

BIOPOLICY – A VISION FOR THE MILLENNIUM

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Abstract

Biopolicy is the core of the Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.) and offers guidelines for reversing environmental devastation and human suffering and building a society of vision and hope. The race to save the environment and bios – life – on our planet must involve every sector of society. The concepts promoted by B.I.O. since its inception in 1985, emphasise ethical values in bio-education as a tool for instilling the vision of biopolicy in future leaders. Policies must become instruments of peace and bio-diplomacy, a pathway for saving bios. The current crisis in values is a great threat to life, the environment and peace. The diachronic ideals of the past can help motivate every member of society towards the preservation of the environment.

Biopolicy and the protection of bios

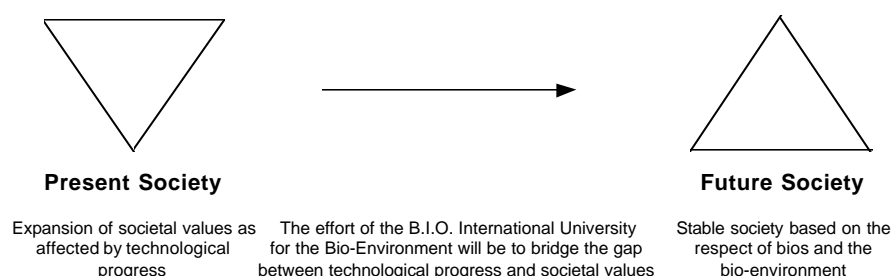
Poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation, a declining resource base, the loss of species and habitats, climate change, inadequate water supplies, desertification – all these are global problems. They do not respect national boundaries and they are all related. Addressing them will require an unprecedented level of international cooperation. If we are to solve the problems of our world, nations must redirect their efforts away from conflict toward environmental restoration and the eradication of poverty, hunger and disease. This is the goal and vision of biopolicy.

Over the past 50 years humans have affected global ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any other comparable period in human history. Humans are an integral part of the world's ecosystems, constantly changing them and often damaging the ability of the ecosystems to provide the services necessary for human well being. The deterioration of the global environment is threatening the very continuation of life on our planet, adding urgency to the need for coherent long-term international strategy and cooperation. The increased mobility of goods, services, labour, technology and capital throughout the world, facilitated by technological advancements in communications and transportation that has been called globalisation, profoundly demonstrates the urgency for rigorous inquiry into the opportunities and challenges ahead. Increasingly, with information and communication technologies empowering individuals everywhere, humanity's future rests with new models of thought, action, communication and participation. A new millennium vision in policy, which we call *biopolicy*, is needed to guarantee the continuity of bios on our planet and lead society to a harmonious future.

In 2000, all 189 member states of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration, an international acknowledgement of the massive problems facing humanity which sets goals for achieving specific targets by certain dates. The Millennium Development Goals include the reduction by one half of the proportion of people in the world whose income is less than one dollar per day, and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. Other goals call for the achievement of universal primary education, the promotion of gender equality, the reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development. The Millennium Development Goals are an admirable effort to solve the world's great problems. Achieving them will require a great commitment by the developed nations and a fundamental realignment of their priorities.

Biopolicy encompasses all aspects of human endeavour, and is based on a framework of environmental ethics that is intended to promote a reassessment of current assumptions and lead to a new global appreciation for the protection of life on our planet. Biopolicy can become a unifying vision for attaining the Millennium Development Goals and lead to the future harmonious co-existence of all forms of life. It provides the necessary incentives for every endeavour to be oriented toward the better understanding and preservation of the environment and all forms of life. In the spirit of biopolicy, every individual on the planet is encouraged to actively engage in the search for new paradigms and to join environmentally committed legislators, scholars, educators and business leaders in influencing governmental protection of environmental issues around the world.

