

## MY SUPERGRANDPARENT: A SUCCESSFUL SPANISH MODEL OF INTERGENERATIONAL COOPERATION MANAGEMENT

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### **Abstract:**

This paper presents My SuperGrandparent, a successful Spanish NGO example of intergenerational cooperation.

During the years between 2013 and 2017, and for the research of my doctoral thesis, I have identified, collected, codified, compared and analysed thousands of data related to social innovation and social innovation in Spain.

From this qualitative analysis, conducted following the concepts of Grounded Theory, hundreds of case studies emerged allowing me, among other things, to determine the Relevant Social Challenges (hereinafter RSCH) of the Spanish social innovation, i.e. the inclusion of groups at risk of exclusion, the opening to new partnerships hitherto unknown, the conservation and diffusion of culture, etc.

Indeed, through a comparative study of five cases of Spanish intergenerational cooperation it is inferred that My SuperGrandparent is a social entrepreneurship initiative, sustainable, replicable and scalable, that connects modernity and tradition, elders and young people, through ICT and promotes the cooperation in terms of parity and mutual enrichment.

My SuperGrandparent represents an innovative and creative management model that integrates in a balanced way a social and technological approach at the same time.

*Keywords: intergenerational cooperation, social innovation, creative management model, case study, Spanish, ICT's.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

My SuperGrandparent is one of the case studies of my doctoral thesis that, through the Grounded Theory, tries to discover findings about social innovation in Spain, its management, triggers, good practices and frequent mistakes.

Therefore, it is important, first, to make a brief reference to the Grounded Theory, to explain how, through the collection, codification, comparison, saturation and analysis of thousands of data, a substantive theory, related to social innovation in Spain, has been generated and validated by these data.

Next, I will explain the concept of social innovation that I propose, as well as a brief description of the Relevant Social Challenges that have emerged after this analysis.

Once these introductory aspects have been explained, I will be able to enter into the analysis of five cases of intergenerational cooperation, in particular My SuperGrandparent, as a successful Spanish one.

## 1.1. The Grounded Theory at a glance

The sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), in their work *The discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*, propose the basic principles of Grounded Theory as a method of approaching and analysing social reality, whose main objective is to generate theory from the data, resulting in a theory grounded in the data.

Hereafter I will make a brief reference to the principles of the Grounded Theory as it was enunciated and define the key concepts that it proposes.

*Construction of theory versus verification:* unlike other methodologies used in social sciences, it does not place emphasis on verifying pre-existing theories or demonstrating preconceived hypotheses, but on constructing and systematizing the theory that emerges from the analysis and the constant comparison of the data. «Our basic position is that generating grounded theory is a way of arriving at the theory suited to its supposed uses. We shall contrast this position with theory generated by logical deduction from a priori assumptions, that generating grounded theory is a way of arriving at the theory suited to its supposed uses» (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p 2).

*Generation of theory as a process:* the generation of a theory implies a research process. Likewise, the generation of a theory from the data means that most hypotheses and concepts come from the data, systematically worked in the course of the investigation. «Our strategy of comparative analysis for generating theory puts a high emphasis on theory as process, that is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not as a perfected product» (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p 32).

*Importance of the data:* the theory must be anchored in the data, comes from the data and originates from them.

*All data are susceptible to generate theory:* «Although the emphasis on qualitative data is strong in our book, most chapters also can be used by those who wish to generate theory with quantitative data, since the process of generating theory is independent of the kind of data used» (Glaser y Strauss, 1967, p.18).

*The accumulation and analysis of the data must be done simultaneously:* «In the beginning, one's hypotheses may seem unrelated, but as categories and properties emerge, develop in abstraction, and become related, their accumulating interrelations form an integrated central theoretical framework, the core of the emerging theory. The core becomes a theoretical guide to the further collection and analysis of data. [...] When generation of theory is the aim, however, one is constantly alert to emergent perspectives that will change and help develop his theory. These can easily occur even on the final day of study or when the manuscript is reviewed in page proof: so the published word is not the final one, but only a pause in the never-ending process of generating theory. When verification is the main aim, publication of the study tends to give readers the impression that this is the last word» (Glaser y Strauss, 1967, p. 40).

