Langscape is an extension of the voice of Terralingua. It supports our mission by educating the minds and hearts about the importance and value of biocultural diversity.

We aim to promote a paradigm shift by illustrating biocultural diversity through scientific and traditional knowledge, within an appealing sensory context of articles, stories and art.

ABOUT THE COVER PHOTOS

Front: An age-old work of purpose, art and of unintended infamous consequence, the living bridges stand testament to the unique interaction between people and nature in Meghalaya, India. Over hundreds of years, locals have engaged in the practice of taking the young roots of two Ficus elastica (rubber fig) trees and intertwining them over a river (using the aid of bamboo) to form a natural bridge. This particular bridge is found in the village of Mawlynnong, which also once held the esteemed title of ‘Asia’s Cleanest Village’.

Photo: Raynold Lyngdoh, 2009

Back: Coastal community’s rendezvous with their destiny. Fishermen at Valiathura beach, Kerala, India, are getting ready for their daily fish catch, while other community members enjoy the evening beauty of the beach.

Photo: Robert Panippilla, 2013

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# Table of Contents

## Contributors .................................. 5

## Editorial ........................................... 8

## Ideas

The Course of Heaven and Earth: 
*The Biocultural Diversity of Space & Time*  
Kierin Mackenzie ........................................ 12

Free-Flow:  
*Why Cultural Diversity Matters for Healthy Rivers*  
David Groenfeldt ........................................... 15

## Reflections

Wild Waters:  
*Landscapes of Language*  
Dawn Wink .................................................. 19

In the Land of the River-Mirrors:  
*Dialogues Around “Bee-cultural” Diversity*  
Juan Manuel Rosso Londoño  
and Walter Gabriel Estrada Ramírez .............. 23

## Dispatches I

Culturally-Mediated Disturbance:  
*Building a Bridge Between Knowledge Systems to Conserve Biocultural Diversity in New Guinea*  
William Thomas ........................................... 29

Traditional Treasure:  
*Local Knowledge for Climate Change Adaptation in Bangukuk Taík, Nicaragua*  
Marie Besses and Martina Luger ...................... 34

Marine Biodiversity and Cultural Diversity in the Coastal Communities of Trivandrum, Kerala, India:  
*Educational Implications*  
Lisba Yesudas and Johnson Jament .............. 39
Louder Than Words I
In the Abode of the Clouds: Biocultural Diversity of Meghalaya, India
Raynold Lyngdoh .......................................................... 44

Dispatches II
Unity in Diversity: A Case Study of Intercultural Education in Tanzania
Jennie Harvey ................................................................. 48

Place Names and Storytelling: Balancing the Opportunities and Challenges of Sharing Biocultural Knowledge Through the Geoweb
Jon Corbett, Christine Schreyer, and Nicole Gordon ........................................... 53

Action
Towards an Ecology of Diversity: Fostering Intercultural & Environmental Diversity in a Post-Secondary Education Environment
Derik Joseph and Shannon Kelly .................. 57

Irony as Inspiration: From Academic Research to Community Action in Protecting Biocultural Landscapes
Kelly Bannister and George Nicholas ....... 62

“Buen Vivir”: Learnings from Indigenous Worldviews on Biocultural Diversity
Katherine Zavala ............................................................... 68

Louder Than Words II
TEKS: Promoting and Safeguarding Biocultural Diversity Through the Arts in Northern Vanuatu
Text by Delly Roy and Thomas Dick
Photos by Cristina Panicali and Sarah Doyle, with contributions by Ham Maurice Joel, Augustin Leasley, and Len Jacob Tafau ...... 73
Kelly Bannister
Kelly is Co-director of the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance at the Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria. Her background is in ethnobiology and her focus is ecological governance and applied research ethics, particularly ethical and legal issues in research involving biodiversity, Indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage.

Marie Besses
Marie is a French engineer volunteering for blueEnergy in Nicaragua. She works in the climate change department, leading field investigations, analyzing data, and disseminating the results of this current project in educational, information, and social media. Her particular fields of interest are sustainable development and agro-ecology.

Jon Corbett
Jon is a map geek, an Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan campus, and the director of the Spatial Information for Community Engagement lab. All aspects of his research include a core community element: the research is of tangible benefit for the communities with whom he works and that those communities feel a strong sense of ownership over the research process.

Thomas Dick
Thomas is the founder and current chairman of Further Arts, an NGO based in Port Vila, Vanuatu that works with local communities on arts and cultural projects. Further Arts’ main objective is to empower Ni-Vanuatu to develop long-term social and commercial enterprises in the industries of creative arts, agriculture, and communications that are culturally, socially, environmentally and financially sustainable.

Sarah Doyle
Sarah is manager and a photographer of Further Arts’ Nesar Studio in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The word “nesar” (from one of the vernacular languages of Vanuatu) refers to the place where all custom ceremonies and dances are performed. It also refers to an area where chiefs, mothers, and youth can meet to discuss village affairs. It’s the area where the traditional arts are carried out.

