

**ADULT EDUCATION**  
& THE PLANETARY CONDITION

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## Adult Education and the Planetary Condition

Edited by Aaro Harju and Anja Heikkinen  
The articles in this book are peer-reviewed

This book first published 2016  
Finnish Adult Education Association  
([www.sivistystyo.fi](http://www.sivistystyo.fi))  
Freedom and Responsibility in Popular Adult  
Education programme ([www.vapausjavastuu.fi](http://www.vapausjavastuu.fi))

Layout by Marika Kaarlela

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ISBN: 978-952-5349-27-6 (pdf)

ISBN: 978-952-5349-28-3 (printed)

**T**he 6th biannual Nordic Conference of Adult Education and Learning was organized in University of Tampere during 25-28 March 2015 (see [www.uta.fi/edu/nordic/index.html](http://www.uta.fi/edu/nordic/index.html)), organized by universities of Tampere and Åbo Akademi and the research programme Freedom and Responsibility of Popular Adult Education.

**The topic of the conference** was Adult Education and the Planetary Condition. In the call for abstract, the organizers stated that the traditional nation-state context of adult education research and practice is challenged by the consequences of globalization. This refers not only to increased mobility and interaction across different borders, but also to financial and economic, social and environmental crises at a global scale. Researchers were invited to discuss their topics and results in the tension-field of local and global. While the conference was open to all interested in encounters and dialogues within the Nordic adult education community, it attracted presenters and participants from all continents.

**In the reflection meeting** the question of Nordicism of adult education was raised to the fore: several colleagues outside Nordic countries were astonished for the lack of discussion on the characteristics and challenges in Nordic adult education. The reactions among the audience were diverse. Some suggested strengthening self-reflective collaboration between Nordic researchers, engaging also practitioners and policy-makers; others considered that the issues and challenges of adult

education are not distinctive for Nordic countries and thus don't need special Nordic collaboration. However, wishes about strengthening the dialogue among Nordic research community were pronounced, at least in the form of preparing the next Nordic Conference of Adult Education and Learning in 2017, expected to be organized by the University of Linköping.

**Connected to the conference**, an exhibition Places and Spaces of Adulthood, was displayed at the front windows of Virta-building, thanks to Jenni Pätäri, Markus Huhtamäki and the EDUSTA Gallery team (see [www.uta.fi/edu/esittely/galleria/nayttelyt/spaces.html](http://www.uta.fi/edu/esittely/galleria/nayttelyt/spaces.html)).

**The organizers** and the editors are grateful to the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture for financial support to the conference, to School of Education and the Conference team in University of Tampere for providing facilities and administrative support, and to the City of Tampere for providing reception. We also thank other members of the scientific committee Jyri Manninen and Petri Salo, as well as the organization team Annika Turunen, Kristiina Tuokko, Markus Huhtamäki and Jenni Pätäri, and conference assistants Emma, Katriina, Bryson, Namwaka and Florence.

**Finally, acknowledgements** to Markus Huhtamäki, who assisted in harmonizing and polishing the texts, and to Marika Kaarlela, who designed the lay out and illustrations.

*In Helsinki and Tampere, May 2016  
Aaro Harju and Anja Heikkinen*



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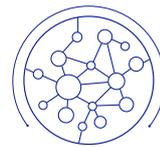
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## BODILY MEDIATION FOR THE ECOLOGICAL ADULT EDUCATION



BY

Alba G. A. Naccari

**W**ith the following I would like to give an idea about educational opportunities offered by the Symbolic-Anthropological Bodily Mediation Pedagogy<sup>®</sup>, which proposes interesting outdoor activities, such as dance and movement, for the ecological adult education. It is a methodology created in Italy from some approaches of the dance movement therapy reworked in a pedagogical way (Naccari 2004; 2006; 2012 ed.). The method is used in the work of education, research, training and supervision in 'Eurinome' A.S.D., the 'School of Bodily and Expressive Mediation Pedagogy' in Perugia-Palmi (RC)<sup>7</sup>, that is operative since 2006 and today accredited by Miur, Cid Unesco and Apid<sup>8</sup>.

**The term 'mediation'** means that movement and/or dance activities are proposed to adult participants in a course not as activities in themselves but as tools to educate the person. Many of the activities proposed through this approach are designed for adult education, considering their different moments of evolution and different educational goals, including environmental education.

