

Towards Sustainable, Formal and Informal Education: at the School of Life. (ID 1346)

EERA Network: 30. Environmental and Sustainability Education Research (ESER) Alternative EERA Network: 06. Open Learning: Media, Environments and Cultures

opics: NW 30 Special Call: Environmental and sustainability education in a time of poly-crisis: aims, knowledges, methodologies and practices

Keywords: sustainability education / experiential learning / whol school approach / eco-training / eco-citizen awarness

Proposal Information

As part of our observations and interviews exploring how being rooted in a supportive environment can support education about life and sustainability, we stayed and talked with the wider community of the *Domaine du Possible*, a french school located in Arles. Experiential and sensory learning are approached through the prism of complexity (Morin, 2014) in order to foster transdisciplinary teaching through fruitful connections between different areas of knowledge and the realization of creative projects. It is in this particular educational context, providing us with an original field of study, that we collected multiple testimonials in order to analyze the links between self-narrative and one's relationship to living things. In the context of the climate crisis, we will examine how the conditions for producing knowledge directly related to living things and the environment can generate knowledge that promotes and contributes to education for sustainability. This type of alternative and innovative educational context is a possible response to the poly-crisis as defined by Edgar Morin and Anne-Brigitte Kern (1999). It is also a proposal to root knowledge and learning in the territory and reality in order to escape from the digital world and the phenomenon of “off-the-ground” children.

Our presentation will address the conditions for collecting statements in a school context and how these statements provide valuable information in terms of the learning process, particularly regarding the meaning given to experiences related to the environment (Cottureau, 2025). We will observe how, through the experiences of students recounted in their own words, an ecological and environmentally conscious awareness emerges. The experience of parents will highlight the links between educational choices, ethical values, and everyday practices. The experiences of teachers will raise questions about their position, their role, and the pedagogical adaptations necessary to support the transmission of knowledge in this particular educational context. Indeed, it should be noted that the *Domaine du Possible* is part of a new pedagogy inspired by outdoor education and the whole school approach.

Methodology or Methods/ Research Instruments or Sources Used

We asked two classes, as well as parents and teachers, to write a biographical account. How did choosing this school impact their lives in terms of their thoughts, actions, and worldview? We thus seek to link educational narratives and the relationship to living things in an alternative school context through a multi-voice approach based on participant observation and an eco-educational perspective. Our approach is both biographical in terms of the data corpus, similar to the life story movement (Pineau, 1989), and anthropological in terms of our data collection method.

Collecting children's voices is also a fairly novel approach, whose methodological and ethical issues warrant some precautions, which we will discuss in our presentation (Amendola, 2023, Lani-Bayle, 2014). We will examine how recounting experiences related to nature and living

things promotes connection with oneself, with others, and with the environment. Although we can observe mutual learning processes referred to by Pineau as eco-training (1989), we are also curious to understand the challenges and limitations associated with this type of approach in terms of teaching posture and role (Lo Presti and Oppliger, 2019).

Conclusions, Expected Outcomes or Findings

Our analysis will also highlight some areas conducive to developing experiential learning for and through nature, based on the needs identified by the stakeholders concerned (Lo Presti and Oppliger, 2025). In addition, we will examine whether it is always possible to encourage children to take an active role as student-researchers by exposing them to real-life situations with a view to educating them about sustainability. Is there not a risk of fueling feelings of eco-anxiety or discouragement in them when faced with certain observations, for example, regarding the loss of biodiversity? It would also be relevant to consider how storytelling can encourage them to develop a sense of agency and eco-citizen awareness. Interdependence will also be addressed, particularly in relation to human, environmental, and planetary health issues. This type of education could thus serve as a tool and lever for social change, better preparing future generations to face the many global challenges that await them.

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