

# Review of: "Somatic Arts and Liveable Futures: (Re-) Embodying Ecological Connections"

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The paper aims to propose 'eco-somatics' as a way to deal with the gravity of news on the ecological crisis and assist in shifting perspectives towards more-than-human connections.

It is much applauded that the article applies a creative approach by guiding the reader through an experience, not just an experience of the head, but also the body. It takes the reader by the hand and guides them through a journey that engages the ecological with the somatic. This is a refreshing approach, especially in an academic paper, and therewith a welcome contribution.

That being said, the other side of the coin of this approach is that the paper reads more like a blog or a 'self-help' contribution as part of an eco-somatic community. If the paper wishes to make a theoretical contribution, this could be strengthened. This issue leans on two matters: i. the paper is rather thin in its conceptual framing, and ii. it does not seem to offer any empirical contribution.

On the conceptual framing: the key concepts are 'eco-consciousness', 'eco-somatic practices', and 'somatic arts', which are proposed to address the separation of humans from nature and the mind from the body. These concepts could be more strongly situated within their theoretical debates. This would make the contribution of the paper to those debates more convincing. For example, in section three, it states "following recent scientific discovery, I should say that *human sensing is grounded in millions of years of co-evolution* with other species of life and living systems." It does, however, not reference any of these recent scientific discoveries. The key question is "...how do the practice and study of the somatic arts help us articulate new ways of conspiring with the more-than-human which defy the global system of extractivism, consumption, and exploitation that is devastating the planet?" This question is rather large and, unfortunately, does not get conceptual underpinning or a response.

Secondly, the paper offers no empirics that support the claims that it makes, beyond the description of a workshop. But the effects of the workshop on the participants do not seem to have been studied, let alone a broader sample. There seem to be some major assumptions that are guiding the paper. For example, that the eco-somatic practices will assist those that are conducting them to alter their perspectives on more-than-human relations. The paper offers some of those practices, but without wishing to be too 'evidence-oriented', there is no clear elaboration on how the somatic exercises do or should alter these views. Also, there seems to be an assumption that by guiding readers through these exercises, their effects will become clear 'automatically'. However, the literature describing what the practices mean physiologically,

psychologically, or even spiritually, is not offered. This is not to say that all somatic practices need 'Western scientific evidence', but as a reader, I would expect elaboration on the types of knowledge or the traditional wisdom that the practices build on, and how they have been or are of assistance to those they are practiced by. At present, the author seems to ask us to believe their use at face value.

This brings me to another matter: the paper does not make reference to ancient embodied practices that are relational to nature and the environment, that are present up until this day, specifically in Indigenous cultures. This risks the paper looking more Western-centric than it probably aims to be. Also, there is little or no reference to authors from the Global South who are part of a rich body of knowledge on embodied wisdom and nature. The author states that there is a *recent* rise of interest in the somatic arts, which is really just the case in the West.

Lastly, a minor remark: the reference to the plastic waste during COVID-times seems a bit random. The state of the planet that Antonio Guterres refers to has a myriad of causes and is specifically linked to the climate and biodiversity crises that predate COVID and that plastic is just one element of. Also, there are many more (positive as well as negative) environmental effects of COVID lockdowns.

Given these caveats, I cannot grant the paper a higher rating than two stars at the moment. I do sincerely hope, though, that the author will address the issues listed above, as the topic it addresses and the contribution it could potentially make would be very welcome.