

ECOVOCALITY

This report presents some of the key themes from the “Ecovocality” workshop, organized by Mirmica Association (Milan), Fundacja Nurt (Warsaw), and Centro di Ricerca Interdisciplinare sulla Voce (Bologna), co-funded by European Union, and facilitated by Francesco Venturi in collaboration with Nieszka Bogusławska, which took place in Warsaw between 23-27 February 2025.

The workshop explored the intersection of ecological thinking and voice education, offering perspectives on the relational nature of both vocality and inclusion. Themes explored in this report include: communication as a dynamic exchange requiring vulnerability and courage, learning as an integrative process operating at both personal and collective levels, teaching as a balance of structure and spontaneity, and learning environments as nervous system regulators. These themes invite continued exploration of how ecological awareness can inform more accessible educational practices.

The report organizes a collection of anonymized ideas, observations, and insights shared during the sessions in the following five sections: 1) Fundamental connections; 2) Sensory communication; 3) Learning processes; 4) Teaching forms; 5) Learning environment design.

“I cannot separate ecology from inclusion”: Fundamental connections

The workshop explored how ecological thinking and inclusive practices are fundamentally connected. Ecology here isn’t just about the environment but about relationships—“working with ecology as the fact that we are always in a relationship.” The concept of “eco” expands to mean “making sense” in terms of being “part of” something, creating a “dialogue”. Rather than focusing on returning to “nature,” the emphasis is on “coming back to relation.”

Inclusion emerges as a dynamic practice rather than a static state, requiring “a constant relationship in which who holds the space is able to hear what is coming.” When considering neurodiversity, we identified a common challenge: “The problem is when something is too much and then you cut it. Either you cut people. Or you cut materials.” The workshop challenged “a culture of cutting yourself away” and instead proposed “empowering through what’s already there.”

“Motor out so you can sensor in, sensor in so you can motor out”: Sensory communication

Communication in inclusive settings follows a rhythmic pattern of expression and reception. The “vocal perspective” helps because “you hear and speak,” creating a dynamic exchange that extends to the environment: “You are with the environment and it’s a dialogue so it’s vocal.” An insight is the need to “tune in to the frequencies that are not heard and to include them and respond,” bringing marginalized voices “back into the dialogue.” This requires asking “Who is affecting whom?” and attempting to “Hear what cannot be heard.”

The workshop grounded abstract concepts in physical experience. The principle that “increase friction: more sound, reduce friction: less sound” provides a tangible metaphor for how resistance generates sound. We explored how “Breathing does not produce sound, it is me taking the decision,” distinguishing between automatic processes and conscious choice. The practice invited the group to transcend individual boundaries and form new connections.

“Three levels: embodiment, morphogenesis, and education”: Learning processes

The workshop proposed a bottom-up model where learning begins with bodily experience, develops through formative processes, and culminates in educational critique. We explored “a tension in the learning process between personal integration and group integration,” acknowledging that integration operates at both individual and collective levels.

A balanced approach emerged where “Both reality should change and creating resources to deal with the reality that there is.” The goal is not escape but connection: “It is not about stepping out from reality and entering an extra reality but to create bridges.” Understanding group dynamics requires attention to “Balance of in and out. Who’s giving the input? Who’s following?” Yet “Balance is not strict and equal”—healthy dynamics involve fluid rather than rigid distribution of roles.

The question of somatic interest “What’s happening?” was identified as “the deepest input to go into the exploration,” emphasizing present-moment awareness. The workshop explored how safety begins with “Opening up needs in people,” followed by “Hearing those needs and holding a space in a way that is predictable.” A key insight was the equation “Structured is predictable, predictable is secure, and secure is inclusive.”

“Being there for the time the group needs”: Teaching forms

Facilitation requires presence and patience—giving processes the time they need to unfold. It involves “Listening to the group and responding in improvisation,” balancing structure with spontaneity. Teaching style matters—“How you use the voice, how you are sophisticated and knowledgeable.” A key insight: “If you propose something, I want to know what to do with it, and if we didn’t do anything I feel that’s missing a link.”

The workshop highlighted the value of both structured learning and playful exploration, acknowledging “the importance of knowledge versus play and the full scale in-between.” An observation: “Playfulness is sometimes missing from somatic education.” Yet “Playful qualities brings a lot of space for integration.” The workshop challenged authoritarian teaching models while encouraging teachers to ask “The ‘what’s not mine?’ question” to distinguish between personal agendas and what serves the learners.

Once again, the importance of “balance” emerged: “Listen to your own curiosity and what you want to transmit and not only what the group resonates with.” Inclusion requires courage—“including somebody, a creature, requires a shift” and “inner courage to feel differently and meet with something outside of your nervous system.” At its heart, “It takes curiosity to be inclusive.”

“Allow frontal cortex to let go”: Learning environment design

The workshop explored how learning environments affect the nervous system. Creating conditions where the analytical mind can relax is “good for regulation.” “Sounds can be strong stimuli” that can either overwhelm or engage. The workshop emphasized active participation: “include people in the work with sounds, help them access that dimension, more than just listen.”

The rhythmic alternation “Receive and motor out and receive and motor out” creates regulatory patterns that are “good for the nervous system.” The workshop explored “the learning environment as a transitional space”—a safe intermediate area where play and exploration can occur. An intriguing insight: “The fact that something is not clear can help finding connection in a relational perspective.” Temporary ambiguity can foster collaboration as people work together to make meaning. The workshop acknowledged that “making sense of the meaning of something will take place no matter if it was made explicit”—meaning-making occurs with or without external input.

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