**These movement** activities, often proposed in a natural environment, have their ancient origins in the history of people (for example the famous Italian pizzica-tarantella) and today substantial studies argue their pedagogical references and give reasons and justify their educational goals especially in adulthood in the liberal education, as I will describe further.

<sup>7</sup> [www.danzasimbolica.altervista.org](http://www.danzasimbolica.altervista.org)

<sup>8</sup> MIUR: Ministero dell'Istruzione dell'Università e della Ricerca; CID: International Dance Council Unesco, APID: Associazione Professionale Italiana Danzamentoterapia.

**In this paper**, I will first briefly refer to the current dramatic eco-systemic situation and to the opportunity of a special kind of experiential learning to try to change the approach adults would have to the problem. Thereafter I will talk about the ancient origins of the tradition of dancing surrounded by nature, a practice that can still be evidenced of in ethnic dances of many countries in the world. Many of these dances, because of their symbolic value, are appropriately integrated into the specific methodology which I refer to. Finally, I will mention some stimuli taken from other approaches and combined to the symbolic-anthropological (S. A.) bodily mediation. The intention of this approach is to awaken a sense of belonging and multiple interaction with 'Mother Earth', to rediscover and experience the harmony between the human and the cosmic rhythms, to enlarge our awareness and sense of responsibility for the earth-system.

**As I refer** to a mostly practical methodology, designed to activate emotions, moods and attitudes, it will not be easy to find the right words. I therefore invite readers to evoke what they may have experienced in other workshops, or to empathize as much as possible to what I am going to present in this paper.

## Introduction and perspectives

The environmental degradation and the negligence for plants, animals and other life forms see adults engulfed by the inability to give a concrete answer to the awareness of the risks that our thoughtless behaviour generates. The 'heuristic of fear' coming from the future (Jonas 1979), facing the risk of 'biocide', does not have adequate concrete consequences. Even the concept of 'non-reciprocal responsibility' (see Jonas 1979), the ability of taking care of those who cannot reciprocate (at least not intentionally, namely children, animals, vegetable beings ect.), which should be typical of adulthood, is sorrowfully disregarded.

**Therefore we** have a thoughtless attitude towards the ecosystem, just think how multinational companies, that influence many aspects of our economy, determine their choices on income and not on human rights and the well-being of the biosphere. This human unconsidered behaviour not only does not take into account the lives of the future generations, but it also testifies the spiritual decline of mankind, unable to feel and experience the *com-presenza*<sup>9</sup> (Capitini 1967; 1999) with plants, animals and the whole earth system.

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<sup>9</sup> It could be translated: coexistence-presence-participation of all beings, the dead and the living, bound together to a transcendent level, shearing together the creation of values.

**Rising public** awareness, in this regard, requires new ways of feeling-perceiving-sharing that would allow a renewed ability for people to act responsibly in their dealings with the environment and other beings.

**In the symbolic-anthropological** pedagogy, the eco-systemic perspective is one of the essential theoretical references. This aspect underlines the inevitable co-membership and interactions between all beings and contexts (Bateson 1972; Bronfenbrenner 1979), and inter alia between human beings and nature, and the inestimable value of our 'terrestrial citizenship' (Morin 1999). In fact, we could not live without breathing the air cleaned by trees; all our biological and psychological rhythms depend on the rhythms of the earth. This deep connection, which seems obvious, but that is now denied by most of human behaviour, is highlighted by the existentialist philosophers (such as Heidegger, Jaspers and many others). "The compound expression 'being-in-the-world' indicates, in the very way we have coined it, that it stands for a unified phenomenon" (Heidegger 1996, 53). *Dasein*, being-there (the existence) is structurally characterized by its living in the world, as what we are familiar with, what we care about, or rather what we should care about. *Dasein* has the essential constitution of being-in-the-world (see *ibid.*).

**To rediscover** and feel all this it can be necessary to awake in everyone the ethical and spiritual profound consciousness of interdependence and co-belonging to all beings. That is not only a physical feeling, due to our interconnection with the rhythms of the earth (day and night, seasonal changings and so on), but also a

deep dependence on the mysterious beauty of nature. This is possible by considering not only the 'formal' size of the value, that means the rational and verbal one (Reboul 1992), but also its 'materialistic' dimension, namely that of experimenting the feelings of goodness and beauty thanks to the rediscover of the intimate interconnection with everything else (Morin 1973). This is especially true for adults who are already immersed in saturated worlds of words, which lose their credibility.

