



ISSUE #20 – ECOPEDAGOGIES

INTRODUCTION

This issue brings together a series of articles focusing on the notion of ecopedagogy, a term that, since March 2023, we have placed at the heart of a research project entitled *Faire éco. Co-créations artistiques en milieu scolaire pour expérimenter une écopédagogie* ('Faire éco. Artistic co-creations in schools as a way to experiment with ecopedagogy')¹.

The notion of ecopedagogy is based on the conviction that, while education alone cannot change the world, it is an essential tool for doing so. Ecopedagogy calls into question individual competition, oppressive relationships, and inequalities – just as the critical pedagogies to which it is moored always have. At the same time, falling within the multiform critique of exploitation opened up by ecofeminism², ecopedagogy takes on the myth of perpetual growth, neoliberal globalisation, overproduction, and extractivism. The literature of ecopedagogy shows us that such a pedagogy is intended to be considered in an intersectional way, i.e. by taking into account the different injustices and biases that shape our relationship with the environment³. Consequently, there can be no ecopedagogy without a decolonial approach, which understands the origins of the current ecological disaster with regard to coloniality⁴.

Ecopedagogy places the question of the human/environment relationship at the heart of the learning experience and seeks to move away from a strictly anthropocentric vision to encourage sustainable changes in our lifestyles. For Antonia Darder, a specialist in critical pedagogies, 'It is not enough to rely solely on abstract cognitive processes, where only the analysis of words and

texts are privileged in the construction of knowledge', because '[s]uch an educational process of estrangement functions to alienate and isolate students from the natural world around them, from themselves, and one another. This, unwittingly, serves to reinforce an anthropocentric reading of the world, which denies and disregards the wisdom and knowledge outside Western formulations'⁵.

To break this deadlock and encourage a global, sustainable, and profound ecological turnaround, we hypothesise that co-creative artistic practices can play a key role in the process of educating on ecology understood in the broadest sense. Because of its transdisciplinary nature and its ability to work on the emotions and the psyche (as shown by Félix Guattari⁶), art can be a privileged space for tackling ecology in all its complexity and inventing new ways of relating to the world⁷. In this way, the collective production of artistic forms is part of a research process, and feeds into the production of knowledge that incorporates the feelings and imaginations of those involved in such approaches.

The first phase of the *Faire éco. Co-créations artistiques en milieu scolaire pour expérimenter une écopédagogie* research programme included the organisation of *Ecopedagogy, a series of talks*, an online public meeting to facilitate discussions without geographical limitations, with seven artists and cultural workers taking part before writing the articles presented here.

Although they do not specifically use the term 'ecopedagogy' to talk about their practices, we asked the authors, for their contributions, to think about their practices in relation to this term. What these guests had in common is that they see artistic practice as a process that involves working with others, going beyond material artistic production to give priority to relationships, developing forms that could be described as *ecosophica*⁸ – an ecology combining environmental, social, and mental dimensions.

For the authors, the issues of sustainability or ecology – even when they are not addressed as a theme – are therefore at the heart of the ethical approach they are implementing by encouraging local, collective, and transformative approaches which go beyond the issues of representation. In this way, the authors offer us essential lines of enquiry for rethinking compulsory and higher education courses, including those at art schools, by assessing the climate emergency.

While ecopedagogy has its roots in Latin America (the concept originated in the 1990s, in the writings of Costa Rican Francisco Gutierrez and Brazilian Moacir Gadotti⁹), the term is increasingly present in the academic field in other regions, particularly the United States. In Europe, however, its use remains limited. Propositions for taking real action based on these ideas are rare, and it therefore seems difficult to translate ecopedagogy's theoretical content and the imaginary ideas it conveys into concrete, situated ecopedagogical practices. Although many authors stress the vital role that art can play in encouraging action for the climate, there is little discussion of how this should be done. While we are presented with a proliferation of formats (mediation, creative workshops, etc.) and approaches, the tools for evaluating them in a qualitative way have yet to be conceptualised.

