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Edited by
ERVIN LASZLO

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Sustainable Futures**

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Alejandro Sánchez Vigil**

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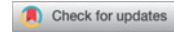
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INTERWOVEN STORIES: OUR PATH OF CREATIVITY AND POETRY NAMED THE ECODIALOGUE CENTER

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The history of organizations and collectives is something alive. It is a network of memories, actions, collaborations, dreams, encounters, and disconnections that live within each of its members. The EcoDialogue Center is an academic space of the University of Veracruz for promoting dialogue between disciplines. In this article we are presenting the stories, both personal and collective, and the values and ideals that create our Center. We are using this opportunity to reflect on the cultural, geographical, emotional, intellectual, and societal conditions that have allowed this innovative process within the rules and customs of a university.

KEYWORDS: Bioregion, healing, community, co-creation, complexity, ancestral cosmovision

How can we tell the story of our EcoDialogue Center without diminishing it? How shall we express this path that has been unfolding itself through a co-intelligence that has given coherence and meaning to our dreams and undertakings?¹

The creative forms from which the Center originated gradually acquired coherence and purpose. Through dialogue and personal and collective learning, these stories remain alive and vibrant.

The EcoDialogue Center existed before its official founding as an institution within the university, before our place and working spaces were filled with “reality.” Here, where our blood and our dreams have been realized, it continues to develop in fertile soil. It is a world where nascence weaves the possibility of being and loving.

In this living story, each of us interweaves the need for new/old forms of educating, making a community, cultivating Mother Earth, sharing learning and knowledge, more and more freely and creatively. Thus, complex knowledge, as a part of living knowledge, expresses itself in this co-intelligence. It is in this sea of emotions and sentiments that our love, our labor, and our efforts as human beings come to fruition. The “Community of Living and Learning” has become a participative space in which to learn and to create a sustainable future.

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Telling the story of the Center is a delicate and painstaking task not unlike the work of weavers. Prior to starting their work at the loom, they had to sow cotton and harvest it at the right time. They also selected the flowers, plants and minerals with which to prepare the colors for dyeing the threads. Eventually, knots and stitches are woven to create the cloth that both covers and protects those who wear it.

In this narrative, various moments, circumstances, and events are interwoven. The first step is to locate *the site*: the territory that gave birth to this initiative. It is the state of Veracruz, its capital city Xalapa, and the University of Veracruz. Personal and collective experiences that give meaning articulate the emergence of the EcoDialogue Center.

OUR LAND: VERACRUZ, GREEN AND MULTICULTURAL

Recollecting the essence of a territory, a city and a fertile site are central to the Center's story. It is situated in a place where it is possible to cultivate a "relational," flexible, and expressive attitude toward knowledge. It is necessary for the development of systemic, complex, and transdisciplinary thinking, as well as for the implementation of a project to transgress prevailing academic practices.

Veracruz is the deep green of the jungle. It is the tender green of pasture land, the emerald green of the ocean, and green in all of its infinite forms and temperatures. It is a sort of green that influences our hearing and thinking, while drawing close and enveloping all the beings that live within its shores.

Veracruz is well known for its biodiverse landscapes and its cultural diversity. The state of Veracruz is limited by a shoreline of 800 kilometers along the Gulf of Mexico and contains a great mountain range, the Eastern Sierra Madre. There, it is crowned by the highest summit in the nation: The Peak of Orizaba (or *Citlaltepetl*, which in *nahuatl* means "Star Mountain") with an altitude of 5,610 meters above sea level. There are 41 rivers with a total length of 1,118 kilometers, a land almost completely full of water and moisture. Within this relatively small territory, surprisingly diverse tropical forests, mountain forests of conifers, desert tablelands, and eternal snows exist.

Three cultures originated Veracruz. Considered the "mother culture," the Olmecs left vestiges in the southern region more than 3,000 years old in Meso-America. The Totonacs, in the central regions, appeared about 2,000 years ago. Finally, the Huastecs existed 1,500 years ago in the north. Presently, various indigenous groups native to Veracruz continue practicing their ancient customs and knowledge, while developing those acquired in modern life. The Spanish and African cultures have also contributed firm roots to our cultural and historical tree. This is noticeable in our ways of speaking, eating, dancing, making music, as well as in the diverse aspects of everyday life.