Today's society may be illustrated as an inverted and therefore highly unstable pyramid in which societal values are heavily influenced by developments in the realm of technology. It is vital that we correct this imbalance and move to a stable society, which is characterised by respect for bios and the environment. B.I.O.'s educational and awareness-raising programmes are directed at restoring the stability of our human and natural environments.



To alleviate regional conflicts and reconcile economic growth with environmental harmony, a new vision is needed in every aspect of human affairs – industry, energy, transport, agriculture and regional development. In order to be successful, however, these policies have to be based on a framework of environmental ethics. Biopolicy provides these ethical guidelines and urges a reassessment of current assumptions with a view to a global appreciation of bios. Society needs to mobilise every one of its elements and strive for a better future. Working to sustain what already exists is not enough. With new challenges constantly arising and with an increased awareness of the urgent need to take action against destructive trends, the time is ripe to find more comprehensive, long-term solutions to protect our planet and guarantee a balanced society for the future. A new vision, *beyond sustainable development*, can help place the situation in perspective, and provide the necessary incentives to move ahead and explore possibilities leading to more just and safe global management.

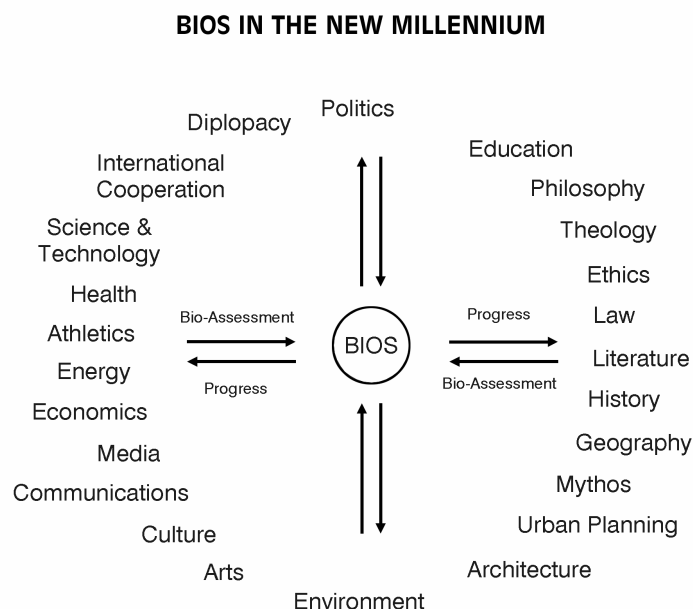
World Referendum

How can we engage everyone in the race to save the environment? Advances in communication technology provide the unprecedented opportunity for all the people of the world to become actively involved in the great issues of our time. With the internet, it is now possible for every citizen from any corner of the globe to cast a vote for saving the global environment. B.I.O. has proposed such a worldwide referendum on the urgency of saving bios and the environment. By giving every individual the opportunity to simultaneously make their voice heard, new pathways for participatory democracy would be established. With a massive vote in favour of the environment, public opinion on saving the environment could no longer be ignored. To vote in the B.I.O. World Referendum, please visit www.biopolitics.gr.

Bio-education

The purpose and responsibility of bio-education is to uplift the spirit of humanity in order to reverse the crisis in values that has resulted in serious environmental deterioration. The advent of globalisation has brought major changes in economic, social and educational priorities and is creating new challenges for humanity. These developments have, in effect,

made the world a single market place. To meet the challenges of education for the new millennium, a radical shift is needed away from the intra-disciplinary entrenchment that has prevailed in the past into more creative patterns of thought for the development of the highest potential of each individual and for the benefit of future generations. By providing interdisciplinary models with concern for bios and the environment at the core of every speciality, bio-education seeks to apply environmental protection to every human endeavour. This vision may be illustrated graphically as follows:



