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Respect for Future Generations

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Problems

- (1) Who are future generations?**
- (2) What is our obligations to future generations?**
- (3) How can we account our activities for future generations?**

Future generations

Future generations are
not yet born human
beings.

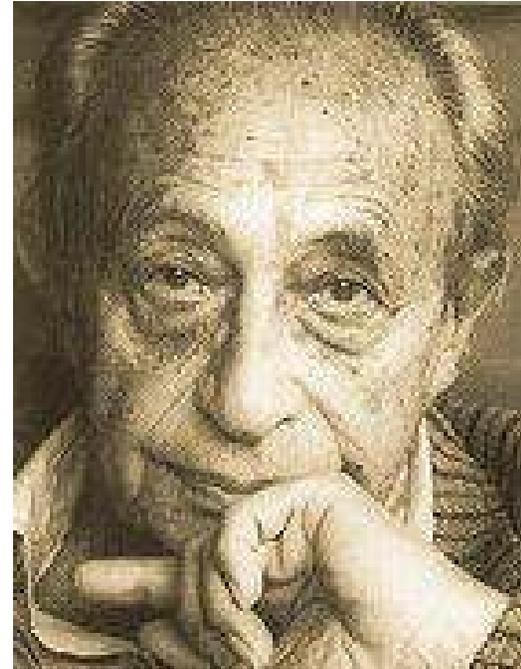
People who may live in
the next 200 years.



The Ethics of Responsibility

The ethics of responsibility involves not only the existence of future human beings but also the way they exist.

The conditions of the existence of future generations should not cause their capacity of freedom and humanness to disappear.



Hans Jonas
(1903-1993)

„Thus moral responsibility demands that we take into **consideration the **welfare** of those **who**, without being consulted, **will later be affected** by what we are doing now. Without our choosing it, responsibility becomes our lot due to the sheer **extent** of the **power** we exercise daily.” (Jonas 1996)**

The position of future generations

We should consider every generation as equal and should not presuppose anything about the preferences of future generations.



Edith Brown Weiss
Georgetown University

Our obligations to future generations

(1) Each generation should be required to **conserve** the **diversity** of the **natural** and **cultural resource base**, so that it does not unduly restrict the options available to future generations in solving their problems.

(2) Each generation should be required to **maintain** the **quality** of the **planet** so that it is passed on in no worse condition than the present generation received it.

(3) Each generation should provide **access** to the **legacy** from **past generations** to future generations.

(Brown Weiss, E. 1989)

Institutions for Safeguarding of Future Generations

- **North American Indians "Seventh Generation" rule**
- **France, Canada, Finland, Israel**
- **Hungary: Ombudsman of future generations**

Accounting for future generations

The state of ecological capital, financial capital, human capital and intellectual capital together determine the fate of future generations in a given society.

Better the states of these capitals, better the prospects of future generations and vice versa.

Capital	Indicator	Value range	Required value
Ecological	ecological footprint	0,1 – 12 ha per capita	< 1,5 ha per capita
Financial	debt service per capital formation	0 – 1,2	< 0,5
Human	share of youths per inactive adults	0,1 – 1,1	> 0,5
Intellectual	investment in research and development	0 – 0,04 of GDP	>0,02 of GDP

The Case of Hungary in 2005

Strongly indebted in ecological dimension
(3,5 ha per capita ecological footprint),

Indebted in financial dimension
(0,80 debt service),

Indebted in human dimension
(0,42 youths/inactive adults),

Strongly indebted in intellectual dimension
(0,089 R&D expenditure/GDP).

Indebtedness in the ecological, financial, human or intellectual dimension makes a considerable **burden** on future generations.

Surplus in these dimensions gives **benefit** for them.

**Improving the position
of future generations
enhances the future of
the present generations too.**