

# Contemporary Perspectives on People-Nature Reconciliation

Guest editor Erica von Essen & co-editor Hans Peter Hansen

## Motivation

The processes of modernity including *urbanization*, *industrialization* and *capitalization* are commonly understood to produce an estrangement or alienation of human beings from the products of our labor and thereby from the natural environment (Szybel, 1997). This alienation of human beings from our own reproductive foundation has severe consequences on individual as well as societal levels. It impairs our understanding of the world and contributes to environmentally unsustainable ways of living (King, 2010), including environmental degradation and biodiversity loss (Miller, 2006). It has been termed the nature deficit disorder or the ‘extinction of experience’, contributing also to adverse effects in public health (Soga & Gaston, 2016). Through our modern reflexive capacity, our alienation from nature is also argued to have affected a consciousness on individual as well as on a social level about the self-manufactured environmental threats which has turned modern society into a so-called Risk Society (Beck, 1992; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994). In a Risk Society, we are subject to general anxiety about the future. Such anxieties are increasingly managed through the concept Sustainable Development. But in this paradigm the future has also been turned into something we have to avoid and the initial vision of sustainability has been transformed into a strategic instrument in order to protect an economic system from itself (Clausen, Hansen & Tind, 2010; Sachs, 2000; Shiva, 2005).

In this special issue, the focus is on the sorts of *responses* that have materialized in modernity to meet our alienation from nature, our troubled con-

sciousness over this estrangement and our ‘ecological boredom’ (Monbiot, 2013). There is an ever-growing industry of services, schools of thought and ways of relating to nature catered to provide both individual and societal needs for self-fulfillment that takes as their basis *nature reconciliation* – both to meet *emotional* desires, *identity*, in pursuits of *status* and by drawing attention to awareness of the lack of *knowledge* and *experience* emerging from a more direct interaction with nature (Simon & Alagona, 2009; Hanna, 2006). Such awareness is also connected to the individual and social recognition that humanity, in order to survive, has to develop more sustainable practices in the way we reproduce ourselves biologically and socially.

Examples of phenomena which conceptually can be argued to be rooted in nature reconciliation include the growth of a DIY (Do-It-Yourself) culture trading on virtues of self-reliance, urban agriculture, nature-based recreation services, the increased popularity and status of game meat and the development of nature interpretation programs. Urban residents and urban areas, in particular, are seen to be a prime target market for a dose of nature in an otherwise sterile environment (Francis & Lorimer, 2011). Parallel to the rise of such phenomena, policy-makers, practitioners and scholars compete over the optimal means and routes to nature reconciliation. In this, they often provide contesting versions of the authentic nature in which one should be reconciled (von Essen & Allen, 2016; Palamar, 2006). Hence, people-nature reconciliation has become fundamentally politicized (Monbiot, 2013).

We welcome empirical and theoretical manuscripts that adopt, in particular, a problem-oriented and transdisciplinary approach to the people-nature reconciliation phenomenon in modernity. Contributions may explore problems associated with socially constructed, invented, faked or historically mediated forms of nature reconciliation. Manuscripts are invited to *problematize* the manifestations as well as *implications* of the growth of the nature reconciliation phenomenon broadly. Because the term reconciliation is broad and used in an everyday rather than a technical sense, even in biological sciences (Corlett, 2016), contributing authors may interpret and argue for a range of practices and processes to fall under the category.

Contributors may from diverse case contexts examine for example processes, services and ideas that trade on atavism and nostalgia, getting back to nature, reclaiming lost ways of life, repairing relations with nature, rehabilitating harmed ecosystems, regaining self-sufficiency and regaining virtues of integrity. Such processes are increasingly diverse in modernity, ranging from specific nature recreation practices that approximate ancient interactions between man and wildlife, not least including the many streams of 'back-to-nature' bow-, knife or wilderness hunting packages sold to urban consumers, to paradigmatic philosophies like different versions of rewilding and ecological restoration (Ceașu *et al.*, 2015; Light, 2000). In this way, manuscripts invite scholars from a wide swathe of TES' issues of interests. We also invite manuscripts that more critically suggest alternative and perhaps more constructive responses to or inoculation toward the 'disease' of nature alienation.

