The realm of the Mercurial Trickster: Framing Ecological Citizenship for Transgressive, Transformative Transgenerational and Transdisciplinary (T4) Social Learning.

Dylan McGarry[[1]](#footnote-1)

ABSTRACT

*This paper takes a step back to observe the embodied ‘mercurial’ nature of the human being within complex (and sometimes wicked) learning environments, and contextualizes the human being as embodied ecological (global) citizen. Within the domain of transgressive, transdisciplinary and transformative learning (T4-learning) a re-framing of the definition of ecological citizenship is explored in relation to the divergent and somewhat binary negotiation between arguments for embodied phenomenological explorations of ecological citizenship (emergent in Deep Ecology), to more emancipatory, social justice-led leanings (emergent in Environmental Justice). This paper explores the middle ground between these two manifestations of ecological citizenship and attempts to formulate a more nuanced definition of ecological citizenship as a common framework for understanding the T4-Learning of citizens responding to complex, shifting and sometimes ‘wicked’ contexts. The value of embodiment, and the inner intuitive capabilities of the human being - specifically their ‘moral intuition’, introduced by Rudolf Steiner (1984)- are reflected on as fundamental capacities for adaptive, transgressive, dialectic and transformative learning and agency. These are considered in relation to human freedom, and valued knowings, beings and doings originally highlighted in Amartya Sen and Martha Nausbaum’s (1993) Capabilities Approach. This paper aims to respond to the various calls to explore paradigms shifts in how we respond to complex and (sometimes wicked) social, historical, economic and ecological problems, and establish a clearer understanding of the capacity of the embodied ecological citizen to be transgressive, transdisciplinary, transgenerational and transformative.*

Imagination, Intuition and Empathy in transgressive social learning: the case of connective aesthetics in South Africa.

By Dylan McGarry[[2]](#footnote-2)

ABSTRACT

*The role of connective aesthetics (Gablik, 1992) in encouraging intuition, imagination and empathy in social learning praxis has been the primary focus of my research over the past five years. This paper explores a personal retrospective of transgressive and transdisciplinary social learning processes that have been collaboratively developed through practice-based enquiry across 20 South African towns/contexts. The collaboration involved a diverse team of ‘cultural practitioners’ ranging from visual artists, poets, film-makers, theatre-makers, guerilla-gardeners, musicians, facilitators, educational-researchers among others who worked with a wide variety of citizens from municipal workers, mayors, policy makers, children, displaced people, teachers, farmers, farm workers, waste-pickers, artists, and others. Drawing from a variety of artistic genres including but not limited to theatre and social sculpture (an expanded concept of public/participatory art) new approaches and insights to social learning praxis have been uncovered. In this retrospective iteration I explore the importance of creative practice and its ability to ‘warm up’ social spaces -as articulated by Jospeh Beuys (1974; 1977; 2004)- through the use of aesthetic praxis as means that transforms how we engage with our inner capacities as well as how we develop our relational sensibilities. Key findings included the vital role connective aesthetics has in establishing imaginal thinking, moral intuition, empathy, participative parity, and emergence and how these are important for transformation and establishing new capacities for ecological/global citizenship.*

Key words: Connective aesthetics, transgressive learning, transformation, moral intuition, creative social learning, transdisciplinary praxis, practice-based research.

1. Dr. Dylan McGarry, Urban Futures Centre, Durban University of Technology, email: armadylan@gmail.com [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Dr. Dylan McGarry, Urban Futures Centre, Durban University of Technology, email: armadylan@gmail.com [↑](#footnote-ref-2)