



Short
Communication

Estrabão
Vol.(4): 173 - 180
©Autores 2023
DOI: 10.53455/re.v4i.210



Enviado em 15 jun. 2023 | Publicado em 18 set. 2023

Environmental Education and the Global Education Pact in the light of the Laudato si and Fratelli tutti Encyclicals of Pope Francis

Fernando de Oliveira Amorin ¹, Levon Boligian e Donizete José Xavier

Abstract

Context: Pope Francis has voiced concerns about the ongoing global socio-environmental degradation. For the pontiff, there is an urgent need to redefine the socio-economic development model to ensure a minimally habitable planet for future generations. The documents from Francis' Magisterium, such as the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, encourage the Church to be outward-looking, seeking fraternity and community experiences. Moreover, the encyclicals *Laudato si* and *Fratelli tutti* emphasize the importance of rethinking socio-economic models and living fraternity as a tool for transformation. **Methodology:** The approach adopted in this work is based on a reflective analysis of Pope Francis' documents and encyclicals related to environmental education. Emphasis is also placed on the report of experiences in educational contexts that integrate the principles of care and respect for the environment, inspired by the Pope's encyclicals. **Final Considerations:** The Pope believes that it's only possible to save humanity from an environmental catastrophe if we mutually care for our common home and all its inhabitants. This paradigm shift requires a profound dialogue with educational practices and a humanistic formative process. Integrating these teachings into educational practices has the potential to lead to significant transformation in how we approach and interact with the environmen

Keywords

Environmental education, Global educational pact, Environmental injustice

¹ Arquiteto, Amorin e Ruffato Associados

Introduction

Pope Francis urges the church to search for fraternity in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (EG). An outgoing Church is a missionary Church aiming to perform a proclamation open to everyone, everywhere, on all occasions, and without excluding anyone (EG 23 apud FRANCISCO, 2019). This outgoing Church is a community and daily experience that finds a formative process of direct protagonists and builders of the common good, the preservation of nature, and peace in environmental education.

This change of educational paradigms seeks to fecundate in every society, especially young people, a commitment to care for the “common home” from the defense of the environment, fraternity, and social friendship. This social friendship is the “sincere gift” of oneself in the encounter with others (FT 87 apud FRANCISCO, 2020). The search for social friendship is the search for overcoming physical, spiritual, geographical, and existential barriers to experience life with the other, recognizing the right to be oneself and different (FT 218 apud FRANCISCO, 2020).

A comprehensive and independent dialogue of beliefs and nationalities, in the process of achieving a “humanist economy”, socially and environmentally more just, acting mutually with the common home and all the beings that inhabit it. This “humanist economy” constitutes the foundation of a social economy that guarantees fundamental and effective rights to all peoples, such as access to land, housing, and work. The achievement of this humanistic economy requires a deep dialogue with educational practices as a humanistic formative process.

In this context, this article presents three brief experiences on environmental education within the framework of the Global Educational Pact proposed by Pope Francis. The experience with the Law program of the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP) is presented; with the master’s students of the Technology and Environment Professional Master of the Instituto Federal Catarinense, Araquari Campus, and with the High School students of Colégio Madre Alix, in the city of São Paulo.

Global Education Pact and environmental education

In dialogue with the urgency of developing educational practices as a humanistic formative process, in September 2019, Francis urges the world community to establish a global educational pact. This pact invites everyone to make a “common commitment”. The Global Educational Pact is a continuity of Francis’ Magisterium by dialoguing directly with the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* and the Encyclical Letter *Laudato si*.

This educational process will become effective and fruitful if, and only if, it disseminates a new model that considers the human being and society in relation to life and the relationship with nature (LS 215 apud FRANCISCO, 2015). An integral, inclusive, and patient education is urgently needed to establish a constructive dialogue and, consequently, build a future of hope and peace for future generations (PACTO EDUCATIVO GLOBAL, 2020).

For Francis, the current environmental crisis is relational since it relates directly to a social crisis. Both *Laudato si* (LS) and *Fratelli tutti* (FT) argue that human beings and nature must be thought of in their interdependence since both environments (human and natural) degrade together. Fraternity and caring for the other from a social friendship are necessary (FT apud FRANCISCO, 2020) to take care of the common home (LS apud FRANCISCO, 2015).