*The importance of comparative analysis:* «In discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept. The evidence may not necessarily be accurate beyond a doubt (nor is it even in studies concerned only with accuracy), but the concept is undoubtedly a relevant theoretical abstraction about what is going on in the area studied. Furthermore, the concept itself will not change, while even the most accurate facts change. Concepts only have their meanings re-specified at times because other theoretical and research purposes have evolved» (Glaser y Strauss, 1967, pp. 21-22).

*Theoretical sampling:* «Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory, whether substantive or formal» (Glaser y Strauss, 1967, p. 45).

We can give a view of the corpus of research in figures, namely: more than 3,000 entries in 5 years (2013-2017) and more than 300 case studies.

## **1.2. What we mean by social innovation**

It might seem that social innovation is the sum of the meaning of two words: innovation and social; but, as I will show with some examples, not everything innovative is social, nor all that is social is also innovative.

To better explain the topic of the thesis, what is covered and what is not, I propose a series of three examples having something in common: the food.

On October 10, 2014, the famous chef Ferrá Adriá was awarded the prize for disruptive innovation at the South Summit 2014 ("Ferran Adrià premio a la Innovación Disruptiva" 2014)", an event that "connects the most innovative entrepreneurs with the most important investors in the world and corporations that seek to improve their global competitiveness through innovation" ("Who is behind the South Summit?", n.d.), for their creativity in cooking and gastronomy.

It is undeniable that Adriá is a great innovator in his field, gastronomy, and that has been, even, disruptive, in the sense that he opened a gap in the pre-existing market and created something totally new. However, despite being one of the precursors of deconstruction, decontextualizing this concept of the art world (consisting of isolating the various ingredients of a dish, generally typical, and reconstructing it in an unusual way, so that the appearance and texture are completely different while the flavour remains unchanged), of the foams (created using siphons), of the spherification (use of alginates to form small balls of liquid content), as well as the use of liquid nitrogen, etc., we can not say that we are dealing with a social innovator or that these contributions, although very innovative, are about social innovations.

In the same way, social canteens for people without resources, despite having considerably increased their presence and number of people assisted in Spain during these past years of crisis, are imminently social, but they are not innovative, given that they represent assistance measures dating from XVIII century.

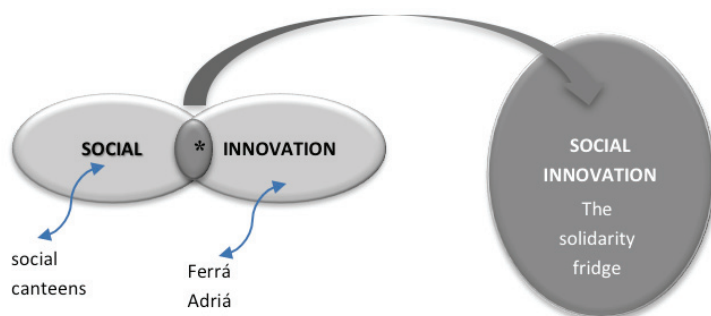
We could find numerous examples in both fields, the innovative and the social, and we would not be talking about social innovation.

Therefore, in reality, social innovation is not the sum of innovation and social, but it is about researching the examples where these two concepts merge and operate as one.

"The solidary fridge" initiative, (Nevera Solidaria n.d.) from Bilbao refers to a refrigerator placed on the street, (surpassing all legal requirements, such as the use of public land, safety, health and food consumption requirements), so that those people who have prepared food can deposit it into the fridge, and people who need or want homemade food can take it: here, we can clearly face a case of social innovation. And a social innovation with capital letters: it is a new idea that fights against a social problem. Never before it had been proposed an action as simple as bold and innovative, to put a fridge in the street, to fight locally against the waste of food and against the hunger of the excluded people. Needless to say, "The solidary fridge" is part of the case studies of this research.

This research, then, collects, analyzes and compares this type of examples, where the innovative and the social are intrinsically linked.