This special issue of the **Journal of Transdisciplinary Environmental Studies** (TES) is in line with the overarching ambition of the journal, to raise important environmental issues and integrate natural and social science into the field of environmental management and planning. Indeed, reconciliation is a term with disciplinary baggage (Doxtader, 2003), and there is a need for a transdisciplinary-focused journal to engage with its application in the environmental context. The special issue proposed is expected to become a significant contribution to our understanding of the mutual drivers of the problems we work with within natural science as well as within social science and the humanities.

## Process

Scholars interested in contributing with papers to this special issue of **Journal of Transdisciplinary Environmental Studies**, titled **Contemporary Perspectives on People-Nature Reconciliation**, are invited to submit a maximum 400 word abstract to [journal-tes@ruc.dk](mailto:journal-tes@ruc.dk) no later than *March 1<sup>st</sup> 2017*. From the submitted abstracts 6-8 will be selected for full length manuscripts. The deadline for submission of full length manuscripts will be *May 1<sup>st</sup>*. All papers accepted for review and revised accordingly will be published online as open access **without any costs for authors or readers**. Since TES is a non-profit and non-commercial journal authors will be responsible for proof editing of their own manuscripts. Length of final manuscripts: up to *50,000 units including spaces*.

**Uppsala, Sweden & Aarhus, Denmark,  
18th of December 2016**

Erica von Essen  
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences  
Department of Urban and Rural Development  
Division of Environmental Communication  
Sweden  
*E-mail:* [erica.von.essen@slu.se](mailto:erica.von.essen@slu.se)

&

Hans Peter Hansen  
Aarhus University  
Department of Bioscience  
Section of Wildlife Ecology  
Denmark  
*E-mail:* [hph@bios.au.dk](mailto:hph@bios.au.dk)

## Works cited:

- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Beck, U.; Giddens, A. & Lash, S. (1994). *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Stanford University Press.
- Ceașu, S., Hofmann, M., Navarro, L.M., Carver, S., Verburg, P.H. & Pereira, H.M. (2015). Mapping opportunities and challenges for rewilding in Europe. *Conservation Biology*, 29(4), pp. 1017-1027.

- Clausen, L.T.; Hansen, H.P. & Tind, E. (2010). Democracy and Sustainability: A Lesson Learned From Modern Nature Conservation in Nielsen et. al. (Eds) *New Agenda for Sustainability*, Asgate.
- Corlett, R.T. (2016). Restoration, Reintroduction, and Rewilding in a Changing World. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, 31(6), pp. 453-462.
- Doxtader, E. (2003). Reconciliation – a rhetorical concept/ion. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 89(4), pp. 267-292.
- Francis, R.A. & Lorimer, J. (2011). Urban reconciliation ecology: the potential of living roofs and walls. *J Environ Manage*, 92(6), pp. 1429-37.
- Hanna, E. (2006). Fair Chase: To Where Does It Lead? In: Manore, J. & Miner, D.G. (eds) *The Culture of Hunting in Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, pp. 239-276.
- King, R.J.H. (2010). Hunting: A Return to Nature? In: Kowalski, N. (ed. *Hunting - Philosophy for Everyone: In Search of the Wild Life*. (Philosophy for Everyone. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 149-160.
- Light, A. (2000). Ecological Restoration and the Culture of Nature: A Pragmatic Perspective. In: Gobster, P. & Hull, B. (eds) *Restoring Nature: Perspectives from the Social Sciences and Humanities*. Washington D.C.: Island Press, pp. 49-70.
- Miller, J.R. (2006). Restoration, reconciliation, and reconnecting with nature nearby. *Biological Conservation*, 127(3), pp. 356-361.
- Monbiot, G. (2013). *Feral: Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding*. Allen Lane.
- Palamar, C.R. (2006). Restorashyn: Ecofeminist restoration. *Environmental Ethics*, 28(3), pp. 285-301.
- Sachs, W. (2000). Development: The Rise and Decline of an Ideal. Wuppertal papers, 108. Wuppertal: Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy.
- Simon, G.L. & Alagona, P.S. (2009). Beyond Leave No Trace. *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 12(1), pp. 17-34.
- Shiva, V. (2005). *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Soga, M. & Gaston, K.J. (2016). Extinction of experience: the loss of human–nature interactions. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 14(2), pp. 94-101.
- Szybel, D. (1997). Marxism and Animal Rights. *Ethics and the Environment*, 2(2), pp. 169 - 185.
- von Essen, E. & Allen, M. (2016). Wild-But-Not-Too-Wild Animals: Challenging Goldilocks Standards in Rewilding. *Between the Species*, 19(1), pp. 80-108.