The University of Veracruz came into being 70 years ago, in Xalapa, the capital city of Veracruz.² This city is noted for its love of art and culture. It is this love of beauty, knowledge, and cosmopolitan life, that the nature of Veracruz and its inhabitants is revealed. These are also reasons why people have been attracted to life in Veracruz. Xalapa also houses the National Institute of Ecology, an institution

dedicated to research and teaching about the country's natural resources. Situated on a mountainside at about 1,500 meters above sea level, in the transition zone between cloud forest and tropical jungle, Veracruz can experience all climates within the same day. This constantly changing weather requires one to be alert and prepared for sudden changes, which can feel extreme due to the high humidity.

BEGINNINGS AND FOUNDATION

Toward the end of the 1990s, those of us who make up the present-day EcoDialogue Center were experiencing a profound crisis, not only as academics, students, and teachers, but also as human beings. We were living in a world plagued with anguish, fear, and egocentricity that imposed its consumption-centered rhythms and lifestyles. Inspired by Enrique Vargas from the University of Veracruz and the Institute of Ecology, a group of academics found ourselves in profound reflection concerning the ways and means of producing knowledge. We felt a powerful need to initiate the reconstruction of bridges based on a dialogue involving the different "ways" of understanding and investigating the world from within the academy. This led us to question the famous, tragic, and abysmal divorce between the humanities and the sciences—both social and natural.

As a result, the year 2000 bore witness to a number of encounters involving informal conversations accompanied by coffee, beer, and Mexican snacks. The intention was to set up periodic talks centered on dialogue of knowledge coming from academic, vernacular, poetic, and other sources. In March of the following year, Enrique Vargas convened the Group for Dialogue between the Social and Natural Sciences, with the Garden of Sculptures in Xalapa as its meeting site. Our power of convocation proved to be astonishing, as the first meeting was attended by more than 50 academics and other people interested in a free and creative dialogue around topics that interested all of us. Our "academic collectivity" grew faster than our rationally ordered thoughts. By the third monthly meeting, we named ourselves *Ludic*³ Group. We met at "La Tasca," a famous bar that had been founded 20 years earlier by a group of artists and bohemians from Xalapa.

For six years, while cradled by Enrique Vargas, we would meet every month with a previously selected reading to reflect on and to share our ideas and our drinks. It was also a place to laugh and to dream of a better world in a ludic space for philosophy. We would read poetry, classical and postmodern philosophy, mythology, decolonial politics, anarchism, the crisis of rationalism, ancestral knowledge, deep ecology, eco-feminism, and Western, Eastern, and American mysticism, among others. Through these ludic explorations, we attempted to free ourselves from the need to defend the academic ego, positions, and ideologies. We were allowed to feel both fear and enjoyment at this "loss of certainties," as Edgar Morin called the path of thinking the complexity of life from our "human condition" (2003).

Out of this beautifully open, creative, and fruitful meeting space inhabited by our profound conversations around poetry and liberty, there emerged the proposal to form a better or organized and more formal community of learning. We then decided to organize a *Permanent Seminar* parallel to the *Ludic Group* in order to

deal with the topic of thought and complex systems. In this contemplative group, we proposed to deal with the problems facing humanity at the beginning of the 21st century. From the standpoint of the sciences of complexity, while considering the necessity for renewed academic and social efforts, we contemplated these areas within an inclusive and creative vision.

In a context enriched by several years of readings, conversation, debates, and reflection, Enrique Vargas designed and convoked a “Deep Ecology Workshop” conceived as a project for life and for alternative and transformative learning.

The workshop consisted of 13 monthly sessions during which dozens of invited friends participated in somatic eco-pedagogical experiences. They shared those spaces of alternative living that went beyond modernity, capitalist markets, and money as the dictator of our lives. This, in turn, opened up the possibility of rescuing ancestral bioregional and vernacular knowledge, of joining them to new forms of knowledge that include a participative and pagan spirituality, and imagining a solidary economy and the emergence of multiple communities of learning.

The perspectives of thought, of the togetherness and the dialogue of knowledge, articulated with an attitude of profound social and political commitment, of profound social ecology, engendered a small group of human beings determined to re-invent their forms of social and labor-related participation.

