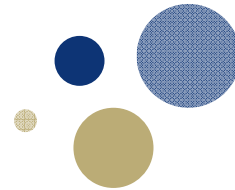




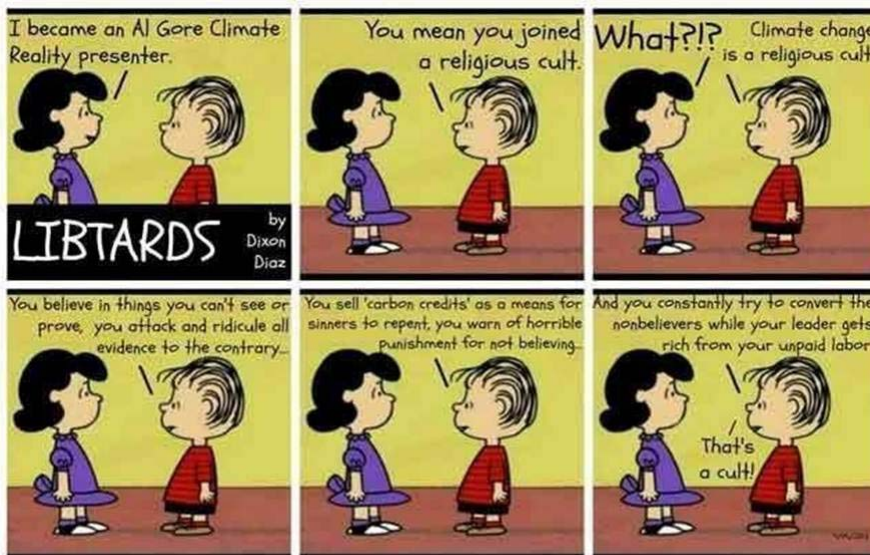
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology



Learning entangled empathy with trees: Experiences from the joint drama educational arts-science project concerning connection of climate change and loss of biodiversity

Futures of a Complex World Conference, Turku, Finland
Session V: Futures of Education, Art and Cultural Studies
Time: Tuesday 13 June at 10:45 – 12:00
Room: Katariina

Associate Professor in Drama and Theatre Studies, Dr. Heli Aaltonen
Department of Art and Media Studies, Faculty of Humanities: <http://www.ntnu.edu/ikm>



(c) 2013 Dixon Diaz except Peanuts characters (c) United Feature Syndicate



<https://www.blazingcatfur.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/global-warming-AGW-climate-change-weather.jpg>

Research with undergraduate students on BA Drama and Theatre Studies



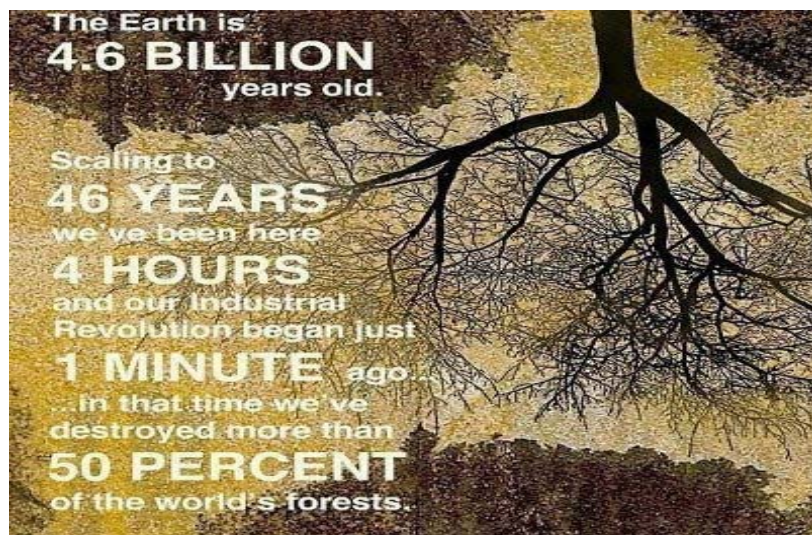
Bachelor students on Drama and Theatre Studies, 16 February 2016. Photo: Heli Aaltonen

