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How to care for the future?

How is future in jeopardy and what acts of care might we make to anticipate it?

How does anticipatory learning happen?

How are we to better learn today for sustainable tomorrows?

Abstract for a paper

Traces of human-nature interface as a cultural transformation towards sustainable futures

Abstract

Ecological crisis, in a complex connection to global interconnectedness and mobility of people and information and in connection to radical new technology, is a megatrend (Kiiski Kataja 2016) which indicates the great global change of the living environment of people everywhere on the Earth. In this paper, culture is seen as a part of nature (e.g. Siivonen 2018; Willamo et al. 2017). The focus is in the conscious cultural transformation, regarded as necessary to tackle the ecological crisis. The aim of this paper is to develop a new conceptual model of Heritage Futures, which combines 1) transformative power of culture defined as a dynamic process of anthroposemiosis, 2) human anticipatory understanding, and 3) cultural heritage as a tool to engage people in an inspiring, affectual, cognitive and practical way. The new model of Heritage Futures is an intentional, anticipatory, cultural tool to co-create better futures in the human-nature interface.

Discussion

John Deely writes about semiosis as a universal network of signs of which one part is an interactive network of signs between human beings and their surroundings. Deely calls this 'anthroposemiosis'. (Deely, 1994, 22–31.) In this paper, culture is defined as a process of

anthroposemiosis: a global, constantly changing process of signs, or traditions, including interconnected tangible and intangible elements (Siivonen 2008; see also Hannerz 1994; Bringéus 1976). Traditions can in some cases be defined as heritage (e.g. Siivonen 2018). Culture as anthroposemiosis is a relationship between human beings and their surroundings. It consists of interconnected elements of nature and human made material world, as well as skills, practices, concepts, thoughts and stories that people share with each other as traditions. Through anthroposemiosis, these surroundings become a part of human understanding and human beings have an impact to their surroundings. In the human-nature relationship, nature in its cultivated and culturalized form (Boudes 2011; Simmel 1988) is a part of signs in the human mind. In anthroposemiosis, both change and resistance to change are produced by human beings as traditions. Thus, traditions have always an implicit transformative power. Cultural heritage promotes more explicitly future oriented actions (e.g. Siivonen 2018).

According to Roberto Poli (2017, 2–5), anticipation has focus in the uses of temporal and futures oriented understandings, which are always a part of actions in present. Thus, traditions and heritage in anthroposemiosis can be seen primarily as more or less consciously anticipatory perceptions and interpretations based on different meanings and values, which are interconnected, among others, with human actions and practices in relation to the nature.

In the semiosis, there is an area outside of anthroposemiosis: nature in its uncultivated and unculturalised form. Also anticipation (Poli 2017, 2–3, 5) is seen as not only a human phenomenon. Other living creatures communicate with one another, with human beings and with the tangible and intangible, cultivated and culturalized, as well as uncultivated and unculturalized world in an anticipatory way. Communication of human beings is not separate from the communication of other species or inorganic nature; rather, they are tightly intertwined (Deely 1994, 6, 24, 41 and passim). In some parts of anthroposemiosis there is understanding of nature, semiosis, which exerts power over culture, anthroposemiosis (Siivonen 2018). In order to reach ecological sustainability, anticipatory understanding of semiosis inside and outside of anthroposemiosis seems to be required.

As we know, the direction of the unavoidable change of culture, especially in our technologized world, is not necessarily towards a more ecologically sustainable world. There are tendencies towards the overuse of natural resources, even in areas where human beings have a strong commitment to nature and the understanding of semiosis outside of anthroposemiosis is relatively strong (Siivonen 2018). In order to see culture as a subordinate part of nature allows, however, for investigating the human-nature relationship and questions of sustainable development from an interesting and important perspective (see Willamo et al, 2017, 422 and passim.).

Summary

This paper suggest a new form of Heritage Futures as tools to co-create alternative images for sustainable futures and accordingly actions in culture and society. Heritage Futures need to include both anticipatory understanding, and understanding of semiosis inside and outside of anthroposemiosis, in order to help us to better understand the human-nature interface and to form practical solutions towards a more sustainable Globe.

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