

TOWARDS A NEW SOIL AWARENESS – EDUCATIONAL TOOLS FOR USE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Abstract. *The Earth is facing serious trouble due to human-induced soil degradation. Does the notion we have of soil influence the way we treat it?*

To explore peoples' notions of soil, workshops involving 170 individuals (age 8-70) in 9 various groups from 3 Western countries were conducted. In order to capture what might be embedded or intuitive knowledge or images of soil, participants were asked to draw their impression of soil. The drawings varied from explicit anthropocentric focus to symbolic or holistic expressions. Viewed together, the drawings revealed an enormous variety of aspects connected to soil. The variety of elements opened up discussions on soil health issues and contributed to broaden the understanding of soils' diverse and very complex properties. The workshops also revealed a serious lack of understanding of vital soil functions. Extended soil awareness is therefore badly needed. Useful educational programmes on soil already exist, but programmes explicitly emphasising the notion of soil as a living, life-giving substance and based on a holistic view, need to be developed. Such programmes must also stress that taking care of soil is a common responsibility.



Fig. "Soil is a living community" and "Soil is the farmer's capital". How two participants drew and explained their images of soil when exploring their personal "notion of soil".

The workshop, in addition to other "living soil" activities, has been further developed and used in Norwegian schools in mid Norway as an introduction to the theme of sustainable soil management.