

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

Antonella Nappi

Dipartimento di studi sociali e politici, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, Università Statale di Milano.
antonella.nappi@unimi.it

Introduction

The dissemination of knowledge in the media about the environmental unsustainability of worldwide economic growth is recent. The opportunities for this phenomena were presented by economic forecasts made by the Stern Report in 2006 and by the IPCC Report on Climate Change in 2007. But the facts were known at the time by scholars and political powers. The existing conflicts between population growth and production, consumption and transport within the natural environment¹ were censored or ridiculed by the press and political powers, just as any critical view on development considered as "growth".

Today, even if these reports have created much of the international political will to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), thus gradually replacing fossil fuels with different forms of energy production², the economic and political outlook oriented to the growing demand for energy has not changed. An economic system based on production growth and market competition cannot reduce its pressure on the environment and the desire to increase production and profits with or without technical efficiency still leads to the exhaustion of renewable and non-renewable natural resources on the planet. Even materials which are salvaged are consumed and degraded³ and the rupture of the natural systemic balance and loss of biological diversity is already widespread⁴.

The fight against global warming can therefore increase the degeneration already in progress on the planet. The production of nuclear energy is associated with toxic waste in huge quantities, active for centuries⁵ and with dams which disrupt ecosystems and economies of entire countries⁶. In the absence of limits, even the building of energy mills for

¹ I refer to texts such as Meadows D.H.- Meadows D.L.- Randers J.- Behrens J.III W.W., *I limiti dello sviluppo*. Report of the System Dynamics Group Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for the Rome Club project on the dilemmas of humanity asked for by Aurelio Peccei, Arnaldo Mondadori, Milan, 1972; Conti L., *Questo pianeta*, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1983. The most recent: Nebbia G., *Lo sviluppo sostenibile*, Cultura della pace, San domenico, Fiesole, 1991 ; Ravaioli C., *Il pianeta degli economisti. Ovvero l'economia contro il pianeta*, Isedi. , Turin, 1992; Gras A. , *Nella rete tecnologica*, UTET, Turin, 1997; Lewanski R., *Governare l'ambiente*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1997.

² but other causes should be reduced: such as intensive farming, intensive agriculture, the use of chemical products and deforestation which should be replaced instead by intense reforestation (Rifkin J., *Il sogno europeo: come l'Europa ha creato una nuova visione del futuro che sta lentamente eclissando il sogno americano* , Mondadori, Milan, 2004).

³ Conti L., *Questo pianeta*, op cit.

⁴ There are many texts dealing with it: Wuppertal Institut, *Futuro sostenibile. Riconversione ecologica. Nord- Sud, nuovi stili di vita*, Bologna, Emi, 1997; Bonaiuti M, *Obiettivo Decrescita*, Emi, Bologna, 2004; Georgescu Roegen N., *Bioeconomia. Verso un'altra economia ecologicamente e socialmente sostenibile*, edited by Mauro Bonaiuti, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 2003; Pardi L., *Oltre I limiti*, "Sapere", 72, 1 , pp 12-21; WWF, *Living Planet Report 2006*; http://www.panda.org/news_facts/publications/living_planet_report/index.cfm ; Shiva V., *Biopirateria. Il saccheggio della natura e dei saperi indigeni*, CUEN, Napoli, 1999; Shiva V., *Vacche sacre e mucche pazze. Il furto delle riserve alimentari globali*, Derive Approdi, Rome, 2004 and myself in *Lo sviluppo non sostenibile e l'immaginario della decrescita*, in *Sociologia e globalizzazione* (edited by) Laura Corradi and Fabio Perocco, Mimesis , Milan, 2007 pp. 191-206.

⁵ WWF, op.cit.

⁶ Barlow M. Clarke T., *Oro Blu. La battaglia contro il furto mondiale dell'acqua*, Casalecchio, Arianna

wind power or solar panels could assault the landscape with significant impact. Moreover, the cultivation of rape or other biomasses for the production of fuels, when agricultural land is indispensable for the cultivation of food and water which is already scarce, is precious in every aspect.