To further this vision, B.I.O. launched the International University for the Bio-Environment (I.U.B.E.) in 1990. The I.U.B.E. urges scholars, decision-makers, diplomats, business and civic leaders to actively contribute to the development of a life-supporting society. Bearing in mind that universities should be, by definition, universal, the I.U.B.E. acts as a catalyst to accelerate environmental awareness and impart an environmental message to opinion formers, students and training professionals around the world. Rather than focusing on the award of degrees, the I.U.B.E. functions as an open and distance learning initiative – using modern teaching tools such as e-learning – whereby leading educators and decision-makers infuse existing educational institutions with bios-enhancing values. B.I.O.’s landmark textbook, *Bio-Syllabus for European Environmental Education*, has become part of the curriculum of numerous university courses in an expanding list of countries. The book provides basic concepts on a range of environmentally related topics, such as bio-architecture, bio-ethics, bio-economics, bio-health, bio-history and bio-tourism. The book provides themed references to the highly regarded and wide ranging resource of other published B.I.O. material, and is freely available to both educators and educated, in print and electronically – on the internet and on CD-Rom.

Bio-education to enrich sustainability – B.I.O.’s extensive e-learning programme

B.I.O. places a wealth of educational material and resources online with its broad range of e-learning courses promoting pioneering dimensions in bio-education. The hope is to infuse new thinking in environmental education and to enrich the concepts of sustainable development. Currently, participants from sixty-six countries are enrolled in B.I.O.’s e-learning courses: The following courses are available:

- *Bio-Architecture*: Environmental models in architecture, energy efficient buildings, environmentally responsible urban planning.

- *Bio-Diplomacy*: International cooperation in environmental protection, the environment as a unifying factor for peace.
- *Bio-Economics*: Environmental management, natural resource economics, international policy, EU environmental policy, corporate policy.
- *Bio-Energy*: Renewable energy sources, clean energy, models for energy savings, wind, solar, biomass, energy efficient buildings.
- *Bio-Ethics*: Environmental protection as an ethical responsibility, codes of environmental ethics for every profession, the environment in bioethics.
- *Bio-Health*: Environmental quality and public health, pollution threats to health, risks and benefits of biotechnology, quality of life.
- *Bio-History*: Environmental factors in the development of human civilisation, culture, historical sources, ancient texts.
- *Bio-Legislation*: International and European Union environmental policy and legislation, international treaties, environmental action.
- *Bio-Assessment of Technology*: Tools and methods for pollution abatement, waste management technologies, recycling.
- *Waste Management*: Tools and methods of waste management and technologies, including recycling, composting, landfilling, and wastewater treatment.
- *Bio-Tourism*: Environmentally friendly tourism industry, suggestions for cultural tourism, environmental hotel management, water conservation, recycling.
- *Common Agricultural Policy*: A simplified text for non-experts who wish to become acquainted with the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- *Food and Agriculture*: Agriculture and the environment, pollution loads, GMOs, water and soils, chemicals and biotechnology, environmental policy.
- *People with a Disability in Modern Society*: Improving equity and quality of life for the disabled, accessibility, information, assistive technology, sports, Paralympic Games.

To participate in B.I.O.'s e-learning program, please register online at www.biopolitics.gr/e-Learning. You may also e-mail your request to bios@otenet.gr

Bio-economics

It is clear that there is an intimate relationship between the environment and development. In the past, industries were the greatest polluters. Economic actors are therefore key players in the drive to tie business to environmental protection. Preserving the wealth and beauty of the natural world, securing the health of the earth's population, providing fair rules of trade, and guaranteeing equal educational opportunities for every country in the world can be a source of genuine profit, both monetary and social. The quality of life issue needs to assume top priority, along with biopolicy and education. Moreover, the concept of "profit" has to be redefined to encompass elements which constitute a genuine profit for society: culture, internal wealth, preservation of natural resources, better health and the protection of biodiversity, as a measurable part of a nation's prosperity. The participation of economic leaders is vital to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

The world is experiencing a range of hurdles with regard to seeking a compromise between the legitimate needs of development and fragile environmental balances. Poor countries overuse their resource base and, thereby, their natural environment. Water development projects often damage the downstream ecology. The sale of raw materials in over saturated markets leads to falling prices, which in turn reduces net proceeds. Because of such conditions, appeals to protect the environment are ignored or often met with derision. The conflict between the industrial countries' ongoing economic growth and the developing countries' undisputed need for growth, on the one hand and, the negative environmental effects of intensive energy and raw material utilisation on the other, cannot be solved within the present framework.

