Education never stands still—it moves, adapts, and transform in response to new realities, while reshaping society in turn. This collection explores some forces defining learning today: digital tools, intercultural dialogue, artistic expression, and the call for ecological responsibility.
At its core, education remains a space for negotiation and reinvention.

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EDUCATING IN A MORE-THAN-HUMAN WORLD: ECOLOGICAL CRISIS AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

Alessandro Ferrante[a]
Andrea Galimberti[a]
Maria Benedetta Gambacorti-Passerini[a]
[a]Università Milano-Bicocca, Italy

1. THE ENTANGLEMENT OF EDUCATION, SOCIAL CRISIS AND ECO-CLIMATIC CRISIS

The title we have chosen for the panel is: Educating in a more-than-human world: ecological crisis and social inequalities. It primarily expresses the intention to orient our analysis on the interconnection of education, social crisis and eco-climatic crisis. The basic idea is that it is no longer possible to consider separately the proliferation of socio-economic inequalities on a local and global scale, the issue of ecological degradation, and climate change. It is therefore necessary to think about social justice, environmental justice and climate justice together (Imperatore and Leonardi, 2023). This idea, moreover, seems to us to be widely cleared and shared. We can think of various examples: the declination of sustainability into environmental, social, and economic sustainability in Agenda 2030; Pope Francis' Encyclical Laudato sì, in which the Pontiff insists a great deal on the inseparability of the environmental crisis from the social crisis; the literature that in the humanities deals from different points of view with the relationship between inequality and climate change (Imperatore and Leonardi, 2023); the text The Three Ecologies (Guattari, 1989), that is now a classic of ecological philosophy; but also the various youth protest movements, which show very clearly the connection between the different crises we are referring to. In addition, we can also cite popular terms that are now in common use, such as anthropocene (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000) or, even better, capitalocene (Moore, 2016), which express well what is at stake in the contemporary historical-cultural scenario. In light of these premises, educating in this *milieu* means learning to combine phenomena that sometimes appear different and distant, constructing critical, complex and problematizing readings (Ferrante, Galimberti and Gambacorti-Passerini, 2022).

Second, the title of the panel is also the result of a specific theoretical positioning, which we could define, in a general sense, as post-humanist and post-anthropocentric (Braidotti, 2013). It is not only about educating having in mind that human society today is marked by the intertwining of multiple crises and is threatened by climate change, but also that these crises take place in a more-than-human world, that is populated not only by people, but also by objects, technologies, artificial intelligences, robots, rocks, lakes, rivers, mountains, oceans, volcanoes, animals, insects, plants, viruses, bacteria, fungi. We are living in a more-than-human world

(Ferrante, Galimberti and Gambacorti-Passerini, 2022; Snaza, Sonu, Truman and Zaliwska, 2016), and this awareness from an ethical-political perspective should lead us to consider a conception of justice that extends across species boundaries, that is a multispecies justice (Haraway, 2016).

All these considerations may perhaps seem trivial and obvious today. However, our experience of living on this planet, even as educational professionals, is often marked by a mental and cultural attitude that leads us not to fully perceive the implications of being part of ecosystems characterized by the interaction between heterogeneous elements (Barone, Cucuzza, and Ferrante, 2024). A deeply anti-ecological attitude that contributes to fuel the crises we are experiencing.

In sum, new and old inequalities are intensified by the convergence of eco-climatic crisis, anthropocentric culture, and neoliberalism, that produces a commodification and oppression of the living, human and non-human, perhaps unprecedented in history. It therefore becomes increasingly urgent to find ways to decentralize ourselves from cognitive, affective, moral habits that are taken for granted and have become all too familiar, as well as to think with theoretical radicality, critical sense and creativity about what it might mean to live and become in a more-than-human world. Consequently, this also means addressing the issue of socio-ecological conflicts in order to redefine the dominant political-economic order. So, which kind of education and which kind of subjectivities we have to promote in order to co-exist peacefully in a more-than-human world, traversed by different forms of injustice (social, environmental, climate, species) and multiple practices of exploitation of the living, operated first and foremost by the international actors of contemporary biocapitalism? If nature, climate, and species have become ethical-political stakes, under what conditions can they truly become stakes in the realm of pedagogical knowledge and educational processes as well?

2. INTERROGATING MAINSTREAM DISCOURSES: A CRITICAL VIEW ON POLICY MAKING

Such exponential change requires considering different social spheres and levels. It involves the educational practices that take place every day in schools and services as well as the mainstream discourses that enter the educational system shaping its underlying assumptions, ideas and orientations. From this perspective, an important field to consider in order to understand concretely how education is positioning itself in relation to the social and eco-climatic crisis is policy making. Indeed, international organizations that explicit their interest in education through policy recommendations have in the last two decades become political arenas in which the meanings and pragmatic orientations of fundamental issues are played out (Milana and Holford, 2014).

The concept of sustainability and education for sustainable development can be traced in various policy documents proposed by UNESCO, OECD, EU (e.g. in the Greencomp Framework proposed by the Joint Research Center, see Bianchi et al., 2022) and at its base there is an interpretation inspired by Our Common Future, an

UN Report dating back 1987. The so called Brundtland report defines sustainable development as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987, p. 8): this formulation clearly belongs to another historical moment and a tradition based on epistemological and political assumptions considerably distant from what we have asserted in the previous paragraph.

This concept of sustainability, on one hand, clearly addresses new challenges to the dominant neoliberal paradigm by integrating it with an ecosystemic sensibility and by activating an empowerment of all social actors towards the problems generated by the current eco-climate crisis and its possible future evolutions. On the other hand, it risks to represent a slow and inconsistent effort, promoting a gradual change within the same frame and not a radical paradigm shift. Several critical voices are rising towards this kind of approach where it is still possible to act on the environment in order to mitigate the most destructive effects of economic growth, through technologies to get to zero impact (Newell, 2015). A vision that conveys linear and often instrumental attitudes, which calls for developing skills (e.g., complex problem solving) and a sensitivity to effects and feedback of one's own action without grasping and revolutionizing some underlying constructs (e.g. the concept of acting itself, see Barad, 2007).

More generally, it is possible to observe how the policy domain is founded on a vision that is still anthropocentric and does not consider the complex interconnections and entanglements between human and non-human in a radical way (Ferrante, Galimberti and Gambacorti-Passerini, 2022). In this distance between dominant representations of the crisis and instances scattering from theoretical perspectives, research studies, educational and didactic proposals, much of the game on issues related to the social and eco-climatic crisis will be played out in years to come.

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