- Improvisation and role play course
- 2-weeks' interdisciplinary theatre-science module in spring 2016 and 2017 at NTNU, Trondheim
- The goal of the research is to develop learning resources, which will give the students more understanding about climate change and individual competence for action.
- Based on an idea that innovative theatre and performance practices are compatible with learning, community engagement and civic participation

Content of the presentation

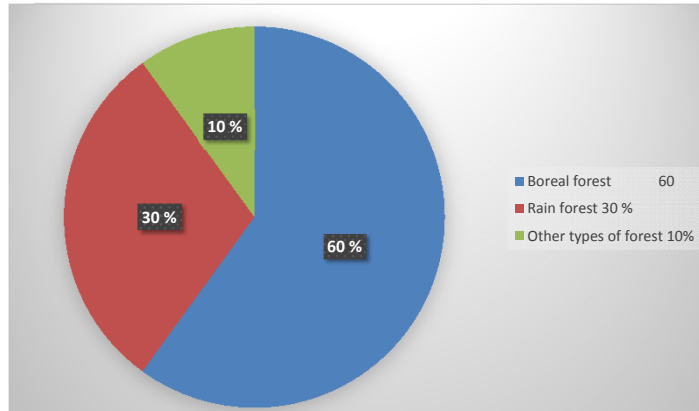
1. Why should we care what happens to boreal forests? Boreal forests, biodiversity and CO2 capturing.
2. The five, Ds, barriers that block the climate message: Distance, Doom, Dissonance, Denial, iDentity
3. Entangled empathy, embodied care and rewilding the human heart
4. Linking climate change with Improvisation and role play course
 - 4.1. Snapshot 1: Meet a tree seminar, 16th February 2016, Rotvoll, Trondheim
5. Reflections around outdoor seminar and applied theatre and climate project
6. Practical advices: How to work experientially, involving a blend of emotion and cognition, to achieve recognition that we are in constant evolving relationship with all other living beings?

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Source: Occupy Wall Street web site.

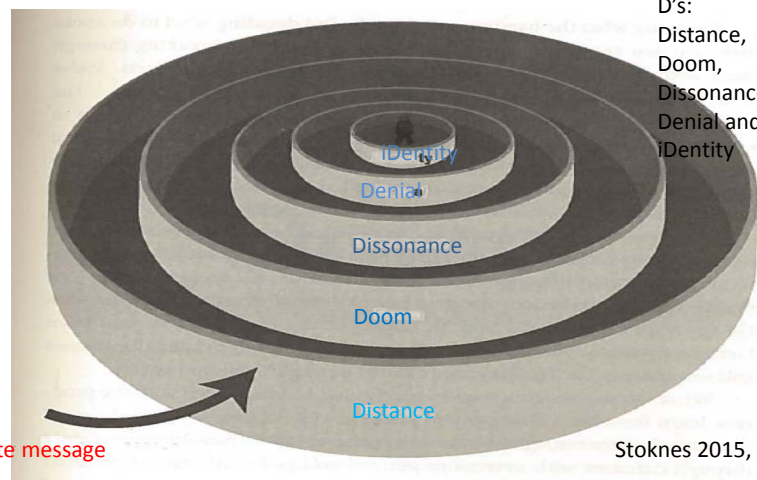
Forests and CO₂ capturing



Hessen, Dag O. 2014, Ut i naturen, Skogen verden glemte 14.1.2014:
<https://tv.nrk.no/serie/ut-i-naturen/dvna20001012/14-01-2014>

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There are five barriers that block and cool down the hot climate message



8

The New Psychology of Climate Action



1. Turn the barriers upside down.
2. Stick to positive strategies.
3. Act as social citizens, not individuals.

(Stoknes 2015, 90)

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Research questions

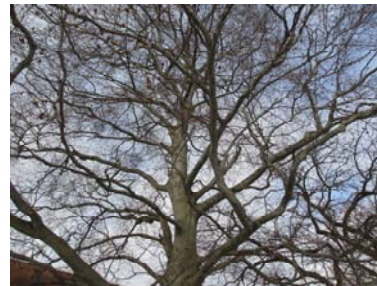


- How to break psychological barriers to Climate action / inspire students to become critical learners about climate change?
- How to work experientially, involving a blend of emotion and cognition, to achieve recognition that we are in constant evolving relationship with other living beings?
- How to develop capacity for cognitive and affective empathy with the «earth others» by using applied drama methods?