During January and February 2004, we attended a course in *Complex Thought* at the Institute of Economic and Social Research of the University of Veracruz given by Raul Domingo Motta, Argentine philosopher and representative of the Itinerant Professorship “Edgar Morin” of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This event deepened our knowledge of the poetic and philosophical tradition of Europe, in particular that of France, its most renowned figure at present being Edgar Morin. The dozens of books written by this philosopher (unfortunately, only a few have been translated into English), particularly a series in six volumes titled *The Method*, provide us with a systemic reflection regarding knowledge, science, and philosophy from the view point of complex thought, with a focus that proposes a way out of disciplinary isolation. The author also urges us to recognize our central role as observers in the process of knowing.

From that time, we (Enrique Vargas and Domingo Adame) began to delineate an academic project based on complex and systemic thought, and dialogue of knowledge from a intercultural and transdisciplinary perspective. This gave rise to a proposal called “Ritual Ecopoiesis,” which was signed by academics from diverse areas of the University of Veracruz, as well as by relatives, artists, and friends, and other members of the community. The project proposed the creation of a Community of Learning aimed at opening our creativity and our thought toward a poetization, looking back to Mother Earth, and to ancestral tradition. Through poiesis, play, and ritual, our academic task freed itself from the confines of disciplinary boundaries and the prejudice of conventional science, where the body, movement, personal and collective creativity are regarded as excesses that distract us from knowledge.

Soon, the project became our fundamental lifetime activity, transforming us from our disciplines and tasks as academics into promoters and facilitators of transformational processes involving pedagogy, organization, and relearning directed toward professional praxis and knowledge for the creation of personal and communitarian sustainability. This we call our ecopoietic and transdisciplinary labor.

The activity of Ritual Ecopoiesis was created and nurtured by various elements and practices associated with the ancestral traditions existing in Meso-American territory, with somatic education and knowledge, with the philosophy and practices of deep ecology, among others. Thus, we approached the wisdom of our traditions through several ritual activities: the Huichol vigil rituals; the ritual dances of the Toltec tradition, such as oriental disciplines chi-kung and yoga; and physical bio-energetic practices and somatic education, like the Feldenkrais method. We also organized workshops in Gestalt psychology in which we dealt with the problems of masculinity and femininity within the context of patriarchal culture. By means of all these practices, those of us participating in the collective Ecopoiesis Ritual opened up to our “emotioning” and to self-knowledge processes in order to discover, heal, and to accompany us in our search for equilibrium from the physical to the emotional and spiritual planes.

Those were years of intense reflection, practices and transformation. The consolidation of a group of people included students, professors, artists, and friends who participated enthusiastically in the activities we would later form as “the shire.”

CONSTRUCTING THE AXES: BODY, BIOREGIONALISM, AND DIALOGUE OF KNOWLEDGE

In the beginning it was the body...

The first academic fruit from these practices and processes was our participation in the “First Mexican Encounter on Complex Thought and the Planetarization of Humanity,” which took place in the city of Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico, at the end of November, 2004.⁴ In this event we (Lety Bravo, Cristina Núñez, Domingo Adame, and Enrique Vargas) offered the workshop, “Ritual Eco-Poiesis: Personal/Communal Empowerment and Somatic Knowledge.” We integrated the most significant ideas and practices we had shared throughout that year. Consisting of three 4-hour sessions, the workshop was designed to deal with the challenge of knowing from a complex decolonial-transdisciplinary perspective. Through its practices and activities, which included the somatic, ritual, playing, and deep ecology as its fundamental tenet it suggested that the complexity of learning and knowing cannot be constructed without the body, which is the scenario for the physical–emotional–mental–spiritual articulation of our being and knowing. By means of this workshop we propose creating processes of somatic sensitization and personal transformation directed as an ecology of knowledge thru which the emotions,

poetics, corporal expression, and connection with the environment would occupy their place as a foundation for the emergence of planetary consciousness.

The workshop was held at the beautiful Botanical Garden of Culiacan, and ideal setting for our work. Presenting the workshop in the congress was a grand experience for us and for the more than 80 professors who attended it. They expressed, with words of joy, the feeling of transcendence when sensitizing their bodies, souls, and spirits and of reliving/recalling their communicative experience with the environment, something we have discovered that gives us back our essence of “being human.”

Since that moment, ritual ecopoiesis has maintained its held conviction that this path offers us a viable possibility of transforming education into one of sustainability and humanization through profound and re-integrating reflections and experiences.

THE ACCOMPANIMENT ...