Nicole Gordon
Nicole Skaay Dóó.oo, is a Taku River Tlingit First Nation citizen from Atlin, British Columbia. She is from the Yan Yeidi clan. Her grandparents are Evelyn and Sylvester Jack. Nicole was raised in Atlin and has a 13-year-old daughter, Evelyn. Nicole has worked for her nation since 2000 and is the Manager of the Lands and Resources department, a position she has held since 2009.

David Groenfeldt
David is Director of the Water-Culture Institute, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. His work focuses on the values and ethics embedded in water policies and practices. He is coordinating a global initiative to develop a “water ethics charter” (waterethics.org), and is also applying the concept to local watersheds planning.

Jennie Harvey
Jennie holds an MSc in Ethnobotany and is working toward her PhD. Her current research investigates the social-ecological history of forest gardens on Mt. Kilimanjaro, Tanzania. She is also working with the Vancouver-based Forager Foundation to create an educational garden at Noonkodin Secondary School, Tanzania, in collaboration with Aang Serian, a Tanzanian organization now registered as a British Charity under the name Serian UK.
Johnson Jament
Johnson hails from the Trivandrum coastal community, Kerala, India. He holds a PhD degree, and is a lecturer at the University of Northampton’s MA Education program in Bangalore, India. He also is the Director of Venad Education & Social Services (VESS), which aims to improve educational opportunities and protect biocultural diversity of coastal communities.

Zaa Derik Gammel Joseph
Zaa Derik is Advisor, Aboriginal Services, at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT). He was born in Victoria and raised in the Tl’azt’en Nation Territory and Vancouver. His motivation as an educator comes from his upbringing around the value of life-long learning. As a father recently completing his Master’s, he can easily relate to the challenges of balancing work, school, and family for students of diverse backgrounds and needs. His role as an Advisor is to provide a safe and productive environment for students, make on- and off-campus resources available, and provide opportunities to give back through initiatives such as the Peer Mentoring program, which he piloted.

Shannon Kelly
Shannon is Program Head, Communication Dept., British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT). Her research posits that it is less important to ask, “Why isn’t a particular group or population represented?”, and more important to ask, “How can our systems—the systems we operate in and the systems we teach—be more inviting to diversity?” With her current research project on paradigms of sustainability and citizenship, Shannon continues along the decade-long path since completing her doctorate at Waterloo in 2002 and arriving at BCIT—a journey to encourage diversity in our student and professional demographics.

Juan Manuel Rosso Londoño
Juan Rosso Londoño, when he isn’t a practicing father and husband, works as an independent researcher and professional, almost always with bees buzzing around. He has a PhD in entomology from University of São Paulo in Brazil, and has worked in research, education, and “development” projects related to rural, environmental, and sociocultural matters.

Martina Luger
Martina is an Austrian ecologist and climate change consultant. She works with blueEnergy and the Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University in Nicaragua, through the Austrian NGO Horizont3000. She is dedicated to promoting investigation and monitoring of climate change issues and to capacity building related to climate change adaptation.

Raynold Lyndoh
Raynold is a Khasi tribal from Meghalaya, India. As a sociologist, sports enthusiast, and someone educated in a multicultural environment, his faith lies in the concept of “unity in diversity”. He and his wife, an ethnobotanist from North Dakota, USA, are making plans to travel the world to champion indigenous seed-saving practices.

Kierin Mackenzie
Kierin was born in British Columbia. Most of his family still lives there. He has travelled and worked on several continents, and sees biological and cultural diversity as the true treasures of the world. He is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Canterbury, Aotearoa/New Zealand.

George Nicholas
George is a professor of Archaeology at Simon Fraser University, and Director of the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. His research focuses on Indigenous peoples, archaeology and associated intellectual property issues, and human ecology of wetlands.

Cristina Panicali
Cristina is a prize-winning freelance photographer based in Italy. She has been traveling through Europe, Asia, Africa, and Oceania to tell photo stories on socio-cultural and environmental issues. In 2012 – 2013 she was in Vanuatu to document the “Music Bridges” project, a music and culture exchange among musicians from Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.
Walter Gabriel Estrada Ramírez

Walter belongs to the Siriano ethnic group from the Colombian Vaupés. Currently he is studying for a degree in biology at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá. He has done researched within his community about traditional knowledge of stingless bees and has experience in ornithology and botany.

Delly Roy

Delly is a visual artist and cultural fieldworker based in Luganville, Espiritu Santo Island. She works with rural and remote communities on cultural and artistic initiatives through her project TEKS. She has gained recognition for TEKS at local and national levels, and continues to expand its international network of cultural artists and professionals.

Christine Schreyer

Christine is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan campus, and an official groupie of the Taku Kwaan Dancers from Atlin, British Columbia. She has worked with members of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation since 2005, when she began a research project with the community about the relationship between Tlingit land, language, and identity as part of her doctoral degree.

William H. Thomas

Bill is Director of the New Jersey School of Conservation at Monclair State University in New Jersey, USA. He has conducted research in Papua New Guinea since 1988. He has developed a “Forest Stewards” program to conserve New Guinea’s wild lands. UNESCO has recognized his work as a “Best Practice”.

