

64° Convegno Nazionale AIIG. *Geografie in transizione. Spazi e pratiche educative per la rigenerazione dei saperi* (Firenze, 20-22 ottobre 2022)

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From October 20 to 22, took place in Florence (Istituto degli Innocenti) the 64th National Conference of the *Italian Association of Geography Teachers (Associazione Italiana Insegnanti di Geografia, AIIG)*. The importance of the AIIG conference rests not only in the fact that it has been the first to be organized after the beginning of the pandemic, marking the continuation of the AIIG activities in general, but, more importantly, rests in its central theme, which is perfectly summarized by its title: *Geographies in Transition. Educational spaces and practices for regeneration*. This has definitely not been a coincidence; albeit the prevailing, for many years now, public and academic debates on ecological transition, and given the pressing issues related to climate change and the latter's material effects on people's lives all over the world, the recent COVID-19 pandemic emphasized in the most dramatic way the necessity of switching paradigm urgently towards an actual and collective ecological transition.

Given such an accelerated rhythm, with the variations of "environmental threat" becoming more and more felt across the world, the relevance of this conference is indisputable. Indeed, the topic of, and critical questions around, transition are increasingly pressing within a multiplicity of public, academic, and civil environments; nevertheless, what is even more pressing is the engagement of the logics of transition within the educational system. Moreover, the main scope of the conference has been not simply to raise awareness and discuss explicitly the centrality of the educational aspects that are necessary so as to deal with transition and reconstruct societies in sustainable manners, and to shape a citizenship inherently sensitive to environmental problems, but also to connect the respective discussion developing in Italy at the moment with the burning international scientific debates.

In this framework, the conference overall has departed from a critical position according to which the concept of transition is treated in overgeneralizing terms, representing transition as a homogeneous process that takes place in an undifferentiated way everywhere -across a horizontal blank surface. Therefore, the principle proposition advanced by this year's AIIG conference is the

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necessity to embrace an anti-generalizing approach that demonstrates a productive sensitivity to the complexity, contradictions and internal variations of local contexts. In this difficult yet inspiring endeavor, Geography emerges as the key discipline. Fundamental questions are raised then: How does Geography respond to the emerging challenges that relate to ecological transition and that render it a context-specific, complex and variegated process? And how can Geography contribute to a general cultural change, enabled by and through our existing educational systems, that will eventually have the potential to support and advance a holistic transition, which is not only ecological but equally social and economic, embracing the entire globe by reconnecting the various scales of our societies? Addressing these questions, as well as other multiple related ones, the 64th AIIG annual conference has successfully approached transition not as an abstraction but, instead, as a material process concretized through spaces and practices -and precisely through educational spaces and practices.

Following its traditional format, the conference has been structured and operated along three major pillars that have channeled the different activities thematically: a scientific pillar, an educational pillar, and a field visit. First, regarding the scientific pillar, it has been centered on the contribution of the keynote speaker Emeritus Professor Federico M. Butera (Politecnico di Milano). The keynote speech entitled “The ten messages of the Ecological Transition” has generally emphasized the necessity for Humanity to find a balance between economic, social and environmental needs, as well as the realization that what we need to do is not to search for a mediation between human beings and the environment but, instead, a new holistic way to integrate human society within the natural environment - to return to being an integral, organic part of it, and to not situate the two in oppositional terms.

Professor Butera importantly raised the question of the dramatic decrease of biodiversity, at a global scale, an issue that has not received substantial attention yet. In expressing his ten messages, the keynote speaker has touched upon topics such as: the limits to economic growth; the environmental impact of global food systems and the consequent food behaviors they shape; the necessity of a systemic vision incorporated in ecological transition; the urgency to react immediately, systematically, and effectively; the significance of annihilating consumption emissions instead of any type of emissions; the necessity to replace consumerist socio-economic systems with circular economies; the role of political and cultural values; the relations between ecological transition and socio-economic equalities to embrace questions of solidarity and equality; and the holistic, intersectional ecological transition that is equally technological, economic and, above all, social. “The ten messages of the Ecological Transition” have been then discussed during the round table section, coordinated by Prof. Matteo Puttilli, which followed the keynote speech.

Second, the educational part consisted of three laboratories that functioned in a rotational mode. The first one, organized by Sara Bonati (University of Genoa) and Francesco Graziani (Save the Children), has been based on the Horizon 2020 LINKS project, which focuses on the use of social media

and crowdsourcing in order to deal with disaster risks. Precisely, the organizers have presented one of the project's last outputs, namely a platform focused on education, children and environmental risk preparation, and then coordinated round tables aiming to produce realistic proposals for specific activities that can potentially become input for the platform. The second has been organized by Pauline Isabelle Deguy (University of Florence) and Camillo Berti (University of Florence) in the form of an educational "treasure hunt" targeted at primary and secondary school students. The aim has been to explore, discover, and get to know one's own city and neighborhood, to further familiarize with them, based on landmarks and specific sites of interest, through navigation tools such as maps and GPS. A specific itinerary has been followed so as to discover specific places based on riddles or other clues such as visual material or geographical coordinates. The third and last laboratory has been organized in collaboration with the Erodoto108 Geographic Journal and has followed a dual format: one focused on cartography and another focused on the relations between literary texts and place (or geographic representations broadly speaking).

Among all activities, and at an organizational level, central has been the renewal of the Association's central board. By and large, the 64th AIIG annual conference has responded to the thematics of the Next Generation EU and PNRR frameworks, in order to suggest that we not only need to change the technologies of production that we mobilize but, rather, our entire ways of living and ways of relating to the natural world. In this direction, the importance of introducing these transition logics into education has become evident, believing in the transformative potential of education in general, and bringing to the fore its wider social role. For it is through education that we can shape a new geographical imagination of how we as human beings and as



Fig. 1 – Apertura del Convegno, da sinistra: Mirella Loda, Riccardo Morri, Margherita Azzari, Massimiliano Tabusi.

Fonte: www.aiig.it.