**To obtain this**, different kinds of experiential learnings are useful. As I said before, in the symbolic-anthropological approach, we (as a school) plan bodily and expressive mediation workshops, made mainly outside, in a natural environment. We work through the reworking and integration of ancient traditions that can help people search and listen to the 'Genii Loci', so as to educate a renewed awareness and inner perception of our innate and vital 'terrestrial citizenship'. To awaken a sense of belonging that, while accepting the profound meaning of our life on earth, it allows us to look to the 'Other', (human being, element of nature, creature), not as a being to dominate, as the main globalized economic logic teaches us, but as an 'otherness' with whom one can creatively come in to a possible harmony.

**In these workshops**, we integrate people's expressive gestural language through their traditional dances, in order to experience, fully understand, and feel their symbolic meanings, often related to a strong sense of intimacy with the whole. The different activities are proposed in a specific setting that facilitates the identification and personal reworking of the symbolic dance theme.

## Some origins of a lost bond to be rediscovered

Traditional dances condense and testify to a past related to the rites of nature in different cultural contexts; we can still dance them and learn new ways of belonging to and the respect for all things, thanks to the specific educational setting.

**Many traditional** dances were originally connected to the awakening of spring, the propitiation of the crop and, through all this, the human beings' power to procreate and generate (Sachs 1933), not only as a biological possibility but also culturally for their community. Dances in nature under trees, are part of many ethnic traditions at all latitudes. As an Italian I have to refer to the dances of my own tradition, among them, the 'Tarantella' is certainly famous all over the world.

**The 'Pastorale'** (one of southern Italy's Tarantellas) effectively interprets the close relationship between dance as a collective ritual and the community life with its unique culture and the strong relationship of interdependence with nature. Dancing is, in fact, related to the ancient tradition of transhumance that profoundly marked the life of the *Lucan shepherd*:

*"in autumn, the transfer of livestock from a cold to a warmer grazing ground (...) meant departure and return, abandonment of the family and of one's environment for a long period, with the inevitable adaptation to a wandering life in different natural environments (...) the departure was seen as the death of the sedentary period and the beginning of the long*

*journey, the coming back home was the end of the nomadic adventure and the beginning of stability in the daily life" (Gala 1999, 6).*

**Although** it is a tradition very far from ours, it shows a way of life with nature and human feelings that, beyond the cultural and historical context, belongs to deep human nature. The sense of deep interaction, of taking care of animals, of responsibility, of sacrifice are values that today should again be part of the adult way of being, as I will mention later.

**Even the 'Tammurriata'** (etymologically: dance on a drum), a name which designates the tarantellas of the Campania area, is a dance linked to rural tradition and life, to a culture deeply rooted in the ancient pagan cult that still follows the nature's cyclical Calendar.

**The true origin** of 'Tammurriata' is to be ascribed to the 'Great Mother' (De Simone 1974), the feminine deity identified with various goddesses, the mistress of ancient rites linked to the land. The calendar of the 'Tammurriata' festivals, from 2nd February to October, follows the path of the sunlight with its fertilizing consequences on the earth, "from the springtime rebirth to the summer blooming down to autumn. In winter the 'Tammorras' are silent and rest, waiting for a new year to come to celebrate again the eternal renewal of the mystery of life" (Garrone 2004, 62).

**Adults today** would learn a lot if only they listened to the seasonal cycles, it is a fundamental dimension of the eco-systemic wisdom and of deep ecology, the ability to listen and harmonize themselves listening and harmonizing with the 'Other'.

» Primitive Expression creates a strong sense of belonging in the group we dance and sing with, and to the context in which we are involved. »

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**But I have to** make at least a brief reference to the famous 'Pizzica', the current popular definition of what remains of Tarantism from Puglia. The therapeutic dancing ritual binds the birth of the myth at the time of harvest, when the spider can bite you because you are immersed in the summer heat and in the natural elements associated with ploughing, grape harvesting and gleaning. In ancient times the same dancing and musical ritual was made in a natural environment; its origins are linked to the orgiastic Dionysian mysteries, which took place in the wildest nature, a privileged dimension, where a peculiar union and a panic abandonment were sought. (See De Martino 2002; Naccari 2004, 62–69).

