

Home and Identity: The Private-Public Nexus

Reflections on the International Conference of the Home Renaissance Foundation
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The Home Renaissance Foundation (HRF) organised an international conference in Rome last November titled “Home and Identity: The Private-Public Nexus”. This was the fourth in a series of international conferences whose aim is to raise the profile of the work of the home, due to its major influence on the well-being of persons. As a UK-based Think Tank, chaired by Bryan Sanderson CBE, HRF promotes a greater recognition of the work that goes into creating healthy and congenial home environments.

The conference presenters came from varied professional backgrounds, providing for a rich interdisciplinary discussion. These included speeches from the philosopher Rafael Alvira of the University of Navarre and French sociologist Jean-Claude Kaufmann among others.

Below are a few salient points that were discussed by the panelists in their various presentations. These covered issues of the family as the source of our identity; importance of boundaries and how these are changing through time; the importance of quality family life, including the celebration of feast days; defining and living up to the perennial work-life balance challenge.

- Outside of the family, it is impossible to have a proper identity as home is the radical origin of personal and social identity. In the family, one learns how to love, how to give one self. The capacity for loving is infinite.
- Time in the family should be well planned for it to have positive and lasting effects on the development of our identity. The process of building an identity is directly linked to the home.
- Home defines what is private and what is public. However, it was noted that there have been changes in the understanding of boundaries. Technological transformations have affected the definitions of boundaries and these are now being redrawn. Some of these changes include the fact that home is no longer a place young people are sure of, based on lots of movement, within

cities, countries, etc. This creates a problem as young people may lack a sense of a past and a future.

- Family celebrations/feasts are very important as they help us remember the past and face the future with hope. All family celebrations have an educational value. The importance of the feast should have external manifestations (actual preparations) and also internal preparations by taking a keen interest.
- Balancing the work of the home and jobs outside the home is a major ongoing challenge in current times. The messages that parents give to their children are critical, as later in life those messages have a bearing on the choices people make. If when growing up children are told only to work hard and have fulfilling careers, when they become professionals, they may do this to the detriment of their families. Therefore, from an early age, the importance of home and family life should be reinforced as much as professional work outside the home. Achieving this balance is difficult. One's priorities need to be determined, as it's not possible to 'have it all.' Sacrifices will have to be made.
- In facing up to the challenge of balancing work and home, a possible way of thinking about the balance is in using the words "interface" or "balance" These words are more neutral as they look at where the two concepts meet. There should be boundaries between work and home. Critically, it is through the person that we unite work and home. Home is a school of life.
- Innovative solutions for integrating women back to the labor force have been demonstrated in some countries like Italy. There were examples of organised programmes where some women go to work for 2 hours a day, to enable them pursue their professional ambitions whilst still keeping their families at the front and center of their lives.

Many other messages were given. Importantly, the home was described as being the foundation of our identity, where key lessons of love and the meaning of life are taught and learnt.

HRF will continue leading these conferences in key world capitals in its mission of raising the profile of the home, for the overall well-being of society.

The HRF website is: www.homerenassaincefoundation.org