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Going Beyond Current Perspectives, Moving Towards Transformative Visions / Arrobio, Osman; Barbiero, Giuseppe; Camino, Elena; Cerutti, Alessandro; Colucci-Gray, Laura; Dodman, Martin; Ferrara, Enzo; Folco, Silvano. - In: VISIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY. - ISSN 2384-8677. - ELETTRONICO. - 8(2017), pp. 3-6.

Availability:

This version is available at: 11583/2716004 since: 2018-10-30T10:59:57Z

Publisher:

Arrobio, O., Camino, Cerutti, A., E., Colucci-Gray, L., Dodman, M., Ferrara, E., Folco, S.

Published

DOI:10.13135/2384-8677/2525

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Going Beyond Current Perspectives, Moving Towards Transformative Visions

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ISSN 2384-8677 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13135/2384-8677/0000>

Published online: December 21, 2017

Citation: Arrobio, O., Camino, E., Cerutti, A., Colucci-Gray, L., Dodman, M., Ferrara, E., Folco, S., (2017). Going Beyond Current Perspectives, Moving Towards Transformative Visions. *Visions for Sustainability*, 8: 0-0.

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Competing Interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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***Perspective:** Theoretical, research and educational visions*

***Fields:** Human, social and natural sciences, Economy and Technology*

***Issues:** Sustainable production and consumption processes, Human impact and responsibility, Peace promotion, Educational processes*

In *Visions for Sustainability* no. 7, we published a paper by Nanni Salio, "Nonviolent Conflict Transformation and Peace Journalism", in which the author draws on Galtung's vision of the transformation of the *triangle of conflict* into the *triangle of nonviolence*, in such a way that the three vertices *attitude, behaviour* and *contradiction* become those of *empathy, dialogue and nonviolence* and *creativity*. Salio then shows how this can be enacted by people working at micro and macro levels in such a way as to "dispel the fog of war". Whether by appealing directly to these principles or to other theoretical and practical frameworks for promoting peace, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), an international movement characterised by diversity and united by a common purpose, was founded in 2007 and has taken root and spread as a worldwide social conscience with 468 partner movements in over 101 countries. On December 10, ICAN was awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize "for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons". For the first time ever, the award has gone to a vast movement of this kind, rather than to a specific association, a group or single individuals. At the Oslo ceremony, three women in particular gave voice to that movement and underlined their vision of the key issues at stake. In her presentation, Berit Reiss-Andersen, chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, emphasized how "ICAN arose as a protest against the established order. Nuclear weapon issues are not solely a question to be addressed by governments, nor a matter for experts or high-level politicians. Nuclear weapons concern everyone, and everyone is entitled to an opinion". The executive director of ICAN, Beatrice Fihn, then warned how "the deaths of millions may be one tiny tantrum away" and how "a moment of panic" could lead to the "destruction of cities and the deaths of millions of civilians" by nuclear weapons. Finally, Setsuko Thurlow, a 13-year-old victim of the bombing of Hiroshima, talked about how she has spent all her life as a *hibakusha* – a survivor of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – bearing witness to the events and

the consequences of August 6, 1945. "When I was a 13-year-old girl, trapped in the smouldering rubble, I kept pushing, I kept moving toward the light. And I survived. Our light now is the ban treaty. To all in this hall and all listening around the world, I repeat those words that I heard called to me in the ruins of Hiroshima: Don't give up! Keep pushing! See the light? Crawl towards it".

The efforts of ICAN to harness collective intelligence, consciousness and competence, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of individual contributions, are a clear embodiment of what can be achieved when human endeavours are based on rational visions of attitudes, behaviours and contradictions within situations of conflict. Yet, at the same time, at both micro and macro levels, at this moment in history there are numerous irrational and potentially devastating manifestations of how attitudes can be based on intolerance and aggression, on ignoring or negating other points of view, while behaviours are based on threatening and attacking, on manipulating and exploiting, and contradictions are based on defeating and destroying, on greedy consumption or profit-seeking and blind pursuit of interests (both self-interests and those of others who are considered to be one's "allies").

Although they are by no means the only examples within the current alarming global scenario, the irrational proclamations and actions by Donald Trump and members of his administration during the first year of his presidency – on worldwide issues such as nuclear weapons and climate change, relationships with countries such as North Korea, Iran or others in the Middle East, internal policies concerning immigration and healthcare – all stand out in this respect. Together they provide expressions of attitudes, behaviours and contradictions that work to exacerbate tensions and create risks, treat problems to be solved as threats to be destroyed, ignore or deny the existence of dangers and act in such a way as to worsen them, present complex situations as black and white contests with winners and losers, while failing to understand that there can only be losers when conflict spirals out of control.

