

Turning the Tide in Urban Planning: Embodied storytelling for urban interconnectivity

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ABSTRACT

This paper presentation is connected with the Dignilogue session *Dignified Humility in the Era of Anthropocene: Rewilding Relationships between Humans, Non-Humans and Place*. The focus in the Dignilogue session is to find actions in the era of Anthropocene to be able to harness dignified humility with other humans, non-humans and place. My aim in the paper presentation is to discuss about theoretical foundations of posthuman identity and connect it with concepts entangled empathy and rewilding our hearts. In urban places there are many contesting stories how to achieve sustainable solutions. Non-human beings are welcomed to urban places if they amuse or please humans. Parks with non-pollinating trees and ponds with quiet water birds do not disturb hardly any human. It is another question when humans encounter pollinating birch trees or screaming sea gulls. Humans create conflicts out of encounters with non-human beings. Human wish of control is threatening the entire existence of many species. The most challenging question in the era of Anthropocene is how to sustain biodiversity. Marc Becoff (2014) writes in his most recent book *Rewilding our Hearts: Building Pathways of Compassion and Coexistence* how the concept 'rewilding' from wildlife conservation may be used concerning human attitudes. The concept 'rewilding' refers to restoring habitats and creating corridors between preserved lands to allow declining populations to rebound. Is it possible to turn the tide in urban planning? It is possible to have the focus in our interconnectedness with other forms of life, instead of trying to harness human control over other species? There are plenty of non-human beings, who have their needs and desires. I am interested in looking at connection between entangled empathy, storytelling and performance practice. The concept "entangled empathy" is coined by Lori Gruen (2015,3), and it is characterized to be "a type of caring perception focused on attending to another's experience of wellbeing". I am interested in exploring questions like: How to develop, by using performance methods, such kind of caring perception which is focused on attending to non-human's experience of wellbeing? How to work experientially, involving a blend of emotion and cognition, to achieve recognition that we are in relationships with others and are called upon to be responsive and responsible? How to develop capacity of entangled empathy by using performing arts? The examples in the presentation are taken from the student work with applied theatre and climate change, and from participating in performance called *Beat the drum: Walk* by Verk productions: <http://verkproduksjoner.no/beat-the-drum/>. Embodied work with environment opens up new sensual connections and celebrates human interconnectedness with other living beings. When the aesthetic practices are connected with knowledge about urban planning, new unthinkable stories may be found. Such stories may have a great capacity to change attitudes of humans and turn the tide in urban planning.