



DEFENCE OF THE PLANET

FIMEM Statement – October 2021

The world is suffering!

Among the causes:

- a capitalism that exploits the benefits of globalisation and passes the costs on to the subjugated populations,
- economic, administrative and cultural neo-colonialism, with financial scandals,
- industrial and technological overproduction and overproduction of waste,
- the privatisation of the commons,
- wars to hoarding natural resources,
- land usurpation and environmental devastation,
- the exploitation of natural resources and deforestation as if they were inexhaustible.

Among the consequences:

- the increasing precarisation and impoverishment of societies,
- the widespread increase in discrimination and injustice,
- the violent restriction of the rights of children, women, workers, minorities,
- growing individualism and competitiveness,
- mass migration and new forms of slavery,
- air and water pollution and climate disruption,
- drought, desertification, increasingly frequent fires,
- storms, landslides, sea level rise and flooding,
- ocean acidification and rising global carbon dioxide levels, rapid disappearance of Antarctic and Greenland ice,
- the circulation of new pandemics.

A new ecological consciousness must be generated

We are at the beginning of a major climate and ecological crisis!

Faced with the complexity of the environmental, economic and social issues at stake, we have to face many challenges. We have the power to try to generate a new social and educational consciousness: to look at the interdependent relationships of our lives, at the economic development and the wounded present of our planet, at the common good that we have to take care of in order to pass it on to new generations. We must generate an ecological consciousness and assume its political and pedagogical implications. The ecological emergency is a human emergency! The capitalist system, the dominant model of our societies, has as its sole objective the control of resources, markets and therefore territories. It is accompanied by an increase in armed conflicts,

economic and climatic migratory movements, the rise of reactionary nationalism and religious or other forms of fundamentalism, with no concern for human considerations and to the detriment of populations.

The ecological emergency is a human and social emergency!

In this sense, we can take up the words expressed by Chico Buarque¹ in a UN assembly where the internationalisation of the Amazonian forest was discussed: *"The real commitment today is to internationalise childhood in the world to defend it from exploitation, threats, abandonment, to remove it from poverty"*. In this respect, the effective safeguarding of the environment, that is to say, of our planet, concerns all of us in order to achieve a more just and united society.

It is young people who are most seriously affected by the climate emergency: the most vulnerable, suffering from poverty, migration and uprooting, or from all forms of exploitation. This is in contradiction with all the declarations in favour of children's rights, in particular the *International Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989).

Public administrators and political leaders do not guarantee (as they should by virtue of their mandate), the rights of children, caught up in the whirlwind of profits and the protection of their private property or professional interests, any more than they protect poor families or civil society, which is increasingly deprived of real resources. On the contrary, they contribute to making the poor poorer and poorer.

¹ Popular Brazilian singer, politically committed to democracy and environmental protection

Children and education

The role of the school is crucial. If children do not learn from an early age the pleasure of participation, of involvement in common projects, the sense of responsibility, of citizenship, how can they be committed to respect environmental balances, protect the environment, caring for all living beings, and working together to ensure a dignified life for all?

Children must be able to exercise the rights of citizenship from the earliest age; they have a systemic and complex way of thinking that must be able to interact with the questions of adults.

Ecological economy, another vision of the world is possible

We, she /he Freinet educators, within our own movements, in our schools, must oppose and bring about changes, of planetary scope, in the very model of development.

Even if a better environmental awareness seems to be emerging, including in some school curricula, social and political practices as well as individual behaviours persist in denying this emergency.

With the Common Good in mind, we affirm that all people are an integral part of biodiversity. Everyone must have a place in the human community. We can draw on the struggles and perspectives of ecofeminism to promote responsible economic practices of local trade and consumption, including the human in a world acting with the environment and living beings, interdependent on each other. Caring for others is both a beacon and a lever in public policy, in everyday life and in education.

The task of the school is crucial, actions

Freinet pedagogy is equipped with tools for forms of participation within the school and within its environment, together with local communities. They are naturally in favour of measures that build environmental sustainability and ecological restoration, thus transcending local boundaries. Freinet schools are laboratories of democratic participation and community building with cooperative proposals and practices. And other schools can join us, because the issue must be defended in all schools and educational centres!

In our Freinet classes, by studying the environment, we build micro-projects with our students that result in small changes, certainly, but with the horizon of a sustainable future: appreciating the value of self-limiting and non-consumptive use of everyday resources, promoting actions and forms of relationships that are not individualistic, but rather those of solidarity, open

and attentive to the Common Good.

The critical spirit is called upon throughout the cooperative work in the classroom: in cooperative meetings, class councils, assemblies, in work researches This ability to analyse, compare, understand and debate is found both in learning and in links to the outside world.

At school, it is necessary to understand the situation of the planet and to become aware of the current disruption of the ecological balance. These essential objectives should be included in the school curriculum.

From the earliest school age, engaging in the study of the environment is one of the keys to an emancipating education. Discovering, exploring around oneself, discovering others, discovering the surrounding world, both near and far, through correspondence, surveys, research, testimonies... And to do this, organise themselves cooperatively, in small or large groups, with the outside world... With the tools of the council, the cooperative organisation of the class, projects, responsibilities.

Then, an emancipatory pedagogy of creation, expression and cooperation is put into action, thus generating care for the Common Good.

In the city, in the neighbourhoods, in the villages, it is possible to generate real actions in the school and family micro-spaces, for example by controlling the use of electricity, by reducing transport, by insisting that the voice of children and young people be heard in adult society.

More broadly, when we analyse the struggles of indigenous peoples and village communities for their water, land, air, we generate a vision of respect for fair payments for their products and thereby veto those who generate devastation and exploitation. This is advocacy work that mirrors what activists like Greta Thunberg have done, setting in motion many other initiatives.

Also, he/she teachers can be references for a sober and sensible way of life, which appreciates and values the simple, every day, 'natural' aspects of social life and an environment where everyone can breathe, live healthily, train and share without supremacy and exclusion.

Concrete actions to be taken, to be carried out right now!

- Defend diversity, avoid wasting resources, educate by imagining a possible and better future.
- Participate in small projects, small exemplary transformations that show students a non-consumerist way of life, that teach them to value the Common Good, the value of small daily acts, solidarity, against individualism.
- Mobilise schools so that there is no noise or cars around educational centres, to bring nature back into living and learning spaces.
- Take into account the issue of migrant families in our schools, because often the integration of children alone is not enough, we also need to support and accompany families, to think of children in their family history to ensure good school follow-up in connection with the parents. We must be particularly attentive to young unaccompanied minors, allowing them access to education and training in good, stabilising and protective conditions. So, for example, collectives are being created to house undocumented families whose children were living on the street, and networks of solidarity hosts provide shelter for young unaccompanied minors.

In each "local" we always find specific "Amazonias" that require our attention and care: a home for life for each new human generation. We must therefore educate by imagining a possible and better future.

FIMEM's COMMITMENTS

As the *International Federation of Modern School Movements*, we declare our commitment to ideas and practices related to the defence of the environment. The effective safeguarding of our planet concerns us all. We must work for the transformation and realisation of a more just and united society.

This is why we can and must carry out a double action: think globally and act locally: have a "glocal" thought! Thus, without losing sight of the major goals and problems of the environmental crisis on a global scale, we must grasp how these clash so that everyone can imagine actions, create very concrete responses to act on various scales, local and global.