Parallel to this academic project, we began work in the field of bioregionalism.⁵ The Ocelotl Bio-Regional Market had recently been created by Elisa Blanchet, Miguel Escalona, and Enrique Vargas in the building occupied by our University Radio. Here was a space where small producers in the region could gather on Sundays to advertise their products. The news of this was sent out to the university and general public, so that the community could purchase products healthful and friendly to Mother Earth. At the same time, the intention was to lend support to the small regional producers who had been developing products, mainly in isolation. Now, for the first time, we were organized for the creation of a place in which to interchange our products, experiences, and knowledge. This was another way of re-learning, while being committed to the daily practice of balanced and sustainable living producing and consuming foods free of chemicals harmful to our bodies and to nature.

Soon thereafter, we (Lety Bravo, Manuel Gómez, Paul Doherty, and Enrique Vargas) founded the bioregional market “La Pitaya” in Zoncuantla, a small suburban community between Xalapa and Coatepec. Our families live in this community. They are largely dedicated to the land and to art and are mostly university academics and biologists who share this ecological vision.

This market was first installed in the patio of Enrique’s house and was later moved to an area for selling coffee. For more than five and a half years, we were offering a diversity of farm and garden products from our lands, with the intention of gradually increasing the supply so as to help the families of consumers in obtaining healthful nourishment free of chemicals and transgenic products; in addition we could count on the presence of the producers as well as their energy and know-how.

Through these efforts we seek to promote bioregionalism as a way of life that procures the recuperation of our sense of belonging to nature and to our communal surroundings, a way that fosters our responsibility and our capacity of adaptation to specific local eco-systems, of regaining the need to re-inhabit our own

bioregions and territories in order to further the transformation toward sustainable human society (Wahl, 2004).

At the same time, we expanded our dialogue of knowledge with the ancestral traditions of Meso-America, which became a source of spiritual food and knowledge in our practices and our re-learning process. We also continued building our *shire* or community with a diversity of persons from the university as well as from society or from the “tradition.” We were able to incorporate ritual Aztec-Chichimeca dances into our common property through the teaching of Ricardo, a Temaztiani (master/guide) of this ritual art. These practices generously nourished our shire during its early years. Learning from a masculine perspective was balanced by Laura Montoya, who also visited our city regularly for more than two years to share with us this same wisdom. Practices are now tinted by this re-emergence of feminine glances and tenderness sorely lacking in the traditional knowledge of our ancestral peoples. Once a month, Ricardo and Laura would travel from Mexico City to Xalapa to teach us rituals, dances, songs, ways to light a fire, cook, to handle plants with care. We also learned to connect ourselves with traditional knowledge, to understand how the masculine and feminine energies complement each other, among several other subtleties of the Meso-American cosmovision of life and social organization. Our dialogue with these ancestral practices and knowledge, which are still alive in Mexico, has been essential for building a new perspective of education: that it stop being imprisoned in a cult of Euro-centered rationality and open itself to other forms and systems of knowing that are highly relevant in the formation of an abiding humanity capable of creating a good life for the beings that constitute it.

LUDENS: THE TOPIC ... OF SERIOUS PLAY

How could we avoid emphasizing, in this account, the central role of playing and experiencing play in our processes of knowing, of community creation, and re-learning?

Homo sapiens and *Homo ludens*: play is always present; it persists and unfolds in the life of human beings; it is the door of access into the poetic state and the source of our creative life (Morin, 2003). By entering it in this project, the experience of playing has shown us that through play we can access forms of profound togetherness, as well as a greater proximity to the process of obtaining human knowledge through direct experience (Maturana & Verden-Zöllner, 2007). Through playing we have relearned the art of living together and becoming a community. In this way, we have built a community of learning and working.⁶

As we mentioned above, the first experience in this sense was that of the *Ludic Group*. As we shared the joy of knowing through reflection and collective feedback, the theoretical and epistemological discussions became a festive conviviality. Participants cultivated a feeling of communion through which a community of learning was brought into being. Going to “La Tasca” bar every month to participate in our gathering of philosophic reflection was almost like attending a party where we shared books by poets, philosophers, therapists, scientists, and mystics. This was our first experience in a community of learning.