If you consider the "energy and economic agreement" for CO2 storage, the European Union project within the parameters of Kyoto and the use of refrigerant gas, new threats can also be anticipated⁷.

The disasters already observed will continue to occur before us: deaths caused by floods, tornadoes and droughts, wars and great migrations. The world is witnessing disasters, from the contamination of oil transport to death of the elderly caused by heat to the increasing marginalization in which the poor and sick are increasingly thrown all over the world. We will end up getting accustomed to almost anything if there is no political will on part of the nations to focus on the issue of environmental collapse and the resulting economic chaos. Western Economic Development was founded on the use of all that the planet had to offer without considering its natural limits. This abstract nature and this violence is spread throughout our culture and social practices; it is the desire not to recognize the existence of anything other than ourselves as a force to deal with⁸. The demand for inclusion and sharing that characterizes the current society has become an obligation in recent decades which is increasingly illusive and managed with gimmicks. It is this irresponsibility that is reasoned in the practices in which it manifests and involves citizens. Environmental problems demand that people become conscious of how to relate to other things and people, with other natural organisms and with different economic and environmental systems. They demand recognition of the plurality of forces that create the context in which we live. From this point on, new awareness can create new practices. Current development should change with an equalization of the distribution of resources and more stability in economies, with a change in behaviour that reduces the waste of energy, transport and consumption⁹ and with the freedom of women to choose how many children to have (with economic and technical aid, but especially political aid). All of this can lower the incidence of the new-borns on the population of the world and on all the other species. The recognition of the significance of procreation in many social and economic fallouts implies a different distribution of social costs and benefits and the participation of women in its management may involve a different way of looking at ourselves with the design of a different social organization.

Education

Education towards practices and thoughts arise from those thoughts and practices carried out in daily family communities and peer communities, in places of work and recreation, but as regards the influence of political choices and messages that come from public institutions and markets, they represent an overall social reference that may seem universal.

Knowledge of the context and the relationship with it, whether it natural, environmental or community related, is the culture that has moulded everyone and in which each recognizes the other, the grounds which each institution is subjected to.

Editrice, 2004; De Villiers Marq, *Acqua. Storia e destino di una risorsa in pericolo*, Sperling & Kupfer Editori, 2003; Lasserre Frédéric, *Acqua. Spartizione di una risorsa*, Milan, Ponte alle Grazie, 2004; Pearce Fred, *Un pianeta senz'acqua. Viaggio nella desertificazione contemporanea*, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 2006.

⁷ Study day *Ambiente e cambiamenti climatici*, from the title "*Protocollo di Kyoto: quali tecnologie innovative?*", Turin, October 7 2008, Sapio Prize for Italian research.

⁸ This conclusion was drawn with the help of sociological, anthropological and feminist literature in Nappi A., *La responsabilità di sé nel pianeta*, in Angelini A. (edited by), *Il battito d'ali di una farfalla. Beni comuni e cambiamenti climatici*, Edizioni Fotograf, Palermo, 2008, pp. 617-644.

⁹ This has been dealt with many scholars already named including myself in Nappi A., *La responsabilità di sé nel pianeta*, op.cit.

Economic interest and technology have upset this wisdom in recent decades and have forced people to become mere consumers.

More people and more pressures have populated the world in their own way, and authority as social practice has defined the tasks of everyone within the group they belong to and the functional interaction between different groups of population has allowed the deciphering of a context of reference. The role of authoritarianism, of models acquired that must be complied with, made up for the need to think about ourselves. During the following years, authoritarianism changed and then became hegemonic in terms of the market, which mediated by objects could appear as subjective freedom to buying and recognizing in others¹⁰.

"The more you consume, the more wealth is created" was the lesson of the development of the 80s and 90s. It was the expropriation of the knowledge of thrift and savings to create a world where the political ideology of economic dominance required new practices and new thoughts. Consuming more than needed, discarding what is not new, not caring about the environment, about the context, about others, despising the work of maintenance - all of this has become the counter-education¹¹.