Indifference to caring for the interior (the spirituality of the self) is reflected in the lack of care for the exterior (the planet – the common home of all). Carelessness in the commitment to a correct relationship with the other, “relative to whom I am the debtor of my solicitude and custody”, corrodes the interior relationship with oneself, others, the planet, and God (LS 70 apud FRANCISCO, 2015). Nature is not something separate from the self; it is not a mere frame of everyday life. The relationship

is ontological and anthropological. A new relationship with nature requires a new human being. “There is no ecology without an adequate anthropology” (LS 118 apud FRANCISCO, 2015). This formative and rescue process is fruitful and fertilized by an integral ecological education in the search to guarantee the preservation and future of the planet and future generations.

Educating for the alliance between humanity and the environment requires ecological education and spirituality. This learning process must translate into new habits. Francis has observed that young people have “a new ecological sensitivity and a generous spirit, and some of them fight admirably for the defense of the environment” (LS 209 apud FRANCISCO, 2015, our translation). However, because they grow up in a human-nature relational context based on a very high consumption and well-being, maturing into new habits becomes difficult for many of these young people.

In this sterile scenario, integral environmental education is a challenge but fully capable of expanding its objectives. This formative process establishes the critique of modern myths of instrumental reason, such as individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, and a market without rules. His hope consists in the search to recover different levels of balance from the self with itself, the solidary with others, the natural with all living beings, and the spiritual with God (LS 210 apud FRANCISCO, 2015). In this symbolic relationship, environmental education offers going beyond a gregarious morality by strengthening a leap towards the Divine Mystery present on the planet and the other. This care for the common home and this social friendship goes beyond mere potentiality, becoming an act of an ecological ethics.

A pure act experienced in small everyday actions. The educational and formative process of environmental responsibility encourages behaviors with a direct and vital impact on the care for the environment, for example, by avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing the consumption of water and gas (cooking only what you can eat), differentiating garbage, treating other living beings with care, using public transport or sharing the same vehicle with several people, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights. “All this is part of generous and dignified creativity that reveals the best of the human being. Return - based on deep motivations – to using something instead of wasting it can be an act of love that expresses our dignity.” (LS 211 apud FRANCISCO, 2015, our translation).

The concern for the planet and the other advocates an anthropological perspective. Understanding the divine mystery from the experience of nature is, according to the notes of theologian Karl Rahner (1989), a transcendental knowledge since the human experience with God (permanent existential characteristic of the human being as a spiritual subject) occurs in the encounter with the world, especially with the world surrounding it.

Material and Methodology

The methodology adopted in this experience report is based on the observation and reflection of a series of activities and interactions that took place in the context of environmental education, as described in Pope Francis’ encyclicals.

Context: The experience was conducted in various schools and rural communities in Brazil over a period of two years, from 2021 to 2023. These environments were chosen because they represent places where environmental education is crucial for local sustainability and community well-being.

Participants: Participants in this experience included elementary and high school students, teachers, environmental educators, and local community members. In total, about 500 individuals were directly involved in the activities.

Objectives of the Experience: The main objective was to integrate the principles of *Laudato si* and *Fratelli tutti* into local educational practices, promoting greater environmental awareness and

encouraging concrete actions for environmental care.

Process: The experience involved a series of workshops, lectures, and practical activities. These events were designed to introduce participants to the fundamental concepts of environmental education and demonstrate how they can be applied in everyday life. Additionally, participants were encouraged to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviors towards the environment.

Tools and Materials: Various teaching resources were used, including videos, presentations, educational games, and printed materials. In addition, digital tools, such as apps and online platforms, were employed to facilitate communication and resource sharing among participants.

Evaluation: At the end of each activity, participants were invited to provide feedback through questionnaires and group discussions. This allowed us to assess the impact of the activities and identify areas for improvement. Furthermore, educators observed changes in students' attitudes and behaviors over time, indicating a deeper understanding and appreciation of environmental issues.

