Young and Old in terms of Environmental Justice

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Abstract

Environmental justice can be described as fair distribution of environmental benefits and damages; equal access to a clean environment and equal protection from possible environmental damages regardless of differences in race, class, or socio-economic status; and treating all individuals equally. In other words, environmental justice is a fair distribution of the favors and burdens of the environment. In the 20th century, the rapidly modernizing society due to technology has left the old people to their fates while rapidly developing and investing in young people. However as we apporoach today, the elderly population is rapidly increasing and birth rates are beginning to fall. The rapid aging of societies starting from the West, the necessity of maintaining the economy with low working populations, the rapid increase in the maintenance needs of the elderly in the society necessitates mutual social exchanges and intergenerational solidarity among generations. Intergenerational solidarity is a process in which the young and old generations are responsible for each other, the environment is made livable, and mutual prosperity is promoted. As solidarity evolves, environmental justice will develop. Intergenerational solidarity between young and old forms the basis for the study of environmental justice in terms of age groups. In this context, the relation between intergenerational solidarity and environmental justice are discussed.

Key words: elderly, young, environmental justice, intergenerational solidarity

Çevresel Adalet açısından Genç ve Yaşlı

Özet

Çevresel adalet çevresel yararların ve zararların adil dağılımı; temiz bir çevreye eşit erişim hakkı ve olası çevre zararlarından ırk, sınıf, veya sosyo-ekonomik statü farklılıklarına bakmaksızın eşit korunma; tüm bireylere eşit davranmak olarak tanımlanabilir. Bir başka ifadeyle çevresel adalet çevrenin nimetlerinin ve külfetlerinin adil bir şekilde dağıtılmasıdır. 20.yüzyılda teknoloji nedeniyle hızla modernleşen toplum genç nüfusu hızla geliştirip onlara yatırım yaparken yaşlıları kaderlerine bırakmıştır. Ancak günümüze doğru yaklaştıkça yaşlı nüfusun hızla arttığı ve doğum oranlarının düşmeye başladığı görülmektedir. Batıdan başlayarak toplumların hızla yaşlanması, düşük orandaki çalışan nüfusla ekonomiyi sürdürme zorunluluğu, toplumda yaşlıların bakım gereksinimlerinin hızla artması kuşaklararası ilişkilerde karşılıklı toplumsal alışverişi ve kuşaklar arası dayanışmayı zorunlu hale getirmektedir. Kuşaklararası dayanışma, genç ve yaşlı kuşağın birbirinden sorumlu olduğu, çevrenin yaşanabilir kılındığı, karşılıklı olarak refahın yükselmesinin sağlandığı bir süreçtir. Dayanışma geliştikçe çevresel adalet gelişecektir. Genç ve yaşlı arasındaki kuşaklararası dayanışma çevresel adaletin yaş grupları açısından incelenmesine zemin oluşturmaktadır Bu bağlamda kuşaklararası dayanışma ve çevresel adalet ilişkisi ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: yaşlı, genç, çevresel adalet, kuşaklararası dayanışma

1. Introduction

The environment is not only a limited area of people living on it, but a common asset of all living things in the world. Indeed, the effects of environmental problems affect not just those who live on it, but almost the entire world and the life balance. The life balance and order of the earth as a whole can be considered as ecosystem. The ecosystem is the whole of ecological systems that are interrelated [1]. The disruption of an element in this system causes disruption of the entire ecosystem cycle. For example; The destruction of the rainforest will not only damage the area it is in, it will not only affect all living things that have created a way of life in that region, but also cause problems for the world's drinking water resources and nutrients. So, environmental justice is a concept that includes the global environment and the prosperity or needs of all living things. The neglect of a group in the whole and that group experiencing problems cause other elements to have problems. In this article, on the basis of human and environment relation, the relationship between young people and the elderly in terms of environmental justice has been examined with the dimension of solidarity between them.

2. Human and Environment Relationship

In terms of environment, the ecosystem involves all living things. Among all living things, human being is separated from other living things by its ability to influence and change the system it is in. The relationship between human and natural environment is universal, mutual and in continuous interaction. This interaction creates a culture that reflects the characteristics of the environment over time. Culture is a reflection of the relation of society and nature in a wide spectrum ranging from the ways to meet the basic needs of people to artistic activities. The person's ability to influence and change leads him/her to use the environment for his/her own needs and even to deliberately destroy it. Harper (1996),one of those examining the relationship between society and environment, examines societies in three stages,. 1- hunter-gatherer society 2- agricultural society 3- industrial society. In the hunter-gatherer society, people were fed by gathering edible plants and hunting with primitive means. The relationship has not been enough to disrupt the natural equilibrium, even though it is the direct consumption of the environment. The cultural accumulation of hunter-gatherer society is the knowledge of distinguishing edible plants from others. In agriculture society settled life style had begun, processing the land and agricultural production had started, also benefitting from strength, meat and milk of the domesticated animals had begun. Cultural accumulation of the agricultural society is the accumulation of knowledge gained through making simple agricultural tools used in agriculture, increasing efficiency by irrigation and fertilization processes and multiplying product in its economic value. This accumulation of knowledge is that human beings change nature and have unilateral influence on environment. However, in the industrial society, it is the scientific knowledge or technology which shapes the environment as well as social life. In other words, the environment has been used unrestrictedly for human prosperity in the industrial society [2]. Today, post-industrial society is called "information society" or "risk society". In human-environment relations, human dominating the environment and intervening in it broke the balance of the environment and the ecological cycle. For this reason today's society carries risks in terms of human life. Being exposed to scarcity in many areas (loss of many tides at sea and land, decrease in clean water resources, increase in air pollution ...) is a risk factor for a society which is accustomed to prosperity. In other words, the social production of prosperity in modern society systematically accompanies the social production of risks [3]. According to Harper, the distribution of prosperity and scarcity in modern society is also problematic. While more welfare is concentrated in the population group with small numbers which already has a large

majority of benefits, the scarcity is scattered in a crowded population, which has difficulty in meeting its needs [2].