Environmentally sound guidelines may be discussed and arrogated at the negotiating table, but in real life, these directives too often do not reach national decision-making. An approach combining the consensus and consent of the people, as well as that of governments and international institutions, is essential in order to prevent economies from expanding without due concern for the environmental repercussions of uncontrolled growth. Corporations and entrepreneurs can work together to tackle these challenges and tread lightly on the planet in their business endeavours. At same time, a grassroots mobilisation and public participation, on both the local and international levels, can enhance the establishment of bios-supporting economic strategies and initiatives worldwide.

Bio-Environment	
Quality of Life	• Health - Safety - Justice - Happiness - Co-existence with all forms of life - External and Internal Wealth - Micro-Environment - Macro-Environment
Ethical Values	• Diachronic Values for Society - New Criteria for Business Compatible with Quality of Life
Legislation	• National - Global - Bios Rights - Bio-Diversity - Global Warming - Ozone Depletion - Overpopulation - Poverty - Deprivation
Macro and Micro-Economics	• Time and Space Scale - Historical Perspective - Millennium Approach - Cleaner Production
Bio-Diplomacy	• Interdependence - International Cooperation - Third World Viewed as Partner
International Commerce	• Durable Development - Internalizing External Costs - Consumer Protection
Governance	• New Models of Participatory Democracy - World Referendum - Defense for Bios
Education	• Biocentric Curriculum in Economics - Satellites in Education
Media and Communications	• Internet Communication Feedback - Satellite Diffusion of Information - Marketing
Energy	• Protection of Resources - Study of Bios Models
Employment	• New Opportunities for Employment in Bio-Environmental Protection - Green Salary for Unemployed
Culture	• Arts, Cultural Values, Traditions

Eradicating poverty and fighting hunger

Global agriculture today faces a major challenge: feeding more people using less land, without further degradation of natural resources and the environment. The Millennium Development Goals call for cutting by one half, the number of people who suffer from hunger by 2015. The industrialised model of agriculture cannot meet this challenge, due to its excessive reliance on chemical inputs and the pattern of environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity to which it contributes. To meet the challenge of feeding the world's hungry, society must focus upon reforming political institutions, creating appropriate technologies, promoting cultural capital and enabling institutional frameworks that favour policy for environmental protection. Key to these goals is the increased use of participatory research methods, proper agrarian policies and local capacity building.

Consumers, however, must ultimately be the driving force for environmentally viable economic development. Poverty and food security are social and economic issues, but are also at the root of many environmental problems in developing countries. As world population expands in these regions, the ability to provide basic necessities is threatened. In the 21st century, agricultural policy will have to complement development policies and programmes with the aim of increasing food production and personal incomes without further degrading local environments.

Food security – providing all the people with sufficient food at all times to meet their daily dietary needs for a healthy and productive life – is an essential precondition for economic and social development in every country. It depends on the availability of and access to food, and on proper food use. Achieving food security is more than just an issue of food production, nutrition, and food aid. Hunger is a severe manifestation of poverty, and alleviating it depends

in the long run on sustainable and broad-based economic growth and income generation. In most countries, these depend on a productive, competitive, and environmentally sound agricultural sector. To achieve these conditions, underdeveloped countries must invest in rural areas to strengthen agriculture, the food system, and infrastructure, and to restore and conserve critical natural resources for agricultural production. This requires both public and private investment, and the political will to implement the necessary changes.

