration accounts for more than 50% of the whole of immigrants) in order to be able to confront the new life styles, those identified with the process of development and modernisation of a society. Religion is another of the institutions which gives people meaning. However, we must tread carefully when analysing it.

Monotheistic religions are inspired by the patriarchal system which determines, per se, a clear submission of women. In this sense, there is an intrinsic discrimination. Islam does not discriminate any more than Judaism or Christianity; in fact Islam allowed very important changes in relation to women and very early. Christianity is less egalitarian between men and women. It is the strictest religion in relation to sexual freedom, for instance, while Islam gives it more egalitarian criteria. The difference has perhaps been that the Muslim religion has been taking the entity of value in itself (Ben Salem, 1997) while manifesting itself very clearly, still today, in the social relations within the field of the Maghreb, above all in rural areas. The Tunisian sociologist Lila Ben Salem specifies that "Islam makes the individual responsible for his acts." Nevertheless, some scholars, above all Maghrebians, consider that Arab-Islamic societies – and Maghrebians in particular – have received a set of specific values based on which each society has developed specific processes and forms of embodiment of these values which could only consider particular demands of each of their peoples. Thus, the ethic and legal analysis of these societies makes clear their essentially diverse characters which, however, does not question the original unity. In Christian societies the secularisation process that unlinks social values and codes from those of religious morality has been gradually consolidated. The balance between these religious references and the present reality involves empowering society in general and women in particular.

Another dynamic differentiated in the north and the south of the Mediterranean has been produced in the sense that institutions like the Church and religion seemed to have been weakened in the North, maintaining the importance of the family as a refuge, while in the South, in Arab societies, the opposite seemed to have taken place. Nonetheless, modernisation would not seem to explain the secularisation process because, in the last few decades, religion has also intensified again in non-Islamic societies. In order to explain this, Ronald Inglehart tells us that the religious dimension is very important but that we should bear in mind that it is connected with other aspects such as education at an early age, social norms and regulations such as obedience, independence and personal autonomy, as well as national pride (Inglehart, 2004).

Religion serves certain purposes as do the legal and education systems which are the institutions that organise the patriarchal system to which we have been making reference. The political and economic powers determine their characteristics. Many writers and analysts, above all in West, are not aware of this aspect and blame religion for determined social backward movements that

are taking place. We know a clear example – authors like Fatema Mernissi or Nawal al-Sádwí come to mind – when, from the West, the situation of women is studied and we want to deal with their particular problematic based on the values and nature of Islam in relation to other religions. It is highly possible that this situation is due to the partiality of the knowledge they have of Islam and of the true role that it has played in the social change that has been so important for women.

Training has an important role of aculturation and of standardisation of social structures and gender roles. The school, therefore, also has a notable weight in the education of children and the population in general. As the only compulsory institution – until the age of 16 in the case of the European countries – it has a unique and consequently of highly responsible character. Thus, it plays a role in the change of values.

Education of girls is the change that most unsettles the established social model and the differences between gender roles. The extension of the time that women study delays access to marriage, with the consequent delay of the different phenomena associated with this in patriarchal societies (birth of the first child, reduction in the final number of descendants...). The priority of education, although initially the two tasks coexist, is the professional training of girls and not the function of wife and mother. This scale of values, however, also depends on the social status of the family and on the education of the parents.

Access, but also the length of this training, is transcendental in guaranteeing learning and for this to take effect in people. In the case of girls and women it is especially important, together with family support. In this way contradictory situations appear: the extension of literacy and education in general is clear, but a set of behaviours is maintained that do not evolve in time. In order to break with the reproduction of retrograde models, this training must be complemented by the evolution of the moral code and of the customs and transmission of culture at home and in other educational institutions such as religion, work outside the home and so on.

The paradoxical situations also are intrinsic to the institution of school, linked to its function as agent of construction and change of values. The presence of two school models, very clear on the southern shore, the traditional school and the modern school, generates contradictions between the children and adolescents who live between the two social models that are transmitted. The traditional conservative model, closely linked to religion, perpetuates some values that especially affect the image transmitted of women –although, as we know,

its effects extend throughout society–; in contrast, the modern school attempts to distance itself from the archaic and rigid structure, breaking with the most conservative stereotypes, but it is associated with an exogenous model, with liberal values from Europe, which strengthen modernising behaviours which are not always welcome.

Due to the traditional school, women cannot detach themselves from their traditional life model, closely linked to the home, to the private space; whereas the modern school emphasises its professionalizing function. In fact, this traditional school is consolidated as a response to the rejection of the modern school that emerges with the first families that entered it, who formed part of the urban elite. For this reason, there is a school closely linked to religion that is associated, in the Maghreb, with traditional values.

This organisation of education in the South strengthens a duality which is already present in the societies of this area of the Mediterranean and that, finally, affects values and families.

The residential sphere to which we refer also conditions many of the characteristics of education. Schooling facilitates social mobility and it is easier to develop in the urban sphere. In the rural environment, its counterpart or negative effect is produced, which means educational failure and exclusion because there are not so many future expectations. This is one of the causes of emigration of adolescents to European countries.

Especially in the case of women, there is a special predilection for the city, given that it is here that the degree of literacy is greater for them, bearing in mind their functional role within the family, their literacy and cultural level is fundamental for the education of their children, apart from being the indicator of the state of the country for the future incorporation of the daughters in school.

In 1990, in the World Conference on Education an agreement was signed to ensure universal basic education for all. We refer to some minimums that would enable women to have access to written information. In the field of health, to which we have referred, for example, it would prevent their death and that of their children (with an action as apparently simple as the reading of a medical leaflet).