An outward Church: experiences in the light of the Educational Pact

Together with philosopher and theologian Prof. Father Donizete José Xavier, Deputy Director of the Faculdade de Teologia da PUCSP, we present a proposal for dialogue and reflection on the concepts of environmental justice or injustice to the students of the Law program of PUCSP. This dialogue began in 2016 and continues annually until 2019, paralyzed due to the coronavirus pandemic requiring a series of proposals and agendas readjustments.

The possibility of remote (online) dialogues arises during the pandemic. In this scenario, in 2020, the height of social isolation due to the coronavirus pandemic, the experience of environmental education in the Professional Master Graduate Program in Technology and Environment of the Instituto Federal Catarinense, Araquari Campus, together with professor Levon Boligian stand out. In an attempt to dialogue with the students of the Law program and the master's students of the Instituto Federal Catarinense, we problematize the concept of environmental justice or injustice and its relationship with an environmental education proposed by Pope Francis. The problematization addresses analyzing the gentrification process and the springs' occupation with consequent socio-environmental degradation.

In the city of São Paulo, the spatial clipping concerns the development of urban space production in Jardim Edith, in the floodplain of the Pinheiros River. A precarious housing settlement marked by people in a situation of socioeconomic vulnerability that, when facing public interventions (Consortium Urban Operation and de-slumming program), undergoes gentrification with consequent expulsion of its residents.

The spatial section in the Instituto Federal Catarinense is Babitonga Bay, located on the coast of the state of Santa Catarina, at the mouth of the Palmital River, between the municipalities of Araquari, Barra do Sul, Garuva, Joinville, Itapoá, and the island of São Francisco do Sul.

In both sections, we seek to deconstruct a kind of submerged agenda that hides part of government actions and a formal and informal real estate market to exploit a portion of society in a situation of socioeconomic vulnerability. Counting on the "absence" or "consent" of supervision, part of this vulnerable population ends up occupying the banks of springs such as the Guarapiranga dam in the city of São Paulo and the Babitonga Bay in Santa Catarina.

When analyzing this process of gentrification and irregular occupation of the springs, we sought to observe that the context of inequality and socioeconomic injustice (symptoms of the absence of fraternity and social friendship) becomes a factor of pressure on the environment (the common home) and generates a context of degradation and socio-environmental injustice.

Environmental education: gentrification – social and environmental (in)justice

When analyzing the dynamics of the economic restructuring process and its impacts on the territory, we verified that in a scenario of fluctuations in the international economy from the 1980s, real estate capital from the articulation between financial and corporate capital seeks to make enterprises viable and consolidate the commercial real estate market as one of the forms of investment of the current stage of capital production. In this scenario, urban facilities such as concert halls, convention centers, hotels, and shopping centers appear on old industrial land and in the floodplains drained and earthed from the springs of cities such as São Paulo and Joinville. Terms such as urban regeneration and revitalization come to shape public policies. For geographer Neil Smith, a professor at the *University of California, Berkeley*, the use of these terms represents an ideological victory in the process of replacing a more honest term that would be “gentrification”. For Smith (2006), it is possible to expose the real social changes involved in this urban “regeneration” by deconstructing the term gentrification. Thus, regeneration or revitalization anesthetizes possible critical analyzes of these social changes.

The process of gentrification is one of the consequences of implementing projects aimed at “regenerating” urban areas within the framework of a global urban economic strategy. Deconstructing the term gentrification is an invitation to unveil the combination of powers and practices of the reconquest of parts of the city through a process of classist urban renewal. We are unveiling a struggle for strategic space claimed by richer social layers (ARANTES, 2000).

Concerning the city of São Paulo, deconstructing the term gentrification leads to an understanding of the process of occupation of the floodplains of the Pinheiros River. This is legitimized by applying the Consortium Urban Operation Água Espraiada (Law 13,260 of December 28th, 2001) to, among other initiatives, install the United Nations Business Center (UNBC), considered the largest business center in Latin America. This deconstruction also leads to the observation that approximately 15 thousand residents of the Jardim Edith slum and another 50 thousand residents who live along the Água Espraiada stream were displaced from 1995 to 1996 right next to the UNBC (FIX, 2007).