Other ludic activities have also formed a central part of our process. For example, attending festivities in other places helps to uncover the idiosyncrasy present in the culture of the fiesta and forms of amusement. We traveled several times to the port of Veracruz, a city near Xalapa characterized as being festive, sensual, and light hearted. While there, we playfully set up the “ecopoiesis jarocho,” which consisted in collectively exploring the knowledge, pleasures, and details of living in the interstices of old Veracruz City. We lived out this ludic experience by trying to re-create and incorporate our little community in an attempt to help us relieve tensions and improve relations. After a tasty “lechero,” the typical coffee with milk in Veracruz port, we went to dance at the “Rincón de la Trova,” an old place for Cuban music situated in the city center. We danced all night long, and finished merrily with a little dance from the Toltec tradition—the Dance of the Sun, so as to welcome the new day right on the beach. Despite no rest, an incredible energy moved us throughout that night and much of the next morning until we reached Xalapa. Those were times of great enthusiasm and companionship that compelled us to accomplish this and all the other activities that we did in those beginnings.

THE DIALOGUE OF KNOWLEDGE

During this first stage of the exploration and opening breaches in this pathway, we organized in 2005 the Dialogue of Knowledge Symposium.⁷

This encounter gave us the opportunity of sharing our knowledge, practices, and reflections within a privileged place where we were able to include dialoguing with Nature: the Tixtla Ranch, located in the rain forest.⁸ Our intention was to facilitate a gathering for dialoguing, celebrating, and ritual. This is how practices of holarchy, sustainability, and respect for others could be focused on. During the event we attempted to practice the Deep Dialogue (Bohm, 1996) around questions concerning the planetary crisis and the need to break down the walls erected between academic and other kinds of knowledge existing in society.

This event was attended by about 50 persons: University professors and students from the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM), from the University of Earth, Oaxaca, and the National Politecnico. It also included performers of the Toltec Dancing Tradition, male and female elders of this living culture, doctors of traditional medicine from the southern part of our state, “decimeros” (a person who writes or improvises *décima*: a style of poetry that is octosyllabic and has 10 lines) of jarocho music from Tlacotalpan (a small jewel of Caribbean population by the edge of the Papaloapan river to the south of Veracruz port), musicians, artists, nongovernmental organizations, and friends.

The Dialogue lasted four days, during which we slept in tents, organized ourselves for preparing the meals, and formed circles for sharing our words and our knowledge. As if to open our encounter, Mother Nature showed us her own way of “dialoguing” during the first night by means of a torrential downpour with an impressive display of lightning and thunder. It was like a passing ritual where Nature let us feel her power and her forceful presence. Profound communication among the participants took place in all areas of the encounter, particularly regarding the organization of the various aspects of community life. For prepar-

ing our meals in the kitchen, we established systemic practices that included and equilibrium between the sexes. Similarly, we performed the activities of cleaning, using the bathrooms, and composting. Thus, all participants shared in the chores of washing dishes, preparing meals, serving tables, and cleaning bathrooms. In this holarchical practice we learned through our bodies, which enabled us to realize how easy it can be to communicate by doing.

Various circles were organized for reflection and dialogue that centered on topics relating to the planetary, crisis, knowledge, eco-pedagogy, and sustainability. The elders of tradition shared with us their rituals of healing and of connecting with mother Nature, such as the Dance of the Earth in which only women participate, as men contributed their energy from outside. There were also temazcal baths, cleansing with medicinal plants, perfuming (with smoke or vapor), and massages. The convergence of dialogue through multiple traditional and everyday knowledge and academic knowledge, showed us the challenge of finding sustainable ways of living within the context of this event. This gave us the opportunity to enrich our perspective and to create a dialogue of knowledge—one of the fundamental tenets of our university project.

CONSOLIDATING THE PROJECT

Conceived through the search for new paths to knowledge and sustainable living with profound significance, this project began to demand more and more of our time and attention, gradually becoming our focus. Consequently, we proposed the need of creating an academic project in which those of us who were involved could all join.

The name of our project, the *Experiential Center for Eco-Literacy and Dialogue of Knowledge* (EcoDialogue), emerged from the exploration we carried out by means of the Appreciative Inquiry Methodology (Elliot, 1999). We were able to recognize and define our objectives, goals, and dreams, and to create our images in order to articulate them and co-produce a hierarchical tree to graphically represent these goals.

We searched for information about different educational centers in the world, about diverse universities that might already be working in this way. These were useful references for proposing our project on the basis of how EcoDialogue Center would exist within the University of Veracruz. After seemingly endless meetings, we drew up a proposal for the purpose of procuring a space within the University Campus of Xalapa. Fortunately, we received positive response from the university authorities. They showed their support for this project by granting us an area of 10,000 square meters, and some financial resources to start installing the necessary infrastructure. It seems worth mentioning here that the site of our settlement was an area that had originally been intended for the development of innovative projects.