In view of what has been said in this chapter we see that, due to a greater extension of the education, the stage of adolescence is lengthened throughout the Mediterranean and is reflected in them living longer with their parents. This reality does not contradict another fact such as the existence of a plurality of forms of family organisation in all fields of study. The selective use of tradition when we

speak of family allows this coexistence of a multiplicity of realities in the family structure with some common behaviours and functions.

### 3. Conclusions

One of the most important conclusions that can be drawn from this paper is that the family unit in Mediterranean societies continues to be a point of reference for the individual. The link between parents and children and between generations continues to be close and dependant. Although, as the Italian sociologist Arnaldo Bagnasco tells us (Roque, 1999), values like those of hierarchy and obedience are being substituted by those of discussion and agreement, the value of the family is not in crisis and continues to be one of the most important values in the life of young people. Nonetheless, we should not forget that not all the responsibility for the influences that children receive falls or should fall on the family. Or at least there are aspects that are inherited, such as socio-economic, which are very influential in the education of the youngest and in the consolidation of values and customs, which in time will condition social evolution. The Algerian sociologist Nadji Safir reminds us that "after having conquered the economic sphere and made more than notable progress in the political sphere, globalisation henceforth undertakes the 'battle' of the cultural sphere in which, clearly, the central question is that of rules and values" (Nadji, 1997). When we talk of values, the concept of purity or authenticity does not fit well with the appearance of new ideas and, moreover, the historical vision is always fragmented.

In these circumstances, the question posed by some writers is: what is happening here and now? As in a perpetual circle, this approach does not contradict these shared reflections that if the singularity of each has to be respected, what is universal also has to be admired. For this reason we must be alert in the Mediterranean in order to achieve mutual co-development. The final objective is to achieve freedom. And we are not referring to an individual freedom that could exclude determined social sectors or whole societies, but to a collective freedom. And to this end, the institutions should be at the service of persons and peoples and not vice versa.

We must realise that cultures are plural, even in areas that we consider homogenous. We should not fall into the trap of thinking that there is a single expression considered orthodox about values and their representations. But in dialogue it is necessary to maintain and found some minimums to make possible a shared ethics and, based on these minimums, have respect for conceptions of a happy life, of behaviours that

can be different, but that do not affect the dignity of the person. Culturally inherited traditions and codes will continue to have a decisive role in development processes. In contrast to past years, today it is believed that different kinds of modernisation coexist and that there is no master plan as a globalising project towards the future. For this reason, the opposition between tradition and modernity, universalism and localism in the 21st century is outdated, except between the sectarian groups of each side. There are no univocal concepts but, increasingly, modernity means dynamism and the capacity to give answers.

## References

- Amiti, Khadija** [coord.], *Famille et citoyenneté*. Rabat: éditions Chaml, 2002.
- Ben Salem, L.** “Cambio social y transformación de los valores en las sociedades del Magreb”. In **Roque M-À** [ed.], *Identidades y conflicto de valores. Diversidad y mutación social en el Mediterráneo*. Barcelona: Icaria Antrazyt, Institut Català de la Mediterrània, 1997.
- Bonnet, D. and Guillaume, A.** *La santé de la reproduction. Concepts et acteurs*, Marseilles: Equipe de Recherche Transition de la Fécondité et Santé de la Reproduction, 1999.
- Chebel, M.** “Mères, sexualité et violence”. In **Doré-Audibert and Khodja S.** [dir.], *Être femme au Maghreb et en Méditerranée. Du mythe à la réalité*. Paris: Karthala, 1998.
- Fondazione Istituto Mediterraneo per l’Infanzia**, *Charting the Mediterranean Child. Indicators and analysis regarding the well-being of children in the Mediterranean area*. Rome: Lynkeus, 2004.
- Gallaire, F.** “La mère, le fils, la femme et la bru”. In **Doré-Audibert, A. and Khodja S.** [dir.], *Être femme au Maghreb et en Méditerranée. Du mythe à la réalité*. Paris: Karthala, 1998.
- Horchani, M.** “Rôles féminins et identité de genre dans une société en mutation”. In **Doré-Audibert, A. and Khodja S.** [dir.], *Être femme au Maghreb et en Méditerranée. Du mythe à la réalité*. Paris: Karthala, 1998.
- Inglehart, R.** “Modernization, cultural change and persistence of traditional values”. Michigan University, 2004.
- Quiroga, V.** *Atenció als menors immigrants*. Barcelona: Fundació Jaume Bofill, 2001.
- Ravis-Giordani, G.** “D’une rive à l’autre. La famille dans l’anthropologie méditerranéenne”. In Albera, D.; **Blok, A.; Bromberger, Ch.** [dir.], *L’anthropologie de la Méditerranée*. Aix-en-Provence: Maison méditerranéenne des sciences de l’homme, 2001.
- Roque, M-À.** [ed.], *Valors i diversitat cultural a les societats d’Europa i del Magreb*. Barcelona: Proa, Institut Català de la Mediterrània, 1998.
- Roque, M-À.** [dir.], *L’espai mediterrani llatí. És possible un lobby mediterrani dins de la UE?* Barcelona: Proa, Institut Català de la Mediterrània, 1999.
- Royo, Radajell, E.** *Salud sexual y reproductiva en Marruecos: políticas y cooperación*. Barcelona: CIDOB edicions, 2003.
- Safir, N.** “Dinámicas de la identidad y retos de la modernidad en el Magreb”. In **Roque M-À.** [ed.], *Identidades y conflicto de valores. Diversidad y mutación social en el Mediterráneo*. Barcelona: Icaria Antrazyt, Institut Català de la Mediterrània, 1997.