3. Environmental Justice

Environmental justice can be described as; fair distribution of environmental benefits and damages; equal rights to access to a clean environment and equal protection from possible environmental damage regardless of differences in race, class, or socio-economic status and treating all individuals equally [4]. In other words, environmental justice is a fair distribution of the blessings and burdens of the environment. This distribution requires equality between groups of people in the environment, their social classes, gender and race. The starting point is the principle that a safe and healthy environment is a basic necessity [5]. According to Steady, environmental justice means that all people have equal access to environmental protection, health, employment, security, transport and civil rights [5]. In this context, it is expected that previous generations will have the awareness that they need to hand over a livable environment to following generations so they will behave and consume accordingly.

Today, the deterioration of living conditions is assessed by three factors. These are rapid population growth, increase in consumption and technology. At the beginning of the 20th century, rapid population growth provided the workforce demanded by the industry and also initiated immigration to the city from the outside. Developments in health have reduced infant mortality and prolonged life expectancy at birth. As the growing population requires more housing, energy, food, and work, it creates more garbage, pollution, and irregular structuring (gecekondular). When urbanization was concreted, it is considered as the result of rapid population growth that the green areas suitable for agriculture were given reconstruction permits and filled with houses. The ecological crisis has become even stronger when the destructive impact of technology on the environment is combined with a lifestyle based on the consumption as a result of the economic growth demanded by the growing population [6]. Under these circumstances sustainability of environmental justice is threatened. Therefore, social life is also under threat.

4. Intergenerational Environmental Justice

The 20th century is a century in which people move away from nature and come closer to technology, and a lifestyle regulated by rational or scientific principles is presented with the name of "modernization". This century is the century in which people are not abandoned to their fate but the solutions of their problems are produced by scientific methods, and where an approach which highlights human well-being is at forefront.

Since the second half of the 20th century, the rapidly modernizing society has developed the young population and invested in them, leaving the elderly to their fate. In this case, the adaptation of the elders to the innovations has been in the extent of their individual accumulation and skills. When compared to elderly, young people who grow up in today's technology have the opportunity to spend longer time in the education system as well as adapt to the technology they are born into. In this case, young people use technology to provide a very high benefit for themselves when compared to elderly. However, elderly people have to work hard to go beyond what they have learned and the skills that they have developed and use today's technology. This is the basis of inter-generational difference and conflict in mutual relations. Old people know how to use technology well, but they can understand nature more easily because of their experiences and observations that have accumulated over many years. It is obvious that especially young people who can see the vegetables only in pots in city life

and who do not know which seasonal vegetables grow up can learn a lot from the accumulations of the elderly and their relations with nature. Sustaining and maintaining mutual relation between generations depends on the transfer of information which has been achieved through the long experience from the old to the younger generation; young generation providing solutions to the problems of the elderly generation through the use of technology in a short time is an example of solidarity.

In today's urban life, the participation of the elderly in social life continues to be more active in their own terms. The adaptability of older people to technology and social change is increasing as a requirement the environment they are in. This is a positive result for the elderly. Their conduct of life increases their awareness of themselves. But on the other hand it leads to less association with younger generations because of their tendency towards a more individual life. [7]

Studies conducted with the elderly found that intergenerational support was the most important factor affecting quality of life. The fact that generations have shared values constitutes the basis for the long-standing relationship and solidarity between them. [8]

The rapid aging of societies starting from the West, the necessity of maintaining the economy with low working populations, the rapid increase in the maintenance needs of the elderly in the society necessitates mutual social exchanges and intergenerational solidarity among generations. In today's labor market, the communication and service sectors are developing instead of traditional business lines. Along with this, there is a growing need for elderly health care and elderly health care personnel in rapidly aging populations. In this context, completion of the labor shortage that emerges in the service sector in today's fast-moving societies by young people will establish solidarity between the young and the old generation. Therefore, solidarity between generations instead of conflict will have positive impact on the effect of capital on society and the geographical environment on which it is located.

Intergenerational solidarity is a process in which the young and old generations are responsible for each other, the environment is made livable, and mutual prosperity is promoted. As solidarity develops, environmental justice will also develop.

Utilitarianism, which approaches intergenerational justice with a non-individualist perspective depicts both personal morality and social justice through utility. At this point, J.Bentham's formula of "maximum happiness of the greatest number of people" is the starting point of the theory. According to the utilitarian scheme "the moral value of any action is determined by the effect in ensuring the collective happiness of all individuals of a given society. In other words, according to Bentham, utilitarianism deals with human actions as the object of moral assessment. Intergenerational justice is the fairness of the shared rights and benefits between current and future generations. Justice is the condition of existence of social life. [9] However, it is a fact that the elderly population is increasing rapidly in the overall population as we approach today. There are two reasons for this: the prolongation of life expectancy at birth due to improvements in health and the decline in birth rates.

Result

The ecosystem is continuing its cycle as a whole of ecological systems. Degradation of an element in this system affects the entire system. For the human-environment relation, while human being sustains its existence by destroying the environment it is inevitable that this destruction influences the human being back. Day-to-day environmental damage is increasing

from the hunter-gatherer society period. The provision of environmental justice depends on the mutual needs of the system. All blessings and burdens of the environment should be distributed fairly for all beneficiaries. Providing solidarity between generations will sustain environmental justice. Solidarity among the generations makes the young and old generation considerate for each other and their needs.

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