**Now I cannot enter** into the symbolic richness of this myth, which I have already treated elsewhere (see Naccari 2004). I can just mention the symbolism of the repressed feminine (the *tarantate* are predominantly women, whose life was under the male power), and the symbolism of feminine archetype, that regards the ability to welcome, to weave relationships, to imagine, to feel and to empathize. All things highly educative for adults today, especially to improve their ability to relate to the Other (human, creature, environment).

**As I said before**, our present is very far from these ancient rituals and dances, but we can still learn some important

ethical attitudes of interdependence with everything through them. The relationship between humans and nature could be mutual, and not of ownership and exploitation of the earth and all its creatures. We could learn to be in touch with season changes, and with the mystery and the value of being in connection with the earth life, with its rhythms and changings, something we should take care of.

## Experiences to consider

I had the opportunity to experience the positive educational opportunities of dancing in a natural environment, both in dance-movement-therapy workshops and in some other adult educational trainings. I was able to translate some elements of these approaches while drafting the symbolic-anthropological theory and methodology.

**An approach** that is well known by dance-movement-therapists, and that can be experienced in nature, is the 'Primitive Expression'. It was initiated by the afro-Cuban dancer HERNANDEZ Duplan, and it has been reworked as a specific method within dance-therapy by France Schott-Billman (1987; 1989; 2001). Furthermore, within the symbolic anthropological method we (other colleagues and I, the most important of whom is Johan Dhaese) have reworked it for an educational setting. The basic

elements are a binary rhythm, simplicity of movements, the posture always vertical to the ground, the reflection of the group, the use of voice, which, inspired by the ancient tribal chants, allows the group to sing simple and repetitive melodies as if it were a choir. Music is not always necessary, so it is possible to propose the Primitive Expression without other tools than one's body: we simply find a common rhythm, and mark it with the voice and the movement of our feet on the ground; that is why we can practice anywhere, in a truly ecological way (that means both in relation with everything and in a very essential way). Furthermore, the symbolic movements mostly refer to the essential themes of nature: the earth, the sky, the horizon, the infinite, the activities and the work of men and women in these dimensions.

**Primitive Expression** creates a strong sense of belonging in the group we dance and sing with, and to the context in which we are involved. It also facilitates the activation of a sort of mysterious ancestral memory characterized by a strong and essential bond of interdependence between Earth, with all its natural elements, and the human being.

**Another practice** that inspired the synthesis and integration of activities in the natural environment in the method I'm talking about, is the so called 'Ecological Movement', which I experienced with Sandra Reeve and Prapto Suryodarmo<sup>10</sup>. These methods are extremely complex and both the experts have developed a practice of movement with some spiritual references and some high educational goals.

**The Javanese** Prapto Suryodarmo gave birth to the artistic movement called 'Amerta Movement' that draws from Buddhism; he

*"decided to practice perceiving the world through movement rather than from stasis, or, as he initially described it to us, 'from the Buddha walking, rather than from the Buddha sitting'. Alongside Buddhist practice, the development of Amerta Movement was influenced by the practice of Sumarah, a traditional Javanese meditation practice of 'letting go' or surrender. Suprapto developed his approach to movement as a life-practice in dialogue with both of these traditions.*

*Amerta is a Javanese word which Prapto translates as the 'nectar' or 'elixir' of life. This practice is based on the basic movements of daily life: walking, sitting, standing, crawling and lying down and the transitions between them, beginning with the observation of children playing. It is also based on moving in*

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10 Workshop of Ecological Movement, June 2011, West Dorset – England.

*nature and an embodied study of movement from the play of elements in motion and the laws of nature.*

*Both as a psychophysical practice and as a cultural attitude, equal attention is given to the environment as to the body-in-movement” (S. Reeve<sup>11</sup>).*

**Sandra Reeve**, after a long experience with Prapto, developed her own methodology called ‘Ecological Movement’. Sandra mainly sought the way to make Prapto’s teaching accessible to the Western culture. As she argues:

*“Current ecological discourses often seem to take for granted an embodied human position, without taking into account the nature of embodiment. It is this gap which I seek to address when I apply selected ecological principles to movement training. It seems only a small step from ecological perception to a notion of ecological movement as a way of both stimulating and incorporating a new conceptual ecology through direct experience. This would be necessary, if a new paradigm of human behaviour was to be experienced and understood through the moving body. This practice of ecological movement begins with the individual and with becoming aware of the structure of the living body in movement. Embodied environmental awareness, which includes an awareness of situation or context, is a hallmark of ecological movement” (S.Reeve<sup>12</sup>).*

**In this practice**, then, there is a particular attention on listening to oneself and to one’s awareness of being in relation with the environment, trying to live the present in the present, in the total perception of what and where you are. The ‘Ecological Movement’ has a deeply meditative-contemplative value that allows you to go beyond the constant mental chatter and to be in the presence of the spiritual mystery of being.