Dawn Wink

Dawn is a writer and educator whose work explores the beauty and tensions of language, culture, and place. Author of Meadowlark, Teaching Passionately: What’s Love Got To Do With It? (with Joan Wink) and “Raven’s Time: Critical Literacy in the American Southwest,” Dawn is Director and Associate Professor of the Department of Education at Santa Fe Community College, and lives with her family in Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA.

Lisba Yesudas

Lisba is a member of the Trivandrum coastal community, Kerala, India, and a PhD student at the University of Kerala Department of Oriental Studies. She was a Malayalam Guest Lecturer at St. Xavier’s College, Thumba. She has published books and journal articles in the regional language of Kerala.

Katherine Zavala

Katherine has been with the US-based organization IDEX since 2005. She is passionate about amplifying global learnings from IDEX Partners with the US public, particularly in relation to food sovereignty. In 2005, Katherine volunteered with an indigenous-women-led organization in Guatemala and earned a Master’s in International Relations from San Francisco State University.
TEKS: Promoting & Safeguarding Biocultural Diversity Through the Arts in Northern Vanuatu

Text by Delly Roy and Thomas Dick, Photos by Cristina Panicali and Sarah Doyle, with contributions by Ham Maurice Joel, Augustin Leasley, and Len Jacob Tafau

Traditional: Habits and ways built over the years that are flexible and change in relation to new circumstances and situations

Entertainment: An opportunity for the people to express and adjust, to adapt, safeguard kastom music and acts using contemporary arts in the face of overwhelming foreign influences

Kastom (custom): Practices that bind people together in relation to the land, their leaders, and the environment

Support: Using appropriate tools to promote and support positive kastom and traditional practices in ways that are respectful of our people

In the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu there are over 130 different languages spoken. With its population of approximately 263,000, this means Vanuatu has the highest rate of per capita linguistic diversity on the planet. For many people in Vanuatu, one of these languages is the first language that they learn from their mother. These languages—and the knowledge and practices that they represent and articulate—are important expressions of cultural diversity. As the cash economy penetrates deeper and deeper into the islands of Vanuatu, communities are identifying the need for alternative, locally based approaches to the promotion and preservation of important traditional wisdom practices including dances, music, songs, stories, and connecting these with contemporary music and dance.

One of the ways that communities in Vanuatu are responding is through the Traditional Entertainment and Kastom Support (TEKS) unit of Further Arts—a local NGO working with communities on arts and cultural projects. Delly Roy, an indigenous woman of Vanuatu and Kiribati descent, founded TEKS in 2011. Delly conceived TEKS to provide space and equal opportunity for traditional performers to express and showcase their artistic talents in a local cultural festival on Espiritu Santo Island in northern Vanuatu. At the same time, TEKS also provides support to practitioners of kastom and those communities that safeguard its values.

Delly speaks fluent English, French and the local creole Bislama (the lingua franca of Vanuatu) in addition to her father’s vernacular language, Mwerlap. She says: “I feel that I understand enough about diverse Vanuatu cultures and that I have a reasonable understanding of many foreign cultures. I created TEKS as a unit to serve as a bridge between the different conceptual worlds.”

TEKS supports a range of traditional wisdom practices such as dances, music, songs, stories, carving, weaving, painting, drawing, and fabric art. There are two principal ways that TEKS engages with communities to support these activities: firstly, by assisting village groups to organize and host Mini Arts Festivals (MAFs); and secondly, by documenting these MAFs through co-produced audiovisual content in vernacular languages.

Delly explains that her “idea is that if each culture can understand or at the very least acknowledge each other, a platform can be set for mutual respect” TEKS aspires to be there to facilitate that platform and foster the connections.

At the time of preparing this photo essay (March 2015), Vanuatu was severely hit by a tropical cyclone, which affected more than seventy percent of the population through the destruction of ninety percent of homes, gardens and infrastructure. Many people were left without adequate shelter, food, and safe drinking water. The Further Arts office was completely destroyed along with most of the equipment in it. Without the office facility to provide stability to TEKS, its work with communities, local youth, artists and musicians is unlikely to continue. All the communities TEKS works with are in the process of rebuilding their lives but need as much support as possible to restore healthy cultural and lifestyle practices. People wishing to donate for the reconstruction of Further Arts and TEKS initiatives can do so at http://rebuilding.furtherarts.org/.

The full 35-picture version of this photo essay is available as a member-only feature on the Langscape website.
Further Reading


Further Arts YouTube Channel (n.d). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/user/furtherarts


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The 21st century cannot be a repeat of the destruction of the 20th. We need to find ways to limit the damages wreaked by current globalizing forces, and to return healthy conditions back to areas that have been damaged. Humanity as a whole has centuries of experience in making mistakes, and correcting them via observation, humility, and making room for other species.

-Kierin Mackenzie

The sense of responsible citizenship is built on the cognitive knowledge of the consequences of our actions, but at the same time is equally about the deepest sense of caring – not only for the health, beauty, and sustainability of our communities, but also for our relationships with the planet, Nature, and our fellow humans.

-Derik Joseph and Shannon Kelly