One of the aims of the present research is to fill this gap by seeking out and studying concrete examples of ecopedagogical actions involving artists (such as the examples presented here) and by carrying out three artistic co-creation projects between guest artists (three TRANS— Master alumni: Grace Denis, Aurélien Fontanet, and Lavinia Johnson), pupils in school classes, and their teachers¹⁰. At the end of the process, a forum-exhibition will present the co-creations made at LiveInYourHead¹¹. The exhibition will also be conceived as a training ground for any teachers or educators wishing to develop similar practices.

microsillons (Marianne Guarino-Huet et Olivier Desvoignes), coordinators, TRANS— Master

Cover image: Study trip based on the principles of ecopedagogy, master TRANS—, Saint-Cergue, May 2022.

1. Research supported by the HES-SO's Design and Visual Arts Competence Network. ↵
2. See Isabelle Fremeaux, 'Après la séparation : utopie et écopédagogie', in I. Fremeaux, J.P. Berlan, T. Paquot, and J. Jordan (ed.), *Des utopies réalisables*, Geneva: A-Type éditions, 2013, p. 109-116; Émilie Hache, 'Pour les écoféministes, destruction de la nature et oppression des femmes sont liées.', *Reporterre. Le quotidien de l'écologie*, October 2016, available at <https://reporterre.net/Emilie-Hache-Pour-les-ecofeministes-destruction-de-la-nature-et-oppression-des-femmes> (last accessed 3.10.2023). ↵
3. Angela Antunes and Moacir Gadotti, 'Ecopedagogy as the appropriate pedagogy to the Earth charter process', in P.B. Corcoran (ed.), *The Earth Charter in action: Toward a sustainable world*, Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2005, p. 135-137; Richard Kahn, 'From Education for Sustainable Development to Ecopedagogy: Sustaining Capitalism or Sustaining Life?', *Green Theory & Praxis: The Journal of Ecopedagogy*, vol. 4, no. 1, June 2008, p. 1-14; Richard Kahn, *Critical pedagogy, ecoliteracy, & planetary crisis: The ecopedagogy movement*, New York: Peter Lang, 2010a; Richard Kahn, 'Ecopedagogy: An Introduction', *Counterpoints*, vol. 359, 2010b, p. 1-33; Ria Ann Dunkley, 'Learning at eco-attractions: Exploring the bifurcation of nature and culture through experiential environmental education', *The Journal of Environmental Education*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2016, p. 213-22; Irène Pereira, 'L'éco-pédagogie: une conscience planétaire', *Le Courrier*, 3.8.2018, available at <https://lecourrier.ch/2018/08/03/leco-pedagogie-une-conscience-planetaire/> (last accessed 3.10.2023). ↵
4. Malcolm Ferdinand, 'Pour une écologie décoloniale', *Revue Projet*, no. 375, 2020, p. 52-56, available at <https://doi.org/10.3917/pro.375.0052> (last accessed 3.10.2023). ↵
5. In Kahn 2010a, *op. cit.*, p. xv. ↵
6. Félix Guattari, *Les trois écologies*, Paris: Galilée, 1989. ↵
7. Bruno Latour talks about the importance of art in dealing with the feelings of anxiety that ecological changes provoke. See Latour, 'Avec le réchauffement, le sol se dérobe sous nos pieds à tous', *Libération*, 16.3.2018, available at https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2018/03/16/bruno-latour-avec-le-rechauffement-le-sol-se-derobe-sous-nos-pieds-a-tous_1636709/ (last accessed 3.10.2023). ↵
8. Ibid. ↵
9. Irène Pereira, *op. cit.* ↵
10. In conjunction with the Geneva Department of Education, these initiatives, led by Grace Denis, Lavinia Johnson, and Aurélien Fontanet, will take place throughout the 2023-24 school year. ↵
11. The exhibition is scheduled for autumn 2024. ↵

1



Some Draft Guidelines Towards a Sustainable Sensibility for Creative Practice

These thoughts cohered further to a talk I gave in November 2022 for a series on ecopedagogy hosted by MASTER TRANS– Socially Engaged Artistic Practices (HEAD – Genève). The gap between that presentation and this publication afforded time and space for me to evolve my understanding of a sustainable sensibility for creative practice. In lieu of a conclusion, this text culminates in some draft guidelines selected from a longer list. They represent an affirmation but also an extension of the position I offered in 2022.

Marsha Bradfield

2



The Undiscussed University

As an artist working in collaboration, my art practice activated reciprocal actions and responses in public contexts, while working in universities has paid my wages and supported my art practice with research grants. In 2012, to engage with the social-ecological crisis, I brought my art

practice into the University of the Arts London (UAL) where I work. By making conceptual interventions, I encountered the separation of academic and artistic discourses and practices from the executive functions of the university.