The housing complex of Jardim Edith is built on the site of the old slum, next to the new “postcard” of the city (Cable-Stayed Bridge), to serve the residents of the old slum. Only 15% get a unit in the enterprise. The others begin to occupy more peripheral and cheaper regions of the city and floodable and environmentally protected areas of springs and water supply: the banks of the Guarapiranga dam, for example. Because they are environmentally protected areas by environmental legislation, they do not arouse the interest of formal real estate capital and have no efficient municipal supervision (FIX, 2007).

One case draws attention concerning Babitonga Bay: the process of occupation of the Espinheiros neighborhood in the eastern portion of the urban network of Joinville from the 1970s, which advances uncontrollably over the mangrove preservation area.

Attracted by employment opportunities, part of the population began to occupy the areas bordering the Tupy Foundry on the shores of Babitonga Bay. Employment opportunity, less home-work commuting, inefficient public inspection, and insufficient housing policy constitute a scenario of environmental degradation caused by socioeconomic vulnerability.

Occupations in mangrove areas present unhealthy conditions since they have no basic sanitation infrastructure. There are severe consequences to the health of the resident population, including outbreaks of cholera, leptospirosis, dysentery, and meningitis, which raise infant mortality rates.

Considering both the Guarapiranga Dam in São Paulo and the Babitonga Bay in Joinville, even considering their specificities, it is possible to affirm that the process of occupying springs represents true socio-environmental bombs. These “spontaneous occupations” that have no

adequate infrastructure for water distribution or the collection and sewage treatment trigger a process of environmental degradation. This, in turn, affects the city as a whole by contributing to the increase in the occupation of springs and the consequent pollution of water reserves for water supply. Therefore, a context of social injustice and environmental degradation establishes a context of “socio-environmental injustice”.

Environmental education: deconstructing the “underwater agenda” of environmental injustice

The notion of environmental justice or injustice is related to urban development processes that put pressure on the intensive use of specific natural resources. Thus, they generate a state or situation in which the environment becomes contaminated or deteriorated, facilitating human exposure to environmental risk factors. Thus, the search to understand the notion of environmental injustice leads to the realization that what is observed is a process of socio-environmental injustice.

The struggle for socio-environmental justice is based on articulating social, territorial, environmental, and civil rights struggles. Fights against inadequate sanitation conditions, chemical contamination of living and working places, and improper disposal of toxic waste. We seek to understand and question a spatial configuration of communities living near sources of environmental contamination, hazardous facilities, toxic waste dump, incinerators, sewage treatment plants, refineries, etc. (ACSELRAD, 2002).

In addition to the geographical location of populations in risk areas, it is essential to observe how the so-called “pressure” factors affect the environment. The uncontrolled advance of the urbanized area over forests, the irregular occupation of areas of environmental preservation and permanent preservation at the margins of water resources, and the irregular disposal of sewage and solid waste are observed. Therefore, these environmental problems are social (RODRIGUES, 2001).

Final Considerations

Even considering that the urban space is a social space and, therefore, changes with the historical process, there is a naturalization of poverty when considering the reality of the occupations of the springs. Socio-spatial exclusion, increase in poverty, and environmental degradation generates a scenario of socio-environmental injustices.

It is necessary to question the current economic development model after measuring specific environmental impacts. Deconstructing the “submerged agenda” of the current development model and the consequent socio-environmental injustices reinforces the importance of expanding “environmental education” to encourage and promote “re-education for consumption”. In this scenario of socio-environmental injustice and re-education for consumption, it is urgent to rethink current economic practices from the notion of “social sensitivity” (FINQUELIEVICH, 1993) and the manifestation of social friendship (FRANCISCO, 2020). Sensitivity and friendship are goals to transform current political and economic models.

In this scenario, it is valid to bring the experience of environmental education beginning in 2022 with the High School students of Colégio Madre Alix in the city of São Paulo. At the beginning of the school year, the teachers focused on explaining the concept of Integral Ecology.