The replacement of humans with machines has gradually eroded the culture of solidarity that recognizes others as part of the community (and results in work being recognized as a commodity¹²).

By recognizing ourselves into the others and into the needs of the others, we have slipped into eliminating every context from our own reflection on personal intention at the moment¹³.

Men and women

The division of tasks between genders has relegated to the private sector all the economic materiality of procreation and care of property and individuals and the formation of people. This was the basis that led to the elimination of these realities from culture and practice, up to a complete reduction, alienation and oppression into marginalization.

Women are delegated to cultivate the ability to listen to the needs of others and pay attention to the overall context of the subsistence activities or otherwise, to deepen, with motherhood, the experience of recognition of the others as dialogic otherness and as a limit to omnipotence¹⁴. On the other hand, the social, cultural and political structure of Western society, developed with men thinking and acting between each others ("between men,")¹⁵,

¹⁰ The thought, originating from the movements of the 60s, particularly those feminist, but prepared by the political study of parties after the war and in particular by those Communist and Socialist, was settled in an easy subjectivity, while political reflection and study, which require time, were suffocated by work hours for women and for all those involved in consumption which free time activities (travel, second homes, sports) amplified.

¹¹ More and more technological products came from the industrial world which made them no longer recognizable in terms of origin of materials, territory, workplace. It was no longer the job which produced life or well-being, to the contrary well-being gave an infinite quantity of assets and money was needed to acquire them. Sennet R., *L'uomo flessibile. Le conseguenze del nuovo capitalismo sulla vita personale*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1999.

¹² Gallino L., *Il lavoro non è una merce*, La Repubblica 19/6/07.

¹³ The civil relationship between people has lost value and attention to our desire seems at times to want to legitimize the very annoyance of the existence of others.

¹⁴ Dealt with by A. Nappi, *La responsabilità di sé nel pianeta*, op. cit. with the aid of women's and feminist studies ranging from Mead M., *Popoli e paesi*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1962 to Saraceno C., *Dalla parte della donna. La "questione femminile" nelle società industriali avanzate*, De Donato Editore, 1971, from Balbo L., *Stato di famiglia. Bisogni Privato Collettivo*, Milan, Etas Libri, 1976 to Violi P. *L'infinito singolare, Considerazioni sulla differenza sessuale nel linguaggio*, Verona, Essedue, 1991; from Abbà L, Ferri G, Lazzaretto G, Medi E, Motta S, *La coscienza di sfruttata*, Mazzotta editore, Milan, 1972; to Carol Gilligan, *Con voce di donna*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1983 and *La nascita del piacere*, Turin, Giulio Einaudi, 2003; to many texts of L. Irigaray. Regarding the measure of oneself against omnipotence, the writings of the Library of women over time are of great importance and Cigarini L. and (edited by) Muraro L. Rampello L., *La politica del desiderio*, Nuova Pratiche editrice, Parma 1995; Dominjanni I., *Il desiderio di politica*, introduction to Cigarini L., 1995 op. cit

¹⁵ Irigaray L, *Donne all'ombra del pubblico potere*, La Repubblica, 2-2-07.

emphasized the power to dispose of any others and any substance, shunning to consider that plurality of forces that require to mediate.

Today, in terms of enhancement of their skills and their practices in every social place, the possibility of action that leads society to the observation of natural and human reality originates from women.

To the feminists of the 60s and 70s, the terror-stricken men replied: "If you are no longer the guardian of relationships, of maintenance, of affection and altruistic attitude, if you do not take care of every human need, what will become of society?". With the revolt of women against their domestic prison, the importance of the economic, social and political sphere delegated to them only in non-public places and unacknowledged in terms of a precise economic, social and intellectual value, became evident.

The social system of today, where many women do publicly standardized work, must be reconfigured¹⁶ because it no longer performs those social needs that affect both the employees and many other figures who need assistance and socialization and it also discriminates women in public life.

