

Vinyl 2010 Essay Competition Submission Template

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Summary:

The main goal of the sustainable development project is the well-being of society as well as the preservation of nature. It is recognized that the man – as a moral subject – is responsible and that he is capable of thinking and acting for the future. Philosopher Dieter Birnbacher – the author of the book “Responsibility for future generations” argues that this required man’s capabilities should be only shaped but it is possible in culture conditions where the value is also *long-term time*, this time that nature works in.

Essay:

It was established, at the recent climate summit in Poznań in December 2008, that in order to maintain quality environment for future generations it is necessary to reduce the consumption of natural resources. Well-being of future generations and of the global society were considered as an entity for which we are now responsible. I think that there is an optimistic claim implicated in the sustainable development project, that we are a collective entity capable of thinking for the future, thus able to sacrifice for the well-being of people who will not be often related to us, and for the environment – their living conditions. But, is it true?

Conference members admitted that to achieve this goal, WE – the collective entity, must enter an ecological age, which means, the sustainable way of living where the global economy is in harmony with the size of the ecosystem that supports us. Therefore, if a business and, above all, political practice is an important part of the transition towards the ecological era, Peter Head, Director and Head of Global Planning at Arup, claims that is required a “fundamental change in thinking, effective national government policies and large public-private partnerships to intensive change”. What,

however, does the fundamental change involve? I think that it involves changing the human perception of *time* in which social and natural transformations happen. However, in many ecological projects it is considered that the ability to image in *long time term*, the future and the future generations as well as the motivation to act on their behalf, are already present human competence. However, taking into account the current ecological practice and knowledge from social psychology, I argue that the contemporary man more often prefers fast gratification and consumption, because the time in which he estimates is the time of “instant culture”, where rapid changes and immediate gratification have become the standard. That is why, we need to remember, that the project of sustainable development would appreciate also long term, natural time. Only, when we could understand long-term time, in which natural changes happen, we would know that for all changes implicated in sustainable development we need to wait longer than for a meal in fast food. Then only, there is a sense in waiting and saving, when we appreciate the future in which the results of our act will be apparent.

In the face of the development of biological sciences, it is said today about a man that he is a part of a complex system of linkages. We are meeting the terms that man is a thread in the great fabric of life as well as that a man is a global citizen. Unfortunately, the global citizenship is not present but required culture, because as all culture it needs to have rituals that confirm global solidarity in a long-term time. The global citizenship should, therefore be founded on the awareness of interdependence and shared responsibility and a sense of obligation toward humanity and the nature as a whole. Dieter Birnbacher, the author of the book “Responsibility for future generations“, argues that a culture of responsibility is a culture of long term time. However, we are now living in a very rapid time, so we need to create conditions for mentality that is aware of time in which future generations will live but also in the time in which all our faults concerning today’s environmental management appear. Only, in the conditions of natural, long-term time, projects of global concern would have sense.

The author suggests that a sense of time is conditioned and dependent both, on personality and the cultural factors. He particularly strongly emphasizes that the range of future time that actors take into consideration in their acting, depends on self-confidence, optimism, belonging to a social class. Birnbacher argues that poor motivation to act also has a relationship with a sense of time. He notes that the concentration on present is not so much an independent variable ethnicity but most of all the result of historical process of addiction and poverty. As it is known, however, the exploitation of nature reaches

enormous proportions in the developing countries and in the third world. Unfortunately, the reason for this exploitation is poverty – this is where the circle closes.

He also states that there is a clear relationship between the assessment of future and mature personality, which is influenced without a doubt by the cultural processes of learning of timeless empathy. Moreover, Birnbacher pays attention to another very important thing – awareness or even consciousness of the future are not enough cause for responsible action. According to him, what pushes us to act is not only the awareness and conviction that the choice is fair, but must of all the motivation - the desire that is in an action. He also adds that a man is often sure that his action has a sense when a correlat - that your treatment is addressed – has a value.

To strengthen effective action in natural and social domain, Birnbacher - but also Hans Jonas the author of the book „Imperative of responsibility” - claims that today we need to renew the virtue of savings and responsibility. Unfortunately, virtue as well as autonomy and accountability without education have no chance to be canon of action. “Education only conducts a man beyond the narrow extend of egoism and provides comprehension of common interests”. It seems, therefore, that the conditions of society well being are in the hands of the society, which will adopt a sustainable development model as a way of progress. However, it requires creating the conditions for long-term time and to delayed gratification most of all in economy and trade. For the future solidarity between the generations, however, we must educate. We need to “create” a man who understand, that he is an actor and needs to take responsibility for his own actions. We need also shape our feelings – the motor of motivation – and comprehension that the nature has its own value.