

## *Editorial*

by *Domenico Tafuri\**

The concept of Sustainability is not new in literature, but in recent times, it has experienced such an expansion that it is possible to find references to sustainability in different disciplines (law, management, architecture, etc.) and in different areas that affect “social living” (from scientific literature to professional manuals and popular communication). In all cases, the references are explicitly aimed at supporting and sustaining a new development paradigm.

The traditional model of economic development, of the seventies, was the subject of strong criticism, as, among scholars, the hypothesis of the inability of the Earth to meet the needs of an ever-growing humanity was advanced. Starting in 1967 and during the 1970s, Paul R. Ehrlich (biologist) began to denounce in catastrophic terms the ecological risk associated with the population boom.

A second alarm bell was raised in 1972 when the “Limit to growth” was published, promoted by the Club of Rome and produced by MIT in Boston; it is a study that, based on trends in population, resources, energy, pollution and industrial development, predicts a scenario of growing shortage of resources such as to lead the world economic system to collapse by the twenty-first century (Meadows et al., 1972). It is, therefore, in the 70s that the awareness of a problem linked to the relationship between natural resources and their exploitation emerges.

To avoid this scenario, which is nothing short of apocalyptic, and to avoid the limits of development, the tool proposed by the authors of the Report is the strategic planning of the forms of use of natural resources. In this sense, it is recognized that nature has a fundamental role in the economy towards

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\* Full Professor. Director of the Department of Medical, Human Movement, and Well-being Sciences, University of Naples “Parthenope”.

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the adoption of “Sustainable Development”. In the 80s the expression “sustainable development” became very popular, especially thanks to the publication in 1987 of the document “Our Common Future”, drawn up by the World Commission on Environment and Development WCED; better known as the “Brundtland Report”: “Sustainable development is a development that guarantees the needs of current generations without compromising the possibility that future generations will be able to meet their own”. The concept of sustainable development highlighted involves limits, although not absolute, imposed by the current state of technology and social organization, economic resources and the capacity of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities.

In 2001, the definition of Sustainable Development was enriched with a further concept, that of cultural diversity. This is the central theme of the “Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity”, of UNESCO; «... cultural diversity is as necessary for humanity as biodiversity is for nature»; it can be considered “one of the roots of development understood not only as economic growth, but also as a means of leading a more satisfying life on the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual levels”. In this sense, cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the sake of present and future generations.

In February 2008, the President of the French Republic, Nicholas Sarkozy, dissatisfied with the current state of statistical data concerning the economy and society, asked Joseph Stiglitz (President of the Commission), Amartya Sen (Councilor) and Jean Paul Fitoussi (Coordinator), to create a Commission, later called the “Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress” (CMPEPS). The Commission’s objective was therefore to identify the limitations of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and well-being, including problems related to its measurement, and to reflect on any additional information that might be needed to develop more reliable indicators of well-being.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ‘How’s Life’ report describes some of the essential aspects of life that shape people’s well-being and is based on a multidimensional framework covering 11 dimensions of current well-being (income and wealth, work and earnings, housing, health, education, work-life balance, environment, social connections, civic engagement, security and subjective well-being) dividing them into two macro groups: “Material living conditions” and “Quality of life”. According to the OECD, the sustainability of this well-being requires the preservation over time of the four stocks of capital (natural, human, economic and social). In particular, the preservation of human capital in terms of availability, quality, diversity is of great importance. With respect

to diversity, it becomes essential to include each person in development processes oriented towards the sustainability of individual and collective well-being.

Therefore, the biggest and most demanding challenge that our society is facing in recent years is certainly that of fostering a cultural and educational change that allows the new generations to build a better, fairer, more inclusive and sustainable world than has been done so far. Today, when the common and global challenge is the transition to more inclusive and resilient societies, it is from the educational processes that we must start. In this sense, it becomes essential to rethink the education and training system in a sustainable way in order to promote a global society oriented towards cooperation and respect for individuals. The construction of sustainability, in fact, is considered a fundamental educational value in the construction of inclusive processes. Promoting sustainability education from an inclusive perspective means planning and organizing coordinated changes according to the principle that the benefits of economic growth must be shared widely, leaving no one behind and satisfying the needs of the present without compromising future generations. In essence, training in sustainability and inclusion means that everyone can access the Institutions, resources and opportunities necessary to live fully in society.

In this sense, the contribution of the United Nations 2030 Global Agenda appears relevant, which, through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), signals the widespread relevance of sustainability at a global level and, at the same time, tries to provide the grammar of a common language, oriented towards development through the adoption of a sustainable growth strategy that follows the principles of non-discrimination, equal opportunities and equal dignity for all forms of diversity. Inclusive education through education for sustainability are essential aspects for those educational and work contexts that intend to become engines of change as they are ready to face present and future challenges and to promote excellence through the value of diversity. In this perspective, training for sustainability means planning and organizing coordinated changes that: 1) Place the person and his well-being at the center, through a global plan of investments and policies aimed at protecting health; 2) Increase the culture of inclusion, recognizing the different forms of vulnerability, in order to ensure equal opportunities for access and participation; 3) Enhance environmental sustainability, with positive effects on the well-being of the territory and its population. In this sense, Motor and Sports Activities represent a unique tool in support of this global action plan, as also recognized by multiple UN resolutions and reports, for key role they can play in achieving economic development; in the promotion of tolerance, respect,