SYSTEMIC CO-DESIGN

Once the territory on which to establish the EcoDialogue Center had been granted at Xalapa, we undertook the process of designing it within our community, and dialoguing with the environment in order to establish the use of space within the

10,000 sq. meters of land. We sought to determine the construction that would be needed.

The methodology of co-designing begins with the creation of the ideal image of the system to be created, in this case the EcoDialogue Center. This image rests on the values and the spirit of alternative education for sustainability that we proposed to create. These were expressed through plastic images, as well as short phrases like the following: “A place to sow tomorrow’s seeds”; “Symphony of beings playing a dream of earth and love”; “The *shire* that grows and nourishes the earth”; “Space for learning and sowing”; “Create a world where one can really live”; “Today’s compassion has killed yesterday’s wrath, although today’s wrath is destructively compassionate”; and “The house of equilibrium where we create, share and practice new and old crafts, experiences and lives.”

From this set of images and in accordance with the methodology, the scopes of action and the specifications of our project emerged. Thus, it was determined that the EcoDialogue Center would direct its activities to impact distinct areas of global society. Its projects and specific academic actions would be directed toward the university community and the bioregion. In this sense, we returned to the idea: *Act locally, think globally*.

We began by building the Temazcal: a collective ritual steam bath characteristic of ancient Mexico. It was what the community first needed in order for the group to feel cohesion with the place and with Earth. For this task we invited Manuel, an active member of the Sun Dance tradition and companion from the bioregional market “La Pitaya” to guide us in this work. The edification of the Temazcal took into account the bearings of the rising sun, while a number of bamboo sticks needed for criss-crossing should be concordant with certain stellar constellations. Upon finishing the work of construction, we inaugurated the Temazcal with a corresponding ritual. Those who so desired took a bath in it, and enjoyed the feeling of relief and self-knowledge that always comes with it. This is another ritual that we have been practicing and offering to others, as it constitutes an experience that integrates the spiritual dimension with the other dimensions of the embodied being: physical, emotional, and mental.

We then built a roof under which we imparted the first educative experiences offered to the students enrolled in different licenciates of the university. Later, we built “La Palapa,” an octagonal structure of wood designed by the architect Alberto Robledo, with the carpentry firm “Sequoia” being in charge of its construction with resources from the university. Last, two dry latrines designed for composting by the carpenter Emiliano Pérez were built.

Based on notions of bioregionalism, transdisciplinarity, and deep ecology, our infrastructure has grown little by little. The office was built with traditional vernacular materials found in the region and with economic resources from Enrique Vargas and Antonio Gómez.⁹ Recently, the construction of a multi-use room was completed was originally planned as a space for the practice and dialogue of culinary knowledge.

We attempted to assume constructive practices with the notion of proportionality between the human and the natural, upon which Ivan Illich invited us to reflect. Therefore, we have become integrated with the area and performing actions in accord with the images from our systemic co-design for which we solicit institu-

tional economic support. At the same time, we take care to preserve the natural spaces necessary for our dialogue with the environment.

EDUCATIVE EXPERIENCE

Within the context of the educational model for the licentiate in the University of Veracruz, one of our first educational activities was offering courses to students from all areas of knowledge, who would be able to obtain the credits they need for their curricula. Up to now we have offered several educative experiences: (a) Complex thought and transdisciplinarity: the crisis of rationalistic knowledge; (b) Art, poetry and knowledge; (c) Self-cure of addictions. Recently, the experience of “The body and cognition” has been taught at the Veracruz Campus and continues to be in Xalapa.

Our educational work and linking approach have been enriched by the Master of Transdisciplinary Studies for Sustainability.¹⁰ This educational proposal is aimed toward the eco-formation of investigators and professionals of all disciplines of knowledge who are interested in generating a reflexive and creative practice for the construction of sustainable futures.

The multidisciplinary origins of the master’s program, from both teachers and students, fosters an ongoing dialogue between the different areas of knowledge giving content to our transdisciplinary academic practice. Likewise, through our MA program, we are generating participatory action research processes from the decolonial, systemic and transdisciplinary perspective in rural communities in our bioregion.

As part of our participatory action research and cooperative inquiry we are addressing problems associated with issues of femininity–masculinity, eco-technologies, and creativity.