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Research material

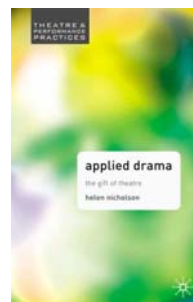
- Lectures and seminars of week 6 and 7 in the spring 2016.
- Participants: 36 students, 26 women and 10 men.
- AV-material of seminars and students' drama educational work.
- 27 questionnaires, week 6
- 32 questionnaires, week 7
- 34 theoretical writing assignment (a 500-word long individual reflection based on practical drama educational assignment work)



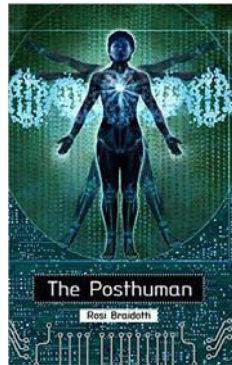
Applied drama

Key words of Helen Nicholson when working with applied drama:

- "intervention, communication, development, empowerment and expression when working with **individuals or specific communities** (Nicholson 2005: 3)".



Philosophical grounding: Rosi Braidotti and nomadic subjectivity



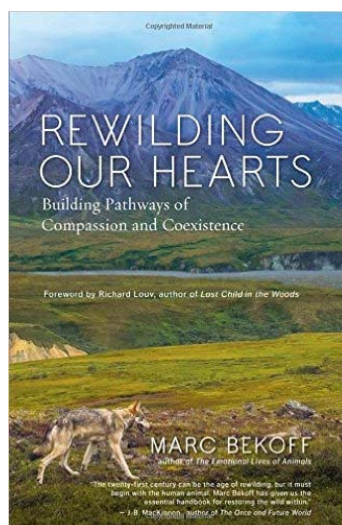
“nomadic subjectivity”

Re-reading applied drama:

Participation: The most important consequence of post-human subjectivity is that the idea of community also includes non-human beings or «the more-than-human-worlds» (Abram 2011, 196). Participation is a process of coming together with the other. (Aaltonen 2015).

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Philosophical grounding: Marc Bekoff and rewilding our hearts

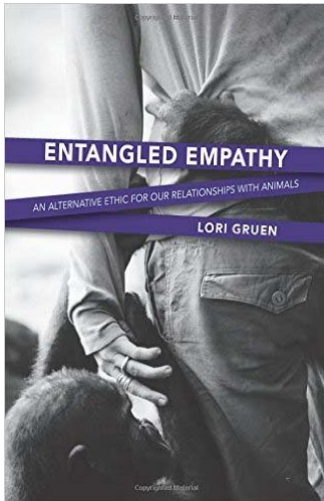


«The concept of rewilding is grounded in the premise that caring is okay. In fact, it is more than okay; it is essential. It is all right to imagine the perspective of nonhuman animals in order to take their well-being into account...

Rewilding our hearts is about becoming reenchanting with nature. It is about nurturing our sense of wonder. Rewilding is about being nice, kind compassionate, empathic, and harnessing our inborn goodness and optimism. In the most basic sense, “rewilding” means “to make wilder” or “to make wild once again”. This means many things, but primarily it means opening our hearts and minds to others. It means thinking about others and allowing their needs and perspectives to influence our own.”

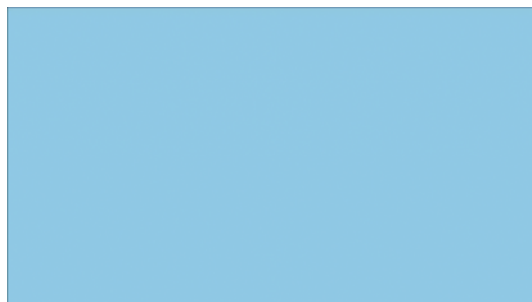
Bekoff 2014, 7-8.