**Picture 1:** What we mean by social innovation



Source: Herrero de Egaña, B. forthcoming

Given the lack of a unique concept of social innovation (assuming that social innovation cannot be a uniquely definable concept), we can say that social innovation is a «new or innovative ways that society has to face the relevant social challenges (RSR), which are more efficient, more efficient and more sustainable or that generate greater impact than the preceding ones and that contribute to making it (the society) stronger and more articulated» (Herrero de Egaña, forthcoming).

### 1.3. Relevant Social Challenges in Spain

By coding 50 cases of Spanish social innovation, the research has made it possible to systematically disclose the concerns of social innovators in Spain; I have called these concerns "Relevant Social Challenges", as the reader of this work already knows.

The interest of this point is that, independently of the priorities and objectives of the different agendas at the global level (Sustainable Development Goals, Millennium Development Goals, UNDP Development Indicators, etc.) or national (Priority Objectives of the Cooperation Española, etc.) the relevant or priority social challenges of Spanish innovation emerge from the data handled; that means, if during the investigation many projects or cases have appeared facing the waste of food, then the waste of food becomes a Relevant Social Challenge for the Spanish social innovation.

**Table 1:** Relevant Social Challenges of Spanish social innovation

Inclusion	Sustainability	Participation and incidence	Development and Human Rights	Others
Universal accesibility	Emissions	Activism	Feeding	Coordination
Gender	Food	Consumption	Fair trade	Financing
Democratic	Consumption	Democracy	Comunications	Training
Interconfessional	Ecology	Mobilization	Culture	
Intercultural	Energy		Democracy	
labour	Environment		Education	
Disabilities	Population		Energy	
Social	Recycling		Justice	
Technological	Nat resources		Health	
			Transport	
			Living place	

Source: Herrero de Egaña, B., forthcoming

## 2. FIVE SPANISH CASES OF INTERGENERATIONAL COOPERATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

From the aforementioned corpus of cases, I have chosen five case studies having a common denominator: they are based in developing intergenerational cooperation.

I assume the concept of "intergenerational cooperation" as «not only about going back to our roots, but much more. It is a bridge between past, present and future. It is not only a “necessary evil”, much more than that is a great opportunity» (EZA, n.d.).

I have made a comparative brief analysis of them, to be able, later, to explain the specificities of My SuperGrandparent, and then to make a management model of intergenerational cooperation, above the others.

First of all, I will make a short presentation of the five selected examples, namely: My SuperGrandparent, I want a grandparent, Adopt a grandparent, SECOT and Show me YAYA.

To make this presentation I will use the same scheme in which I will indicate the objectives, the Social Relevant Challenges they are facing, the means and the beneficiaries of each one of them. This way of presenting them will later facilitate the comparison between them.

The content comes from the web site of each project or entity, although to facilitate reading and comprehension I mention the bibliographical references at the end of the paper.

### 2.1. I Want A Grandparent

*Objectives:* It is a Project that tries to facilitate that elderly people who have time and desire to dedicate affection to children who due to life circumstances do not have grandparents can meet and create a relationship like those of grandparents with their natural grandchildren.

*How it works:* Through an online platform, I want a Grandparent offers a «service of contacting people classified within one of two levels (families / grandparents), so the web simply provides a method of intermediation aimed at proposing the possible establishment of a link between members of each of the two categories referred to» (Quiero un Abuelo, 2017, December, 14th).

*Model:* The organization only facilitates the platform to contact but «does not assume any responsibility and it is the users of I want a Grandparent who, freely, decide by mutual agreement (or, in their case, reject) the establishment of a link between them. As well as, by mutual agreement, these users freely decide about all the personal, organizational, economic and / or legal questions pertaining to the relationship between them that can be reached, without that I Want a Grandfather assume any type of responsibility to such effects. I want a Grandparent cannot guarantee the success of the contacts, nor is he responsible in the event that no contact occurs».

*Comments:* The project focuses on the grandparents and the affective relationship and teachings they can practice in life, based on the personal experience of its founder. Beneficiaries are mainly the grandchildren (even if it is a volunteering that also enriches the elderly people participating in the program).

### 2.2. Adopt A Grandparent

*Objectives:* It is an intergenerational volunteer Program focused on the objective that «our seniors feel accompanied, listened and loved» (Adoptaunabuelo.org, n.d.).