Our original source of work and our vision were conceived in those practices that gave us a constant reconnecting with the environment and ourselves. It also encouraged dialogue in an attempt to transcend the conventional hierarchical ways of organization within our community work that grows and changes continually.

NOTES

1. In the text presented here, we attempt to share the stories of our experience through a personal and collective narrative, resorting to emotions, sentiments, and an almost genre description of that which agglutinates us, unites us and has given meaning to our years of life in an academic collective. For this reason, the narration sometimes comes from a single voice, at others from the three of us, and when possible from a chorus attempting to reflect the memory of the collective whole. Consequently, we suggest that the reader regard this text from a profoundly humanistic angle, without expecting formal theorizations or argumentations, but rather the feelings, smells, memories, textures, and other experiential aspects that give body to the history of a community. As an antecedent to this text, we also suggest referring to the article titled “Contemplative Dialogue as the basis of Transdisciplinary Attitude: Ecoliteracy towards an Education for Human Sustainability,” which accompanies the present article in this special issue of *World Futures*, dedicated to our EcoDialogue Center. Said text enters, both theoretically and philosophically, into the fundamentals of all that we describe herein, with the corresponding bibliographical citations.
2. This university occupies second place regarding the number of students enrolled, being exceeded in this respect only by the National University of Mexico. Initially located in the city of Xalapa, it

was decentralized in the 1970s, which made it possible to create five campuses in different parts of the state. Being in the “capital city,” the Xalapa campus continues to enjoy certain privileges, such as offering the most bachelorships and postgraduate degrees, concentrating the most researchers and a strong editorial staff, besides containing an Area of Arts renowned as being the first of its kind in the nation and in Latin America.

3. Relating to, or characterized by play; playful, ludic behavior.
4. Participants: Enrique Vargas Madrazo from the Institute of Biological Research, María Cristina Núñez Madrazo from the Faculty of Sociology, Domingo Adame from the Faculty of Drama, Leticia Bravo Reyes from the Faculty of Dancing, all within the University of Veracruz. But who are we? Why do we perform the Ecopoiesis Ritual? Our story in common is that of performing a routine of daily disciplines that kept us dissatisfied, submerged in isolation from the world and its problems. We were unable to share enjoyment and to create freely. All of which saddened our existence. Thus it happened that a theatrical researcher, a biochemist, an anthropologist and a dancing instructor entered into a lucid and chaotic conversation several years ago. Interlacing molecules, tissues, habits, wiles, leaps, intonations, notes, rhythms, stagings, peasant migrations, thermal imbalance, and so on has been a strange experience. Creating places for dialoguing where we could fit in and be received has not been an easy task. Little by little we have become more willing to renounce our “terminological jargon” and our exclusive routine practices in order to realize that our models only explain ideas and closed observations. Traveling this road has taken us through profound and unsuspected internal sojourns that have enabled us to become aware of the demons and spiritual entities that inhabit our souls. On the other hand, the present human and planetary agony is something that worries and moves us deeply. Leaving behind the sterility of erudite knowledge and of academic and intellectual praxis has become a passionate desire among us. In this way, we have not only broken through the barriers between disciplines and areas of knowledge, but we have opened ourselves to the dialogue of knowledge, to drink in that transcendental space of infinite wisdom that exists in vernacular and traditional knowledge, a space of inspiration guarding a local, pertinent and humble planetary know-how. Thus, it is that our need to reconstruct our thinking, knowing, and doing has led us to transdisciplinary reflection and far beyond. We have set out along the road of poetic poiesis leading to places and processes where human problems can be dealt with from a position of real liberty to create and to move without any attachment to dogmas or admonitions about academic “good manners.”
5. Enrique Vargas promoting the Ocelotl market and Leticia Bravo growing organic coffee.
6. In the article called “Experiencing the Mastership in Transdisciplinary Studies for Sustainability” in this issue, the place for play and creativity in the transdisciplinary re-learning processes is approached in the postgraduate program at the EcoDialogue Center.
7. In May 2005, by the initiative of Tania Romo, Enrique Vargas’s doctorate student.
8. This ranch is located at the foothill of the mountain called Cofre de Perote (Naucanpantepetl, in nahuatl. “Four sided hill”), which is taken care of by Leticia Bravo.
9. Engineer that is developing an investigation about the application of electromagnetism in human health, he collaborates in the MA program that is imparted at the EcoDialogue Center.
10. Taught at the EcoDialogue Center since 2008.

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