It is time to take those values as the basis for new economic and political reflection and the process is already underway with communication between women and between women and men in public places¹⁷, with listening to public interferences in the private sector that women bring: attention to body and health; observation of the sense of actions, emotional relationships with colleagues and work; attention to the purposes and recipients of work, the demand for modified and reduced working hours so that other actions and relationships (such as the study, politics, care and nursing) have more room in society for all no longer divided by gender and age¹⁸.

Raising and socializing children, creating and recreating relationships between adults (between families and between friends) dealing with the absence of independence, which is the constant factor of life¹⁹, is the matrix of social development. This culture helps to exit from an economy of mere money and expands on the concept of wealth²⁰.

Men and women had had different experiences during the past time until now. This differences are to be traced in the different roles they have always played, that are now coming to rejoin and demand recognition of the value of time. More freedom in the use of time allows everyone to create and develop the independent activities of people and produces culture and relationships that preserve and enrich social assets.

¹⁶ It was this way in some countries in Europe with variable and reduced working hours but the same opportunity would have to be applied to all without restriction of age, as said in European programs, please see Ludovici S. Semenza R (edited by), *Il lavoro part-time in Europa. Anomalie del caso Italiano nel quadro europeo*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2004; Nappi A., *Anziani, disoccupati o integrati?* In *Isig Quarterly of International Sociology*, Gorizia, Anno XV-XVI, N. December 4 2006 / N. February 1 2007, pp.13—15.

¹⁷ But it is difficult to be able to speak to women in public places, there is also conflict in equal opportunity committees between the affirmation of radical innovation brought about by their presence in the public sphere and the attempt, even if unconscious, to deny the practice of usual mental and political habit as a function of adaptation of women to the masculine world of work, to the political and cultural practices of men. Nappi A, *Potersi dire, (Can women be heard?)*, in Simonetta Bisi (edited by), *Genere e potere. Per una rifondazione delle scienze umane*, Bonanno Editore, 2008 pp. 537-541. All of the text is interesting regarding this. Please see also Benvenuti M. Barbieri P. Chiarabini V. Cigarini L. Masotto G. Motta S. Savoldi O. Zanuso L., *Il doppio sì. Lavoro e maternità, Quaderni di via Dogana*, Libreria delle donne, 2008.

¹⁸ Time may become a distribution of wealth and opportunities and also the solution to many needs, I mean this in a general sense but it is also interesting that time banks have spread at the public level already in these ten years. (www.banchetempo.milano.it)

¹⁹ in the animal and plant kingdom.

²⁰ Relationships and social activities, knowledge of sustenance and humour, of enjoyment and suffering, provide a framework of common assets that everyone can give and receive and the dual relationship can broaden relationships with civilians. But it takes time and exercise and political recognition of their motivation.

This is a political alternative to the current social organization. It is an alterity that the feminists had visualized and illustrated, but also for women, the world of men and the culture of provision of services held (and holds) the charm of economic independence. On the crest of these two cultures, it was the first which earned the second and today the difference is largely reconstructed and offers much more to personal choice which, according to standards, can bring back the awareness that subjective, creative and relational abilities, functioning independently, should reduce the time required by the market without it being marginalized.

Self-education as political practice

Women who used to meet each other in the late 60s found little to talk about in terms of concepts, apart from experiences, but turning to their own lives and expressing a state of mind proved to be a source of knowledge for those who listened too. They discovered, with the urgency of speaking about their problems (about themselves and for themselves), that analysing personal behaviours and thoughts, subjective desires and feelings, in comparison to the standard rules made personal changes free and allowed changes of contexts which these renewed subjects acted in.

This is a powerful political practice²¹ and can be brought back in relation to environmental problems. Moreover changing ourselves is the only way to test the possibility of social change which we are discussing.

Perhaps it is a practice that needs to be guided in its implementation or has been little explained, it is uncommon.

Many feminist elaborations have been surmounted by institutional practices, for example, the very importance of discussion among people about behaviour or acquisition of information and knowledge. Such was the case for material produced about the doctor/patient relationship, for example: the provision of medical care through in-depth discussion of the causes of the disease and methods of therapy.