## **Geo-dance: from the body-home to the Earth-home**

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11 [www.moveintolife.com/thesis-amerta-movement.html](http://www.moveintolife.com/thesis-amerta-movement.html)

12 *ibid.*

In the S.A. method, we call those specific activities made in a natural environment with explicit ecological goals ‘Geo-dance’. In this kind of workshops, we think and propose activities oriented towards mediation, integration, and harmonization of the elements living in us

and in where we live, as a kind of ecology that begins from inside. This involves a true practical eco-psychology (see among others Roszak 1992), that means the real care for the interaction between personal well-being and welfare of the context of life (see Naccari 2012, ed.). These activities are complex, because they don't aim to a single ability or intelligence, but to the totality of the human dimensions in the interaction with the varied totality that surrounds us.

**In the specific** setting all aspects and experiences of bodily and expressive mediation (including traditional dances, and/or activities of primitive expression or of ecological movement) are appropriately integrated with one another in order to facilitate the achievement of the proposed objectives. Here I will resume only some aspects of it, for a full description of the specific methodology we should see more comprehensive studies (Naccari 2004; 2006; 2012 ed.).

**The natural** environment is the privileged interlocutor, it is intentionally considered and proposed in its dialogical potentialities as a true 'You' (Buber 1984) rather than as a simple background. Every natural element becomes a source of relational potentialities. However, this does not exclude but rather enhances, also the ability to listen to oneself. How can I listen to the silence of nature if I do not know how to be silent inside me?

**The workshops** are then proposed outdoor: in a forest or a clearing, a wood, a garden, on a lawn, on the beach, on the seashore, in different climatic conditions (hot or cold, wind, rain or snow will be part of relational stimuli); each activity will res-

onate of the specific characteristics of the site. It is not the same thing dancing in a forest or on a beach; the wood can evoke the stories about the magic people living in it, the beach probably will generate a sense of openness and closeness with the vastness of the sea. It will be very different dancing during the day, the night, the dawn or dusk, in winter or summer, under the rain, the snow or the sun rays; all these elements are intentionally part of the setting of the proposed educational experience. The landscape is not a simple device to connect movement activities; it is what gives structure, makes possible and selects what everyone involved can learn, as well as a didactic integrating background (Canevaro 1996).

**The choreographic** sequences, whether they are ethnic dances, or sequences of primitive expression, represent one of the core activities; due to symbolic-cultural themes condensed in them, they allow the dancers to get in contact with the ancient traditions, as I said before, to incorporate from them what might be evolved on a personal level. Among the ethnic dances, the sacred ones are of particular interest, because they let you experience, in a more specific and comprehensive way, the mystery present in nature as the creation (see Naccari 2015).

## Dancing beauty

All the activities, including the ethnic dances, are proposed in such a way that it is possible to perceive and experience the meaning and the beauty of the relationship between human beings and nature. In this specific setting, before and/or after the choreography, we suggest expressive

improvising activities that will allow everyone to enter personally and fully into the choreographic symbol and/or in the natural element experienced by dancing. At the beginning, there is a warm up, which is not only physical but also relational, emotional and imaginative too. At the end of the session, after a verbal sharing on the experience among the participants, the educator can have a little time to tell stories and meanings connected to everything the group has done in the workshop, on a purely cultural level, so to offer the opportunity to know more about it. In some sessions, we can also introduce the subject by telling a myth, and/or a legend, related to the topic that we intend to propose, and/or to the places where we are working.