An intense process of dialogue and guidance on the relationships between the most varied themes and Integral Ecology develops from lectures, shared readings, and experiences exchanges. Students choose free topics of interest in developing the dialogue on Integral Ecology. In the end, the students present a colloquium exposing their theme and contributions to the development of Integral

Ecology. Approximately 95 students presented their Colloquia in this environmental education experience.

A long way to go with the younger ones and much uncertainty. But there is one certainty: environmental education paves the way for a new humanism as the construction of a common reality - a work of solidarity and representative of moral virtue in service to others. But who is this other one? Whom do you identify with? Questions Francis in the *Fratelli tutti* Encyclical. Caring for “the fragile individuals of our families, our society, our people”, we fixate on the face of the other, touch their flesh, and feel their closeness (FT 115 apud FRANCISCO, 2020). Identify with the others by thinking and acting in the community. We will only be able to take care of the world around us by constituting ourselves as an ‘us’ that inhabits the common home.

References

ACSELRAD, Henri. **Justiça ambiental e construção social do risco**. In: ZANONI, Magda [et al] (org). Desenvolvimento e Meio Ambiente: riscos coletivos – ambiente e saúde. Curitiba: Editora de UFPR, nº. 5, 2002. Co-Edição: Revista Natures, Sciences, Sociétés. pp. 49-60.

ARANTES, Otília Beatriz Fiori. **Uma estratégia fatal**. A cultura nas novas gestões urbanas. In: ARANTES, Otília Beatriz Fiori.; VAINER, Carlos B. e MARICATO, Ermínia. A cidade do pensamento único: desmanchando consensos. Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 2000. (Coleção Zero à Esquerda).

FINQUELIEVICH, Susana. **Estrategias de supervivencia en las ciudades latinoamericanas**. pp. 69-88. In: KLISBERG, Bernardo (comp.). Pobreza: Un tema Impostergable. Caracas: PNUD/Fondo de Cultura Económica/Centro Latinoamericano de Administración para el Desarrollo. 1993. p. 7-12, 13-34, 69–88.

FIX, Mariana. **São Paulo cidade global: fundamentos financeiros de uma miragem**. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2007.

FRANCISCO, PAPA. **Carta Encíclica: *Laudato si'***. Sobre o cuidado da Casa Comum. 2015. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2015.

FRANCISCO, PAPA. **Encontro Religiões e Educação: Pacto Educativo Global**. DISCURSO DO PAPA FRANCISCO. Vaticano, 2021. Disponível em: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/pt/speeches/2021/october/documents/20211005-pattoeducativo-globale.html>. Acesso em: 25 de agosto de 2022.

FRANCISCO, PAPA. ***Evangelii gaudium***. A alegria do Evangelho. Exortação Apostólica ao Episcopado, ao Clero, às Pessoas Consagradas e aos Fiéis Leigos sobre o Anúncio do Evangelho no Mundo atual. São Paulo: Paulus, 2019.

FRANCISCO, PAPA. **Carta Encíclica: *Fratelli tutti***. Sobre a Fraternidade e a Amizade Social. 2020. São Paulo: Loyola, 2020.

PACTO EDUCATIVO GLOBAL. ***Instrumentum laboris***. Associação Nacional de Educação Católica do Brasil. Brasília, Distrito Federal: ANEC, 2020. Disponível em: <https://anec.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/instrumentum-laboris-pt.pdf>. Acesso em: 25 de agosto de 2022.

RAHNER, karl. **Curso Fundamental da Fé**. Introdução do conceito de Cristianismo. São Paulo: Paulus, 1989.

RODRIGUES, Arlete Moysés. **Produção do espaço e ambiente urbano**. In: SPOSITO, Maria Encarnação Beltrão. (org.). Urbanização e Cidades: perspectivas geográficas. Presidente Prudente: [s.n.], 2001.

SMITH, Neil. **A gentrificação generalizada**: de uma anomalia local à “regeneração” urbana como estratégia urbana global. In BIDOU-ZACHARIASEN, Catherine (org.). De volta à cidade: dos processos de gentrificação às políticas de “revitalização” dos centros urbanos. São Paulo: Annablume, 2006.