Many methodologies of analysis were experimented with to get close to the facts and to discover the reasons, being aware that having a good sense of issues is what points to their solutions. The spending of energy and time on reflection, listening and discussion, is the reason behind every appropriate action while saving human energy, which has become the prevailing trend today, is the reason for every failure.

This education has been defeated by the "surprise" of technical development and increase in production that it has enabled and by innovations that have accustomed us to shorten the time for activities. Science has become an increasingly constant presence in our imagination: the distributor of well-being and capable over time of easing every discomfort. This has created the explicit delegation to economic choices and has dissolved the exercise of responsibility for individuals and institutions. A special power is inherent to the subject itself: in the saving of energy applied to objects that allows the power of creation to be accentuated. This brings a sensitive pleasure, just as the aesthetic pleasure that the object offers²².

Also in politics, the critical capacity regressed, the repossession exercised by political parties or "alternative" movements, even those involving women is by now more than twenty years old. Not that information and movements cannot be enriching, but it is difficult for them to entail a thorough analysis of daily practice. The exception, on the contrary, is the environmental movement and its culture which has progressed continuously and represents a deepening of observation of the contexts and of ourselves in these contexts and represent an extension of political roots in the self-awareness of our own existence in the world and of the multiplicity of relationships that most subjects take part in.

²¹ Cigarini L. (and edited by Muraro L: Rampello L), *La politica del desiderio*, op.cit.

²² The pleasure of artistic action is full of alternatives to drugs and violence; psychological research considers aesthetic enjoyment as a very important resource that must be addressed, I apologize for not being able to provide the sources here.

But those political practices that do not involve the analysis of our daily behaviour and the questioning of our factual consent to what appears as critical still prevail in the Left: To name but a few examples: the relations between war- oil - use of automobiles, do not involve a response elaborated on ourselves, on political choices and daily experience that the system pushes to put into practice²³.

Each consumption (and technological consumption) can be analysed in relation to how it affects the individual and how it affects the environment and this step can produce changes in the way of thinking and in behaviour²⁴. For example, the destruction of cable connections which were a creation of society, at a cost to and implemented by the public telephone system, deprives us now of a free and healthy service, that symbolically connected us to others as far as tradition and a tangible wire network, in favour of the new advent involving a new subscription that requires an electromagnetic network connection to reach others, exacerbating the harmful effects of this power in the space in which everyone lives²⁵. It requires an object: the mobile phone has become almost part the person²⁶, who, in this way, is never alone within the context, a condition that has always been the basis of the personality of adults, according to tradition.

Today, a new awareness and autonomy can be created by questioning ourselves and facing rules, consumptions, infrastructures, productions, ways of life, relations and by reasoning on the feelings they provoke, the thought they propose, the expectations they create and the social repercussions produced by this processes. The consumer is no more acquiescent to everything and plays an important role in political choices. He can also disavow rules and habits which do not feel right.

Consumers or leaders?

The new opportunities linked to energy self-production from sources such as the sun and wind²⁷ overturn the paradigm of the endless availability (and demand) of energy and lead us take into consideration the natural productive factors (which are discontinuous): windy/sunny days capable of facing this/that task that may require energy²⁸. But also the opportunity to resell excess energy²⁹ and be encouraged to do so by the very attractive prices leads, in a very widespread way, the population to abandon the attitude of delegates towards the environment and their own behaviour to find subjectivity and the capacity to take action again³⁰.

²³ Perhaps this is another reason why the opportunistic choices of the right are not contradictory.

²⁴ It can be seen today with respect to cars that have become in recent years the subject of analysis in this sense. They are starting to be banned not only in city centers but in cities, in favor of public transport (there is the news of 4 euros paid in the Netherlands to those who leave their cars at home to go to work *Pagati per lasciare l'auto a casa*, LASTAMPA.it, 14/9/2008).