*How it works:* Through its website volunteers register themselves indicating their time availability and their place of residence, so they propose a volunteer program in nursing homes, day centers attendance and other institutions that work with this group.

*Model:* based on young volunteers. The organization provides the link, training and support to the program.

*Comments:* The project focuses on the grandparents and their need of love and company, based on the personal experience of its founder. The beneficiaries are the grandparents, although volunteering is an enriching and satisfying experience.

### **2.3. SECOT**

*Objectives:* It is a Nonprofit Organization (created in 1989) that offers senior volunteer as services business consultants. They define themselves as an «Instrument through which the know-how, experience and values of a significant number of people are used who, once their work is finished, are in a position to help society as a whole through volunteer work, business advice and more specifically to companies that need to improve their management to be able to stay in the market and to those entrepreneurs who want to build up a company» (Secot, 06/1989; my translation). *Mal tradotta*

*How it works:* it offer all kinds of support to entrepreneurs, from courses at no cost so that they can start their own business, to technical consultancy, to develop, expand and consolidate your company through senior partners, who offer their services on a voluntary basis.

*Model:* based on senior volunteers

*Comments:* The project focuses on the young people and the professional relationship that seniors can offer to them; The beneficiaries are the young people, although volunteering is an enriching and satisfying experience.

### **2.4. Show Me Yaya**

*Objectives:* It is a non-profit organization were «We connect generations through the transmission of knowledge around what is now known as Do It Yourself, Craft or handmade (handmade things), but in an authentic, close and easy way» (Show me yaya, n.d.).

*How it works:* «We connect generations through short and face-to-face workshops taught by grandmothers» (Show me yaya, n.d.).

*Model:* based on volunteers. They identify the yayas (grannies) unique, modern and ready to experience new uses with the same old techniques, who accumulate experience, for their tricks and for their stories and who train in sewing, cooking, etc.

*Comments:* The project reclaimed the grandmothers as pioneers in the world of craft: Women who have accumulated years of tricks and shortcuts that now they can and want to teach step by step, calmly.

### **2.5. My Supergrandparent**

*Objectives:* It is a non-profit organization that created a social project with the aim to gather contents related to the knowledge, traditions and habits of people, explained from the point of those who know more, the elderly.

*How it works:* Through an online platform, they are creating a videopedia of traditional cultural heritages, that would otherwise be lost, giving preeminence to those who know it and keep it until now, the elders. At the same time, it proposes a My SuperGrandchildren volunteer program to young people, so that they can return to the elders what they dominate, for example, regarding the use of ICT.

*Model:* promotes a peer to peer relationship in which grandparents are hubs connecting tradition and modernity.

*Comments:* The project reclaimed the grandparents as heroes in the world of cultural heritage. At the same time, it raises a parity relationship between the generations.

	I want a grandparent	Adopt a grandparent	SECOT	Show me Yaya	My Suoer grandparent
Objetives	Affection to children	Affection to ancient	Training and consultancy	Training	Empower old people Conservate and disseminate oral or tradicional knowledgement
Relevant Social Challenges	Inclusion (social)	Inclusion (social)	Instrumental (training).	Instrumental (training).	Inclusion (social) Development and Human Rights (culture) Instrumental (training).
Beneficiaries	Children	Ancient	Young people	Young people	Future generations
Actor	Ancient	Young	Ancient	Ancient	Ancient / Young
Relation	Help	Help	Help	Help	Win-Win
Model	Based on volunteers	Based on volunteers	Based on volunteers	Based on volunteers	Innovative ITC centred Social

**Table 2:** Comparative analysis

Source: Herrero de Egaña, B.

### 3. MY SUPERGRANDPARENT

#### 3.1. My Supergrandparent: Differences With The Other Four Analyzed Cases

As we can see in Table 2 above, the case of My SuperGrandparent brings together several elements that make it different from the other four examples.

First, the case of My SuperGrandparent is the only one that achieves more than two objectives that respond to the Relevant Social Challenges of which we spoke in section 1.3. of this paper. Indeed, My SuperGrandparent faces the challenges of inclusion (accessibility for all and social), development and human rights (culture) and other instrumental (training).