and the emancipation of individuals and communities; in pursuit of objectives related to health, quality education and social inclusion. Motor and Sports Activities have always played a fundamental role in our culture, social and family, thanks to their educational function. A mirror of our society, they are able to involve young people and all citizens, promoting sustainable life models and virtuous behavior practices. According to this perspective, the training model that is desirable to achieve places as its central nucleus the participation, collaboration and promotion of problem-oriented and decision-making thought processes. Educating for sustainability means rethinking the pedagogical, social, economic, cultural discourse towards a relational-systemic approach, which assumes the concept of network as the primary organizing concept. It is a matter of investing in a radical change of mindset with respect to the global approach to sustainability. A change of mindset entrusted above all to schools and universities and extended from childhood to the entire course of life, in the plurality of places of life and experience. Each and every one, without distinction, is called to “their part well”.

The task of the Educating Community must be to promote “Sustainability Literacy”, that complex of knowledge, skills and provisions that allow people to engage deeply in building a sustainable future and to make informed and effective decisions with a view to life-long learning. Educating, therefore, individuals capable of individual and collective fulfilment, sharing their experiences and co-designing the actions to be implemented to achieve levels of well-being that are compatible with the precarious balances of the ecosystem in which they live.

In this Special Issue, the Authors explore, from different but complementary angles, the role of Sport, School, Pedagogy, Psychology and Educational Policies in promoting more inclusive, aware and resilient communities. In a time marked by environmental crises, social inequalities and cultural transformations, the contributions offered outline possible paths towards an integral education that puts the person, the context and the planet at the center.

The first common thread is that of Sport as an educational, social and environmental lever. The study “Sport as a Tool for Inclusion and Sustainability in Secondary School: A Qualitative-Quantitative Analysis” shows how structured sports practices can foster a sense of belonging and inclusion among students, concretely responding to the goals of the UN 2030 Agenda. To complete, the Article “Outdoor sports as a tool for environmental sustainability: an educational model for schools and communities” proposes a model of outdoor physical education that integrates movement and ecological awareness, strengthening young people’s responsibility towards

the territory and the environment. From another perspective, “The importance of making sport sustainable” draws attention to the contradictions of the modern sports system, which on the one hand is affected by the effects of climate change, and on the other hand contributes itself to the environmental impact. What emerges is an invitation to the sustainable transformation of the sector, from infrastructure to events to sports culture. In this framework, the Article “Physical activity for the promotion of cognitive functions: the role of the exercise-induced Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor in muscle-brain crosstalk” adds a neurophysiological perspective, deepening the role of physical activity in the promotion of cognitive functions. The production of myokines, including Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF), shows how body movement is also a vehicle for brain well-being, enhancing neuroplasticity and neurogenesis. The idea of Sport as an educational and preventive tool, capable of acting in depth on the integral development of the person, is strengthened.

A second thematic axis concerns the intertwining of sustainability, mental health and individual behavior. The Article “Sustainability and eco-anxiety: strategies for addressing environmental concern” highlights how emotions related to climate change, often negatively labeled as “eco-anxiety”, can instead constitute a starting point for responsible action, if properly recognized and accompanied. On a complementary level, “Environmental sustainability education and its impact on psychological well-being: a cognitive-behavioral approach” explores the potential of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to foster the adoption of sustainable lifestyles, addressing the cognitive and emotional barriers that hinder change. Both contributions underline the importance of integrated approaches, capable of combining the psychic and environmental dimensions in the construction of an ecological citizenship.

The reflection expands with two Articles that place sustainability in a perspective of social justice and community cohesion. “Competing Futures: Reconfiguring Sustainability in US Education Policy from Equity to Meritocracy” critically analyzes the language of US education policies, showing how the concepts of equity, inclusion and merit are being redefined (and sometimes opposed) in the construction of sustainable futures. From a more practical perspective, “Promoting social well-being and psychophysical health through environmental restoration” documents the positive impact of environmental regeneration initiatives promoted by local associations, capable of strengthening social ties, improving psychophysical well-being and rooting a culture of caring, both for people and places. Within this perspective, the Article “Designing Inclusive and Sustainable Cities: an urban future for All” proposes a holistic vision of urban policies as a space

for integration between social inclusion and environmental sustainability. The Contribution highlights how the design of cities must aim at the removal of physical and symbolic barriers, promoting equity in access to urban resources, civic participation and quality of life. The city thus becomes an educational scenario, in which the organization of space reflects and shapes social relationships and collective values. Finally, the Article "Dual Career Athletes and Sustainable Development: A Model for the Future of Sport" introduces a virtuous model that integrates training, inclusion and sustainability. The experience of dual-career athletes shows how it is possible to reconcile sports performance and personal development, mitigating psychosocial risks and offering opportunities for growth beyond the competitive career. This perspective reinforces the idea of a sustainable sport also from a human and professional point of view, based on policies that value the person in his or her entirety.

Taken together, these Contributions outline a rich and articulated framework in which Sustainability is no longer just a technical or environmental issue, but is configured as an educational, transformative and relational horizon. It is an invitation to rethink school practices, public policies, sports activities and individual strategies in an ecological and inclusive way. But it is also an appeal to a shared responsibility, that is, to build possible futures that are at the same time just livable and desirable.

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