²⁵ The huge increase in electromagnetic fields has implications for health as testified by many studies, see for example : Hyland G.J. *Esposizione alle radiofrequenze*, "Verde Ambiente", XXI, 2, pp25-28; Olivetti Rason N.-Colaluca C.- Giovanazzi A.-Malo M.- Perini A., (edited by), *Inquinamento da campi elettromagnetici*, CEDAM, Milan, 2002; Levis A.G., *Effetti biologici e sanitari a breve e lungo termine delle radiofrequenze e delle microonde*, 2006.

²⁶ Once, guest was offered the telephone or he paid for a call, emphasizing the collective opportunity; today offering the cell phone is more intimate and curious: "Why don't you buy one?"

²⁷ The 2007 financial year, for the installation of solar panels and the thermal insulation of buildings, recognizes an IRPEF relief of 55%.

²⁸ M. Bono P. Riccardi, *L'altro modello*, in Report, directed by M. Gabanelli, Rai, Sunday March 16 2008, 9:30pm http://www.report.rai.it/RE_elenco/0,11515,2008-categoria-350,00.html Alternative.

²⁹ The "energy account", which recognizes a state incentive for every kWh produced by photovoltaic panels for 20 years and obligates Enel or AEM to withdraw the energy produced <http://www.grtn.it/ita/fotovoltaico/NuovoContoEnergia.asp?Act=L&IdArgomento=508&Voce=Nuovo%20Conto%20energia&SortBy=DTPUBBL%20desc>; <http://www.casarinnovabile.it/incentivi.htm>.

³⁰ Joining together and becoming producers of clean and local energy, stimulating change in the architecture of the distribution network involves increasingly engaging more citizens and local authorities. But nuclear energy is opposed to suggestions of self-regulation and disagrees with this educational turn,

Even the social discourse, despite its focus on the lack and loss of environmental resources, lead us to take into consideration the natural elements and their processes; it educates us to recognize the finite and the existence of limits, according to traditional education. As a consequence, this return to tradition defeats the ideology of the historical progression towards "the best" which confuses people to a great extent.

The criticism towards broad goods transfers that increase emissions can lead to have connections with closer territories and to protect their productions and those who work there. It also drives to recognize the importance of territoriality and to point out the planning of its organization³¹.

Scientific studies demonstrate how everything has a cost within the natural context; how wastes deteriorate this context; how transports affect the planet and human health: the awareness that everyone's life has a cost for everybody: to know how and to what extent, this is a revolution of economic knowledge³². But, on the same time, it also eliminates the impotence of the citizen who is lead to read social and economic facts, is refurnished with his capacity and awareness of the need to connect with others.

Changing the index of development, accounting for natural depreciation, giving value to air, water, land, forests, helps to change the way of thinking. These are references which are increasingly accepted by citizens and governments; they may enable placing the economy of the human species in a global economic context³³.

Managing information and comparisons between people, managing different organizational and consumption choices should become a widespread political practice.

pushes even harder to challenge the measure in favour of elimination of every constraint.

³¹ For example, the regional law approved by the Veneto region this summer, presented by Coldiretti with 25 thousand signatures of citizens, known as "Zero Kilometer Law" provides that the managers of collective restoration entrusted by the Government make an effort to prepare their products for 50% local food, and also private and supermarkets are urged to encourage consumption (<http://www.informaserenissima.it/dettaglio.cfm?titolo=II-federalismo-veneto-comincia-dal-cibo.cfm&art=17541&canale=1>).

³² Wuppertal Institut, *Futuro sostenibile. Riconversione ecologica. Nord- Sud, nuovi stili di vita*, Bologna, Emi, 1997; Osti G., *Nuovi asceti. Consumatori, imprese e istituzioni di fronte alla crisi ambientale*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2006; Osti *Il consumerismo alla sfida del commercio occulto*, Day study on citizens and consumers, Milan, 12 aprile 2007, Università degli studi di Milano.

³³ Ravaiolo C., *Un mondo diverso è necessario*, Roma, Editori riuniti, 2002; Georgescu Roegen, op. cit.; Osti G., 2006, op.cit.