In addition, it is the only one of the five compared cases that generates a peer to peer relationship between the different interest groups; for instance, the elders are both protagonists and beneficiaries.

The case of My SuperGrandparent is the only one making possible that the benefits of the project go beyond the direct actors of the project, becoming available for future generations.

Last but not least, we can observe in this comparative analysis that My SuperGrandparent is the only case that generates a peer to peer relationship between the different actors of the project, generating a win-win relationship.

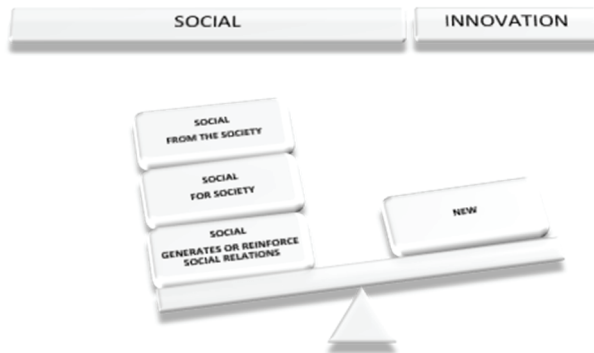
#### 3.2. My Supergrandparent: The Management Model

Once we have verified that My SuperGrandparent is a more complete case than the other four, we can analyze the elements that make this a model of intergenerational cooperation.

As first it is the only case of social innovation, as we have previously defined it: indeed, My SuperGrandparent is on the one hand "innovative", since it owns a new and effective solution to the

challenges it faces, and on the other, it is three times “social”: it is of society, for society and generates new relationships between the different social actors and strengthens existing ones.

**Picture 2:** Ingredients of social innovation



Source: Herrero de Egaña, B., forthcoming

Secondly, the case of My SuperGrandparent brings together a series of elements that make it easily scalable, replicable and sustainable over time, which is why we propose it as a model of intergenerational management.

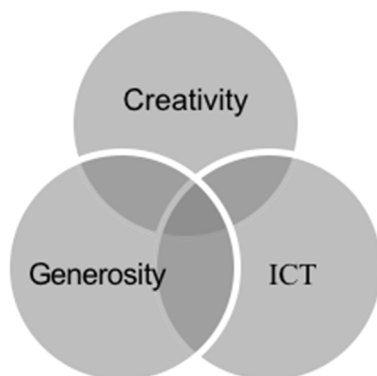
*Creativity:* although it might seem like a superficial element or of secondary importance, it is not. On the contrary, creativity is not only the ability to create, to imagine and project and therefore has to do with innovation and also with the possibility of awakening an empathic reaction by the recipients. An example of the creativity of the model is reflected graphically in the logo of the entity that represents a grandfather dressed as a superhero, as the same name of the organization recalls.

*Generosity:* the whole model is based on the generosity of its stakeholders, from the founders and creators of the project, to the super-grandparents and super-grandchildren, who must be generous with their time, their knowledge and with people from another generation.

This generosity goes beyond what is supposed to any volunteer, since a volunteer always receives at least as much as he gives, and it facilitates the dissemination and scalability of the project.

*ICT:* The use of information and communication technologies to record and disseminate the super grandparents' tutorials, as well as to facilitate their integration into society by providing them with basic access to these technologies (for instance, the social network What's up), it also has an impact on the sustainability and scalability of the Project.

**Picture 3:** My SuperGrandparent management model: differential elements



Source: Herrero de Egaña, B.



## 4. LEARNINGS

Innovation, Creativity and Technology are ingredients that make the difference approaching the Relevant Social Challenges we have to face in order to make this world a better place to live for everyone.

Intergenerational cooperation understood as a «bridge between past, present and future» is one of this challenges, specifically in Spain, as we have seen in this paper.

A Relevant Social Challenge always refers to what really matters and facing "what really matters" it is worthwhile that all resources are activated and put to play.

Values such as generosity and creativity can facilitate the sustainability of a project and help increase not only qualitatively but also quantitatively its effectiveness and impact.

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