At times, what is most alarming is the

affirmation of the patently irrational or the negation of what is rational and based on data. On the one hand, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, damage caused by fires in 2017 makes it the nation's costliest year ever, while long-term climate trends will inevitably lead to increasingly frequent droughts. At the same time, 97 percent of scientists agree that global warming is evident¹. Nevertheless, blatant deniers of climate change and its consequences abound in Trump's entourage. In other cases, there is an equally alarming attempt to confound issues rather than simply deny them, such as when the head of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) claims that scientists continue to disagree about the degree and extent of global warming and this means that government action cannot be taken without the necessary agreement, or when the director of the Soil Health at Department of Agriculture (USDA) advises the avoidance in official documents of terms such as "climate change" (to be replaced by "weather extremes") and "reduce greenhouse gases" (to be replaced by "increase nutrient use efficiency") in such a way as to use language to obfuscate rather than clarify vision.

In the face of such confusion, the only way to address problems and transform conflict of all kinds into sustainable trajectories is through dialogue – seen as interaction between humans and between humanity and nature based on reciprocal respect and meaningful language – in order to develop and propose visions that can be the basis for shared, constructive and creative action. Individual, collective and planetary life courses are made up of contexts, events, choices and actions that require understanding reasons why situations develop as they do, weighing up alternatives and options available and imagining possible solutions based on participatory action. The roles of education and involvement are paramount in promoting multiple points of view and a consequent multiplicity of visions, an awareness of how within any context there exists the danger of adopting single visions that are inevitably limited and lead to partial, ineffective or biased action.

¹ <https://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus/>

Each one of the papers published in this issue offers a vision of how human beings can go beyond current and conventional paradigms and situations in order to build future and transformative scenarios, go beyond perspectives based on immediate reactions or short-term gains in order to create pondered solutions by considering a range of options and long-term perspectives, go beyond themselves and their presumed centrality in order to consider their collective wellbeing within the framework of planetary wellbeing.

Helen Kopnina's paper on *European Renewable Energy* looks at current European energy policy in terms of the differences between conventional and transformative sustainability approaches. The author considers the different renewable energy options that are available to policy makers and how such choices have been shaped. She argues that European energy policy has been developed within a conventional sustainability framework that focuses on criteria such as eco-efficiency and 'energy mix', examines the limitations of this perspective, and proposes a move toward a transformative approach based on circular economy and Cradle to Cradle frameworks.

In their paper, *Rewilding Education in Troubled Times; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Post-Nature*, Sitka-Sage, Kopnina, Blenkinsop and Piersol show how the recent move to introduce a "post-nature" world risks confirming and consolidating anthropocentric perspectives and techno-scientific approaches to managing the environmental crisis. They analyse the bases and the dangers of such approaches and argue that troubling nature has profound implications for education. They then illustrate case studies from nature-based programs in The Netherlands and Canada to show how anthropocentric thinking can be reinscribed even while ostensibly working within a "sustainability" framework. At the same time, they argue that, despite what they call "the tenacity of human hubris and the advent of the Anthropocene", our troubled times offer examples of emerging "post-anthropocentric" perspectives and practices. "Rewilding" is proposed as a means for re-

thinking education in order to modify actions and go beyond ideas of human exceptionalism. The papers by Berto and Barbiero, "The Biophilic Quality Index: A Tool to Improve a Building from "Green" to Restorative", and by Nota, Marian, Callegari, Berto, and Barbiero, "When Biophilic Design Meets Restorative Architecture: the Strambinello Project", both look at human beings' relational structures and their interaction with their physical-spatial surroundings, emphasizing how current "green" architecture pays exclusive attention to being environmentally friendly and considering ways of introducing biophilic design based on the importance of the restorative environment dimension. Berto and Barbiero present the *Biophilic Quality Indexes* as an instrument for calculating to what extent a building is biophilic and argue that this dimension corresponds not only to an aesthetic need but also to a necessity for efficient human cognitive functioning. Nota, Marian, Callegari, Berto, and Barbiero present an experimental case study of biophilic architecture that becomes a design variable for the physical and psychological wellbeing of the inhabitants on the basis of certain characteristics known as regenerative factors within *Attention Restoration Theory*.

In *Environmental Security and Sustainability of Community Resources in Nigeria*, Uzoaru and Chidinma examine the question of how human activities have created environmental insecurity and its implications for the sustainability of community resources in

Nigeria. They illustrate contents, objectives and methodologies for adult environmental education programmes for environmental sustainability and security in order to consider how, when adults receive adequate information through awareness-raising activities, they can be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to manage the environment in a sustainable manner and prevent the environmental insecurity their own actions can provoke if not guided by a desire to be a community and work together for the common interest.

Moving towards a vision of the environment we inhabit and care for and the resources we use and replenish can only be achieved if we promote peace by refusing the perspective of defence through nuclear, or indeed other, weapons, that deforms both the purported defender and the defended, and if we promote nonviolent ways of transforming actual and potential conflicts within humanity and between humanity and nature that involve us all. In the words of Berit Reiss-Andersen, "ICAN does not accept that the lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament is a realpolitik necessity. ICAN's premise is humanitarian, maintaining that any use of nuclear weapons will cause unacceptable human suffering (...) ICAN has succeeded in generating fresh engagement among ordinary people in the campaign against nuclear weapons. The organisation's acronym is perhaps not a coincidence: "I CAN".