**As Bachelard** says, we often start from an image of nature, so to interpret, inhabit and contemplate it through the body in motion. As a kind of particular 'reverie', we can propose the flow of water, the movement of the flames, the opening of the sunset, the dance of the wind, the dance of the snowflakes, the heat of the sun. Identifying ourselves with the image, which becomes, in my opinion, more intense when experienced through bodily movements, in an appropriate pedagogical framework, allows us to experience the image itself in an immersive way, so the image can enlarge the depth of life (Bachelard 1960). When we enter in the images through dancing, they become 'inexhaustible objects' and "psychotropic images". These images are beneficial, especially when they are embodied. They can induce a renewal of the joy of perceiving, a refinement of the senses (see *ibid.*), which brings us back to the intimacy with the world, an intuitive, perceptive, meditative, perhaps mystical intimacy, that finally does no longer make

us feel 'outside' of the world as rational consciousness does, but immersed in it and in its beauty. The experience thus leads us to the perception of an ontology of contemplation that is beauty, bliss, peace, gentleness, confirmation of belonging 'to the soul of the world' (see Hillman 1997), that is also unity, totality, happy immediacy, expanding security (see Bachelard 1960, 179–220). Because, in fact, "you do not see the world if you do not dream what you see" (see *ibid.* 179); and we can add: if you don't dance what you see.

**In the interaction** with the natural elements, then, we are educated, not only to the discovery of a more authentic, respectful, mysterious relationship with Mother Earth, to the sensitivity and awareness of what it represents, but also to the rediscovery of lost (or slightly enhanced) dimensions of the self and to the discovery of the harmony between human biological rhythms and terrestrial and cosmic rhythms. To feel part of the whole, without losing the sense of our own conscious individuality, can orient to the achievement of a sense of responsibility towards the Earth system.

**This is certainly** also an education of the heart (Rossi 2008), in the sense of the amplification of the horizons of consciousness, which is made of many and varied affective dimensions. All creatures, animals, plants and other beings are our brothers and sisters, and this is not only a matter of philosophy and theology, it is a matter of the heart!

**All this can** help adults find a way to a different and more ethical lifestyle, moving towards the care ability of the others that should be typical of adulthood.

## Outlines on the research methodologies and questions to develop

As I have said so far a theoretical and methodological approach emerges which, combining old and new practices, aims to reactivate in adult people attitudes and skills perhaps forgotten. They could rediscover the capacity to be responsible for and take care of the Earth system. The novelty lies essentially in the fact that it is an education through bodily and expressive mediation, made outdoor in a natural environment, centred on activities of dance and movement. Being a new methodology, there are not many empirical studies yet that investigate its positive educative effects (Naccari 2012 ed.; 2016). That is why we (as a school) are planning some action-research projects (principally activated within the school Eurinome in Perugia and at the Foro Italico University of Rome) to investigate the effectiveness of the S.A. method.

**The epistemological** paradigm, to which we refer to, is itself ecological. Taking its cue mainly from Morin's studies, it has gradually been enriched, in Italy, of specific pedagogical investigations (Baldacci 2001; Mantovani 2000; Mortari 2007; Sorzio 2005; Trincherò 2002; etc.).

**Generally**, the methodologies which we use to investigate and evaluate the educational potentialities are mainly hermeneutic and idiographic so to take care of the complexity of the involved elements. What we are mostly interested in is not the validation of this educational method (which could be quite impossible) but the transferability and corroboration of it.

**The researcher** is often the bodily mediation educator, aware of the inevitable influence that he/she plays in the explored context. We also strongly hope that the various educators involved share their interpretation and consideration of the educational process, both on the pedagogical and the research side. Some of the searching and analysis data tools are expressly created (Naccari 2011; 2012 ed.), other instruments are part of art-therapy tools (Laban 1980; Riedel 2004). We always use a specific logbook (see Naccari 2011), both to assess the pedagogical and the research process.

**Thanks to** the various experiences reported collected in our logbooks of geo-dance workshops with adults, we can consider that, usually, those who take part to this type of seminars, after the experience, report they are more attracted by natural elements and they can see more details in them than they could before. They also say they experience more pleasure than before when immersed in nature, and they can benefit from it more than before. There are also significant verbalizations about a greater sense of unity with the whole, a renewed perception of the sense of wonder, and moods ranging from a sense of renewed confidence (faith) in life, to the most varied shades of states of mind that cannot be called but mystical (see Naccari 2012 ed., 133-139).

**The issues** I would like to investigate before long are: is this renewed sense of belonging to mother earth transformed generally into a new sense of awareness and responsibility? If it is so, in what way? How is it possible to facilitate it? How can we support the adult in going from a new way of feeling to a new way of acting that is more environmentally responsible?

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