

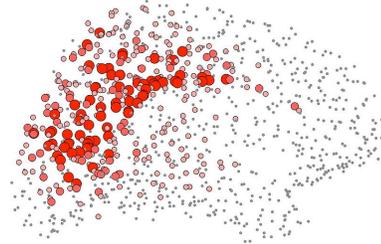
Back to the Roots (13)



Humankind has developed incredibly complex intellectual, cultural, physical, and technological artifacts over the years. This has put a wide chasm between our present status and our "roots" — closer to nature, closer to the source and sustenance of our lives. In cities and in other areas around the world many of humankind's "roots" are barely visible. In the U.S. only 2% of rural inhabitants are engaged in farming. Going Back to the Roots is not intended to be a nostalgic trip: discovering, cultivating and building on our "radical center" can be a wellspring for creative preparations for the future. "There are unanticipated benefits to collective and individual well-being with the reconnection to the natural world" according to Peggy Barlett. Thinking holistically we can imagine and create new opportunities for reconnecting with our roots that have unexpected benefits: "A community garden in New York City may replace an abandoned lot and come to be a social focus for many who live nearby." Barlett again: "Community gardens not only provide nutritious food and conviviality with neighbors, but can build a different sense of self through a new awareness of growing cycles, weather and human agency." Barlett presents "several layers of connections to nature" including knowledge; emerging emotional attachment; purposeful action; new personal choices and ethical action and commitments to political action.

Written by Douglas Schuler

Demystification and Reenchantment (14)



For vast numbers of people, virtually every social, political, economic, and technological system has become mystifying in its complexity. On the other hand, some of humankind's most deep-seated mysteries have become disenchanting in the sense of no longer conveying profound meaning and connection with other people and the natural world. This reduces political discourse to a battle of special interests, allows the marketplace to dominate in the determination of value, and limits the creativity and energy available to address fundamental challenges.

This pattern addresses the ethical application of communications systems, processes, and tools to clearly distinguish that which is conditionally unknown — gaps in understanding or perception that can be addressed by gaining new knowledge, skills, or experience — and that which is essentially unknowable as the source of profound mystery and fascination. The intent is to convey meaning in a way that invites, encourages, and supports free and unfettered engagement in the human enterprise.

Written by Ken Gillgren

Translation (15)



People who speak different languages cannot understand each other without benefit of translation. A related problem, which may be more insidious, arises when two or more people think they're speaking the same language when they're not. This pattern applies in any situation where two or more languages are employed. Here "language" is applied broadly. For example, with global climate change looming, scientists must be able to engage in two-way conversations with the public effectively; social scientists must be able to do the same if their work is to have relevance and resonance. Translation takes place when any two worlds of discourse are bridged. "Languages," furthermore, are of various types, in addition to what we usually think of — English, Japanese, or Hindi, for example. Some people seem to speak only "Technical" or "Post Modern Academician" which can be incomprehensible from outside those cultures. Finally, there is often an implied "pecking order" in which one language (and its speakers) are viewed as dominant or more important while other languages (and its speakers) are devalued and bear an unequal share of the burden of understanding. Think about the critical role of translation and, if possible, become a translator — or at least when the need arises where you can help bridge a gap of understanding.

Written by Douglas Schuler

Linguistic Diversity (16)



Over the last century, many of the world's languages have disappeared. When a language is lost, part of the world's knowledge and culture is also lost. Beyond the losses incurred thus far the trend is increasing as languages such as English, Spanish, and Swahili are displacing languages that are less prominent in the world media and language sphere. Losing humankind's Linguistic Diversity diminishes our collective ability to perceive and think about the world in a holistic, multi-faceted and rich way. It may be that our everyday familiarity with language prevents us from understanding that "...any language is a supreme achievement of a uniquely human collective genius, as divine and endless a mystery as a living organism," as Michael Krauss reminds us. Linguistic Diversity can be thought as analogous to biological diversity. Krauss asks, "Should we mourn the loss of Eyak or Ubykh any less than the loss of the panda or California condor?" Due to their particular knowledge and expertise, linguists are often at the forefront of the struggle for Linguistic Diversity. Although linguists are helping to develop methods to archive linguistic resources, non-linguists have important roles to play. All of us need to become aware of humankind's diminishing Linguistic Diversity and work to preserve and enhance it.

Written by Douglas Schuler