

## A second series of visions, perspectives, and experiences

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***Perspective:*** Theoretical vision

***Fields:*** Earth life support systems - Economy and technology - Social processes and structures

***Issues:*** Bio-geological equilibrium and ecological decay

This 2014 winter solstice issue, number two of *Visions for Sustainability*, focuses on aspects of the relationship between language and sustainability (Dodman, 2014a; Piredda, 2014), efforts to assess the value of biodiversity (Kopnina, 2014) and education experiences (Longo, 2014; Berto and Barbiero, 2014).

In her paper on the evaluation of natural resources, Helen Kopnina analyses the role assigned to biodiversity in economics by comparing different approaches in terms of new conservationist attitudes. The latter aim at protecting the biosphere through including nature in the concepts of economy, although maintaining its commodification within the cultural debate. The discussion is particularly interesting as way of opening alternative perspectives, offering a comprehensive framework within which to give due importance to care-based and spiritual approaches in the evaluation of nature.

Following on from his previous paper on Language, its technology and sustainability, (Dodman, 2014b), Martin Dodman analyzes the relationship between multilingualism, biocultural diversity and sustainability from the perspective of the importance of multiplicity and diversity in terms of the sustainability of the human enterprise. He argues that the current, ongoing loss of language diversity and the risk of an increasing hegemonic spread of monolingualism are indicators of a decline in human vitality and detrimental to the possibility of long-term social and ecological resilience.

Patrizia Piredda addresses aspects of the conscious use of language with a survey of the technical and literary writings of Primo Levi, which show both contradictory and unitary patterns in human knowledge-building that emerge in the evolutionary history of language within differing discourse fields and types. Levi was able to blend interdisciplinary perspectives with an eye to their ethical

implications through recognizing the particular relationship between signifiers and signifieds within given text types and genres. This attitude allowed him to refine the use and analysis of metaphor as a superb tool for integrating scientific observations within narrative essays and made his prose also an example for science education. Indeed, Levi's memoir of a young Jewish person's life under fascism in Italy narrated through the metaphors of chemistry (*The periodic table*, 1975) was named the best science book ever (Randerson, 2006).

The contribution by Claudio Longo offers a particular educational perspective on sustainability by focusing on the advantages that derive from using drawing as a practical means to observe, learn and appreciate beauty in the world with the eyes as with the hands. Examples of the author's own sketches are used to illustrate drawing as a means to strengthening memory and attaining both a deeper and more relaxed experience of the landscape. Moreover, the act of drawing helps us to become aware that "there is no line that contours and defines things in nature" and that such a "vertiginous mental jump" is capable of fostering a more sustainable frame of mind.

Following on from their previous contribution on silence training to unveil biophilia in children (Barbiero et al., 2014), Rita Berto and Giuseppe Barbiero propose a further educational perspective through a discussion of the improved duration of attentional performance as induced by mindful silence experiences designed for primary school children. Based on results from a research study conducted with 72 children in Aosta (Italy) to assess sustained attention (continuous performance test) and physiological parameters (heart beat frequency and blood pressure), authors argue that mindful silence produces significant and long-lasting improvement, actively engaging children's involuntary attention.

Each of these contributions offers an example of the wide range of possibilities available to each of us as we endeavour to work within the many fields of natural and human sciences, technologies and educational processes in order to continually renew humanity's dialogue with nature and itself. We hope you enjoy reading them!

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