David Cross

3



Micropolitical and Holistic Makings of Ecopedagogies

Today's cognitive capitalism operates on the logic of separationism that demands self-commodification and self-representation: a logic of exteriority that, as we know, is also engraved e.g., by social media. Equally, omnipresent media consumption, spectatorship, observation, by-standing and the outside view are qualities that society today is abundantly saturated with, and that help the efforts of late cognitive and data capitalists' to construct hyper individualism, separation, and apathy, emotional states that manipulate and alienate subjects from their own social and expressive efforts.

Berit Fischer

4



Play in that void. Eco-pedagogy

I am interested in writing about my performance-based pedagogy in relation to the text-based research that more directly signals its politics. This, in order to highlight important practice-based tensions and signal something about relationships between knowing and teaching in our changing world.

Marc Herbst

5

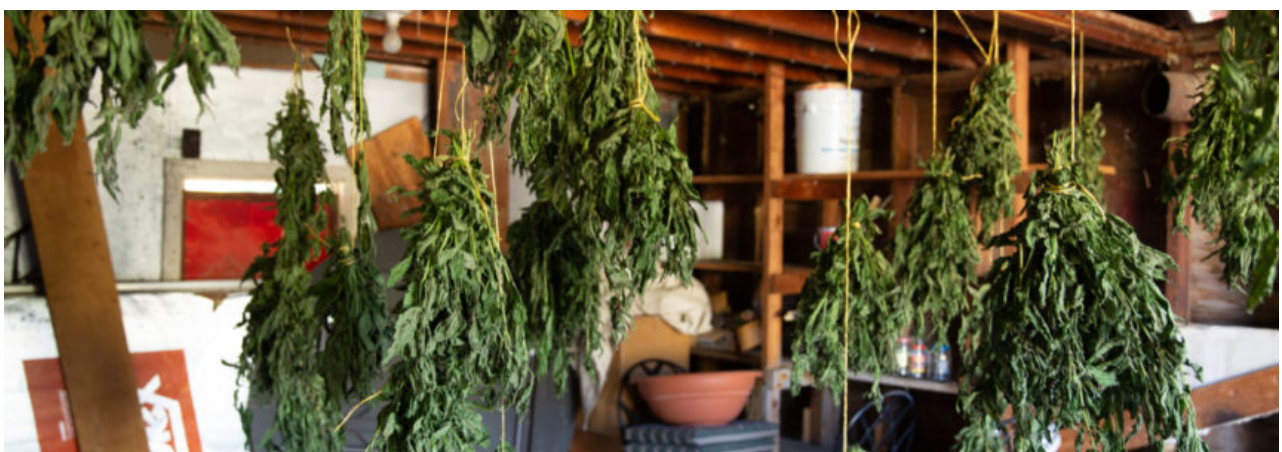


For a Deeply Ecological Art

In the contemporary art world, a professional sector based on the globalised market economy where I worked for over twenty years as a production manager, a curator, and later as a – mostly public – institution director, environmental awareness only started guiding my choices late in my career. I usually prioritised the production, circulation and transmission of artistic projects, and the ecological paradigm only very occasionally interfered with creative and curatorial freedom.

Marie-Anne Lanavère

6



Dehydrated Landscapes

If you are reading this text on a computer screen, it is possible that your eyes are drying out. Prolonged exposure to bright electronic screens makes us blink less and thus reduces lubrication, which can result in a condition known as “dry eye”, causing discomfort and seriously affecting our vision. At the same time that our eye globes dehydrate in front of the screens, it is estimated that about 33% of the terrestrial globe is presently undergoing processes of aridification. Adding to global warming, the most immediate cause of aridification around the world is the inappropriate use of land by conventional livestock and agriculture.

Jorgge Menna Barreto

7



Preparing for the “Not-Yet”

For me, agency is about how we can act upon our desire to have a better life.

“Right to the city” proponent David Harvey emphasizes that when he uses the term “heart’s desire,” he is referring not only to an individual undertaking, but also to a collective one. How can we move towards a shared desire of how we would like to live? How do we act in order to better our own life or situation, while also serving a collective understanding? These are questions that need to be addressed in every living environment – within the city as well as beyond it.

Jeanne van Heeswijk

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