Philosophical grounding: Lori Gruen and entangled empathy

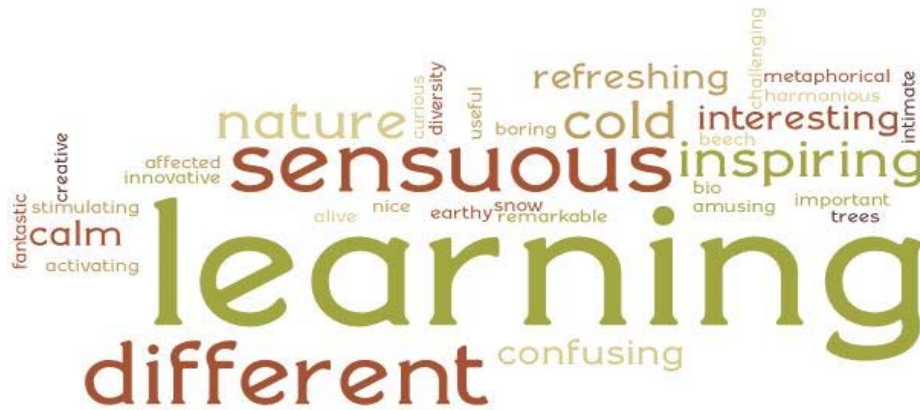


A type of caring perception focused on attending to another's experience of wellbeing. An experiential process involving a blend of emotion and cognition in which we recognize we are in relationships with others and are called upon to be responsible in these relationships by attending to another's needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes and sensitivities. (Gruen 2015, 3)

Meet a Tree Seminar, Rotvoll 16th February 2016



Students' reflections on the Meet a tree-seminar



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Students' reflections on the process

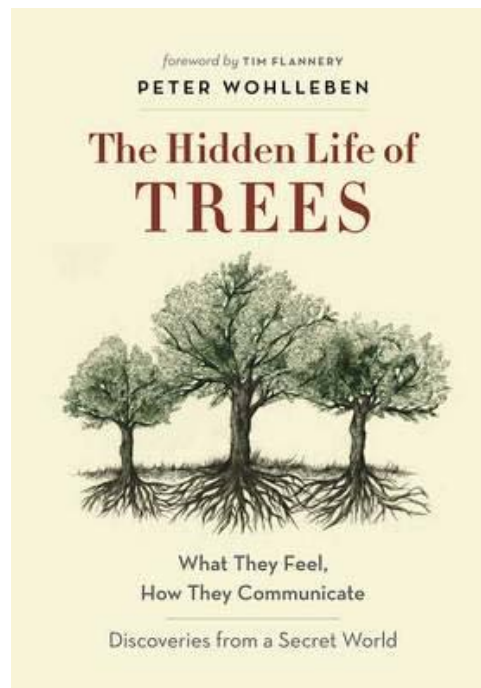
- Many students reflected that by the end of the course they had developed a more conscious relationship with the consequences of climate change to biodiversity.
- Many students wrote that after the course they had a stronger desire to connect with the natural world and focus on non-human beings.
- Many students became more conscious that the forest is somebody's home, where "please, leave no trace principle" should be practiced.
- Many students found the outdoors workshop section of the course "mind and heart expanding".
- Experiential learning through theatre and performance can create a paradigm shift in thinking and being in a world.

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How to work experientially, involving a blend of emotion and cognition, to achieve recognition that we are in constant evolving relationship with all other living beings? Some practical advices


- 1. Use drama educational methods. They function as a concrete and personal opening to the topic.
- 2. Share natural science knowledge and ecological understanding about the connection between climate change and forest biodiversity.
- 3. Have fun outdoors! The observation and sensuous outdoor activities are of vital importance for learning about the importance of the trees for climate.
- 4. Combine different methods of teaching. Ecological curiosity, entangled empathy and existential understanding of human's interconnection with non-humans are activated through the combination of drama and natural science exercises.
- 5. Share narratives of connection. Share green growth stories, rewilding and ecological restoration stories.

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Questions? – Comments...



Questions?

Comments...

Questions?

Comments...

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Literature



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