Bio-legislation

The central concept of bio-legislation is to link the protection of *bios rights* to the defence of the rights of future generations. The interdependence between human rights and human obligations is vital in this context. Rights correspond to obligations, and, in addition to the existence of human rights, there exists a series of human obligations concerning our common responsibility to preserve the environment and improve quality of life on a global level. The defence of human rights should not be regarded as an issue unrelated to the protection of other forms of life on our planet. Health hazards arising from environmental degradation and pollution, desertification, depletion of natural resources, water scarcity and famine are a threat to the human species. To secure our rights and to prevent disaster, we urgently need to accept the responsibility of reversing negative trends and protecting our natural heritage.

There has been a growing recognition that environmental justice cannot be achieved without effective international legislation dedicated to addressing environmental issues. After well-documented environmental disasters, such legislation is not a mere aspiration but indeed a necessity. The integration of the environment into all aspects of global policy and the issue of environmental liability are therefore priorities.

Bio-diplomacy and defence for life

Today, the world faces an unprecedented crisis of environmental degradation. The continuation of life on our planet is threatened by global climate change, by hunger and disease, by the destruction of the forests and biodiversity, and other forms of environmental degradation. Yet the nations of the world are too pre-occupied with international conflicts and preparations for war to mount an adequate response to the environmental crisis. Future generations should not be burdened with the results of today's negligence. The convergence of the aspirations of sovereign states and civil society into a spirit of cooperation in long-term environmental policy and action can overcome the current climate of competition and unending conflict and lead to universal harmony and peace among the peoples of the world. This is the vision of bio-diplomacy.

Bio-diplomacy – international cooperation in environmental protection – is a concept that was pioneered by B.I.O. at a time when civic leaders, international organisations and the world community as whole had not yet fully realised the urgency of adopting common environmental policy. Bio-diplomacy focuses on the interdependence of all forms of life, and calls upon diplomats and other people of influence to engage in a collective endeavour in defence of the environment. Joint efforts to protect the environment can boost international relations and act as a bridge between global communities at the national and local levels. At the same time, bio-diplomacy actively supports efforts to maintain biological and cultural diversity and seeks to improve human relations and to attain the goal of world peace by replacing current diplomatic attitudes with a complete international and intercultural perspective.

Defence for life must become a priority in every facet of our lives. The conversion of war regimes to programs for the preservation of the environment would guarantee a better future. Military aircraft, instead of dropping bombs, could be used to survey the state of the environment and to drop seeds for trees, restoring devastated areas and benefiting the entire planet. Naval destroyers could be used to clean the oceans and shorelines of pollution. Hospital ships could be deployed off the coasts of Africa and South Asia, treating the sick and

hungry. Such steps would be the best response to poverty and deprivation. The environment, as a common point of reference, can bring all peoples of the world together, in harmony and coexistence.

Conclusion

Humanity has been given a final opportunity to respect the close relationship that exists between its actions and the environment. The Millennium Development Goals, as promoted by the United Nations, the World Bank and other international organisations in order to promote equity and improve quality of life, have set an international agenda for correcting the inequities of the past. Protecting and managing the global environment rationally will be the most challenging task for the new millennium. Technology has become infused in every field of human endeavour. Like a new Prometheus with sensitivity and prophecy, it has provided light and fire and has made possible the advent of a new era. This ability must be tempered with a solid base of fundamental values in order to lead to a better future. The current crisis in values is a great threat, not only to the environment but also to peace. This is why there is a pressing need to apply the vision of biopolitics to motivate every member of society towards the conservation of the environment and the fulfilment of a better life for all.

Millennium of Peace

*Can you hear the gong
resonate the dawning of the new era*

*Can you see the bright stars
send messages of light and hope*

*Can you feel the breathing
of every creature on our planet*

*the waves of love
the whispers of life*

*Can you listen to the beat of your heart
embrace us all with warmth*

*Share the new vision
of joy, peace and harmony*

A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis, 1998

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Author's Note: All of the above references are available electronically at www.biopolitics.gr