

ENVIRONMENT AND NEW GENERATIONS: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Summary

- Different generations have different attitudes towards the environmental issue.
- Mountain regions should be regarded as "resources" to exploit for social and economical development.
- The Mediterranean Sea can be restored through environmental plans, which would provide employment for qualified workers and professionals.
- People are becoming more and more aware that the protection of nature should be connected with the protection of human history.

1. Introduction

Environment is a theme that marks a separation among generations. In Italy the gap is wide and youth and adults have quite different opinions about this important issue. A cultural background and legislative power are needed for the great challenge facing the question of development and protection of the environment.

This text mainly deals with the cultural gap among generations: the younger they are the more they understand that environment is not a source of limitless resources. Natural resources must be exploited with caution and discrimination.

- Italian young people look upon environmental policy as a policy to be conformed to European or world standards, rather than a home original choice connected with the social-economical reality of our country.

- Three fields urgently need decisive measures: the protection of our hydrogeological system, the solution of waste disposal problems, and the struggle against pollution in general.
- Despite the differences among countries' interests and needs, dialogue and the search for solutions are the essential means of tackling the environmental issue.
- Information and school programs must concretely support the educational system teaching the young to protect nature.

2. Environment and new generations

The relationship among generations has always followed a pattern of separation. In fact, there is an objective gap among young, adult and elderly people, which shows itself not only in their choice, but also in their values. The environmental issue provides a clear example of a generation gap, i.e. young people are urged by mass media to be aware of the plight of air, water, sea and forests. So they find themselves involved in kinds of choices that affect the quality of their lives, whether they like it or not.

As a matter of fact they find themselves leading lives full of contradictions: they like racket, roaring motorbikes and cars; they litter the grass when they go for hikes; they throw anything into the sea, tread on the grass and pick flowers and mushrooms in the woods, without any foresight and consideration for the reproduction cycle. But, whenever environmental organizations ask them to clean up the riverbanks or the underbrush, they are eager to help. So new generations live in two dimensions at the same time: on the one hand they accept the current state of our environment and, on the other hand, they show to be more sensible and worried than the adults about the future of the environment. Nevertheless, they do not know what they can do for it. They lack both the means of knowledge, which should enable them to understand what is happening in our planet. They also lack new rules and methods, which would provide them a different way of living, namely a way of living aiming, first of all, at the respect of nature and its rules of reproduction and surviving.

Young people often criticize the many businesses arising from the environmental issue. Both as representatives of employees and of small and medium industries, they have repeatedly called for an organic program for the safety and protection of the environment.

Politicians, however, still and mainly tend to plan national politics in accordance with the international resolutions, which prevent them from solving "the several knotty problems about the environment restoration and protection program (Youth Social Forces Council, 1999).

Young people are calling for urgent intervention in three fundamental fields: the implement of protection actions for our hydroecological system, the solution of the waste disposal problems, and the fight against air and noise pollution.

A concerted approach, according to the young who have joined social-economical organizations, is the right path to follow. The resolution of the environmental issue needs people's joint efforts and will; all the same the young are aware that such process

require quite a long time. Consideration for the environment is still poor within our productive system; it is often perceived as an element that increases further production costs.

On top of this, we have frequently seen attempts failing because of the incompatibility of local and overall interests. It is still very difficult to establish a balanced situation between development and protection of the environment, especially when, both the deep-rooted local interests and the economical-financial requirements, along with the organizational-supply demands, are pressing. It appears clearly, therefore that it is quite difficult for different generations to reach an agreement about the environmental issue.

The young point out that school, as well as our whole educational system, lacks subjects dealing with the protection of nature.

Moreover, it is widespread opinion among the youngest generations that we should have more and more consideration for our environment, on behalf of our country's overall social and economical growth.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, the old generations, being dominated by the myth of "progress", have always showed a dominating behavior over nature. The environment was to be regulated, ruled and adapted to man's life and work. Respect for the environment, along with its "needs" and rhythms, is a recent concept that new generations are starting to acknowledge, but the instruments and methods for studying in depth this subject are not in the least available at school, as well as at university, nor at any specialization courses.

Papers and television always show different kinds of cliché nature, but the complexity of nature, with its different features, escapes the rigid human cataloguing or reproduction. So, planning a new educational system for a bearable society, we should conceive a change in all disciplines and the overturn of old logic. Despite the fact that the new generations wish to understand better what is the right relationship between man and nature, between development and environment protection, teacher's training has not changed so far, and the contents of basic and professional forming programs have changed little.

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Biographical Sketch

Doriana (Teodora) Giudici was born in Varese, Italy, on 6-12-1938.

Degree in Law from the Università Statale di Milano (1962).

Married, one daughter.

Work Experience

Legal Department of Chamber of Labour of Varese.

Head of Textile and Clothing Workers Trade Union in the Region of Lombardia -C.G.I.L (General Italian Labour Confederation (1968).

Transferred to Rome office of C.G.I.L. to direct division dealing with laws and contracts for women (1974).

Appointed Head of C.G.I.L Labour Market Division (1980)

Joins CNEL (General Economic and Labour Council), placed in charge of working group on Youth (1990).

President of Federation of Evangelical Women in Italy

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