

A third series of visions, perspectives and approaches

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Perspective: Theoretical vision

Fields: Earth life support systems - Economy and technology - Social processes and structures

Issues: Bio-geological equilibrium and ecological decay

The third issue of Visions for Sustainability, coinciding with the 2015 summer solstice, is published while the controversial, glamorous exhibition of Expo 2015 is taking place in Milan, Italy from May 1st to October 31st. This international fair, “the biggest world event dedicated to nutrition”, purports to address technological socio-economic issues so as to enable worldwide access to food. More prosaically, the rationale of Expo 2015 “Feeding the planet. Energy for life” reproduces a series of rather anachronistic dangers for the environment and people’s minds in the name of technological progress. Grassroots movements ask for food sovereignty and equity in land distribution, yet over one million square meters of precious soil in the metropolitan area of Milan have been deployed to host oversized infrastructures whose destiny after the fair is open to question. Paradoxically, industrial producers of bottled water, pesticide resistant Genetically Modified products and junk food manufacturing industries support seminars and parades at Expo 2015 to promote themselves as defenders of genuine and safe agricultural production.

Safe and sufficient food for people on Earth is a vital requirement, but this must also be compatible with respect for the planet we inhabit and its delicate equilibria. As a way of not forgetting this imperative, this issue pays tribute to an early teacher of environmentalism, Rachel Carson, re-proposing her first published essay, *Undersea*. As one of the earliest instances of ecological writings, it describes the enduring natural exchanges dominating ocean life and the material immortality of all biotic components, ranging from the larger humpback whale to the smallest sea plankton.

Fundamental issues about the sustainability of extreme technology in industrial food production are presented by Alice Benessia and Giuseppe Barbiero, who discuss the complex and contentious issue of GM salmon through an analysis of *The impact of*

genetically modified salmon. The paper considers both epistemic and normative implications in the manufacture of transgenic salmons and proposes an assessment of its impact, risks, and promises, together with a reflection about the standards for estimating the ‘quality’ of genetically engineered food.

In a subsequent dialogue between pedagogy and biology, Gabriella Falcicchio and Giuseppe Barbiero, explore the moral value of biophilia as it emerges from the philosophical and political thought of Aldo Capitini, founder of the nonviolent movement in Italy. Strong and deep-rooted conviction for nonviolence, they claim, can create connections with the natural world expressed as biophilic attitudes.

The education section contains an essay by Nadia Lucchini and Martin Dodman on *Gender and Sustainability*. Lucchini and Dodman examine the relationship between gender and sustainability for the importance of education as a means for deconstructing stereotypes and promote awareness of both attitudes towards gender and ecology. Within a sustainability view, all members of humanity should be able to pursue their own personal pathways from an early age, without conditioning and discrimination.

Additionally, Giulia Rossi and Martin Dodman examine *The contribution of psychology in connecting the civic and environmental dimensions of sustainability*, analyzing the role of social sciences within the practices of sustainability to promote viable human attitudes and behaviors. Their paper demonstrates the interdependence that exists between the civic and environmental dimensions of communities, in particular with respect to understanding how the psychological mechanisms bridging citizens, communities and environments can help build pathways to individual and planetary wellbeing.

This series of papers offers a further range of perspectives on diverse and much-debated endeavors to move towards more sustainable life trajectories. One clear implication is that at the time of Expo 2015 sustainability cannot be based on the dubious promises or expectations of messianic technological momentum. A similar message is contained in the papal encyclical on the environment "Laudato Si" issued on June 18th 2015, a document that expresses the ecological concerns of Catholic teaching and includes harsh criticisms regarding the problems of income inequality and the plight of poor countries. Perhaps it makes more sense at this time to concentrate our efforts on the diverse set of 'simple ways' to living: a wider range of approaches that are spiritual, educational, as well as scientific and practical may offer the opportunity to address the daily needs for food, transport, education, housing and communication of a wider population living on a shared planet. Sustainability means 'in' not 'ex'.

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