

# EXPERIENCING THE MASTERSHIP IN TRANSDISCIPLINARY STUDIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY\*

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## Abstract

We describe the experience of the Transdisciplinary Re-Learning Process in our Education Postgraduate Program in the Veracruzana University. We emphasize the main processes of the ecoformation experience for sustainability through the transdisciplinarity methodology that is focused on three processes: a) Transdisciplinary Re-learning; b) Eco-literacy; c) Dialogue of Knowledge. The experience of self-knowledge, as an axis in the process, is described through the specific re-learning practices that has been carried out with the first generation of students. In the paper we also describe the central strategies for creating our *Learning Community* through holarchy practices, profound dialog and self-organization process. Finally we raise three notions: creativity, spirituality and play as central in our transdisciplinary re-learning process and how they are expressed and they nurture our *Learning Community*. Creativity appears as a potentiality to those who activate, practice and cultivate it from any area of knowledge; spirituality as an intrinsic pulsation to our nature that enables one to accede to a sensitive and respectful attitude of serving, attentive to both individual and collective needs, to the internal and the external. Playing, from a broader perspective, as a way of relating to oneself, one's neighbor, the community and the universe in general.

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*We have committed ourselves with humanity on a planetary level in the essential task for life: that of resisting death. Bringing civilization and solidarity to the Earth to transform mankind into truth human beings becomes the fundamental and global objective of all education, aspiring not only to progress but to the very survival of mankind. The awareness of our humanity in this planetary era should lead us to experience reciprocal solidarity and compassion for one another, for each and everyone. Education in the future should teach the ethics of planetary comprehension.*

*Edgar Morin*

## Introduction

As a part of the academic activities at the EcoDialogue Station, in the year 2008 we started this postgraduate program for the purpose of formalizing a process of eco-formation and transdisciplinarity within the Veracruzana University. With this intention, we proceed to organize a multi-disciplinary group of professors-researchers from different areas of learning: the arts, humanities, and social and biological sciences; with these we took on the task of setting up this area for eco-formation. The mastership program proposes the formation of professionals who, from a transdisciplinary perspective, will direct their efforts toward creating process of self-organization and alternatives for development<sup>i</sup> in communities and organizations. It seeks to establish connections with Alternative Social Creativity, that is, with the social praxis of resistance and transformation that individuals as social groups are constantly creating in order to contend with the crisis generated by the process of globalization and the

destruction of cultural diversity. Its theoretical and epistemological foundations are based on systemic thought, the biology of knowing, complex thinking and the ancestral philosophic traditions of the peoples<sup>ii</sup>.

The pedagogical proposal of the Program is focused on three processes: a) Transdisciplinary Re-learning; b) Eco-literacy; c) Dialogue of Knowledge.

By Transdisciplinary Re-learning<sup>iii</sup> we mean the process of learning and of transforming the individual so that he/she will remain permanently to questioning and to a reflexive dialog within different levels of the organization of Reality, by these means approaching the paradoxes of complexity from the logic of the included third (Morin, 1981; Nicolescu, 2002; 2008). The foregoing implies a process of epistemological awareness, which means permanent attention, awareness and openness toward the relationship of knowledge (Bateson, 1993; 1987).

As for the process of Eco-literacy, these should reinforce Transdisciplinary Re-Learning by directing the attention toward sustainability, first of all by fostering a general ecological consciousness, that is, recognizing that we form part of the whole. Having sustainability as an axis means directing the learning process toward an unavoidable commitment to life and its preservation, to health, harmony, balance, totality and diversity as qualities to be applied to human beings as well as to natural systems. This commitment is based on a sense of the sacredness of life that expresses itself as love, nourishment, creativity, fantasy, hope and justice (Orr, 1992, p.133). Thus, the ecologizing of the life of every person and every community becomes a process of learning for and about life, with no distinction between learning and living.

The Dialogue for Knowledge brings into contact with the immense arsenal of knowledge, wisdom, and the traditional and vernacular experience that are present in

people's lives at a local level, and which contain the creative capacity for contending with and finding solutions for the diverse expressions of planetary complexity. In this way, intuitive knowledge, sacred notions, the holistic principle, the myth, oral tradition, etc., are sources of nourishment that enable the transdisciplinary professional to co-create a pertinent and practical dialog with the processes that emerge from the organization of society at different levels.

### **Cultivating the Attention: The Experience of Self-Knowledge**

*Cultivating the attention* constitutes one of the fundamental axes of the Transdisciplinary Re-learning Process. One of the foundations of so-called epistemological awareness is precisely the development of the attention, that is, the full presence of the person. The program of the mastership seeks to strengthen this quality, among others, with three highly significant educative experiences: the Feldenkrais Workshop, the Self-knowledge Workshop and Eco-horticultural work. Each and all of these aspire to imbue the *co-apprentice*<sup>iv</sup> with the feeling of the experience, encouraging him/her to recognize his/her own fragmentation and to open his/her levels of perception.

Working on the cultivation of attention in oneself and in the environment through these experiences is not an easy task when we come to understand that experiencing is a matter of combining zest, emotion, sensation, perception, reasoning and integration into one single and unique moment - *this one*. Therefore, translating the experience into words necessarily reduces its significance by encapsulating it in concepts.

The fiber that connects the Feldenkrais method with Self-knowledge and with Eco-horticulture is the articulative integrity of the Embodied Being. Constant practice of the Feldenkrais has enabled many of us to maintain the equilibrium and harmony

needed in order to enjoy physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health in life. The corporeal work is often done while lying on a wooden floor, thus allowing the body to relax. This method makes it possible to contact our bodily weight and flexibility, and to become aware that the physical body occupies a dimension in time and space, here and now. At the end of each session, there emerges an energy that revitalizes the body and calms the mind.

In order to achieve self-consciousness through movement, Moshe Feldenkrais (1972), the creator of the method, recommends, “halting the mind” while doing the exercise. The facilitator of the Workshop, María de los Angeles Anaya, suggests doing the movements with ease and attention so that they do not become mechanical. The guideline that connects the Feldenkrais method with the Self-knowledge workshop is precisely the cultivation of attention. Antonio Gomez Yepes, the person in charge, asserts that *the muscle of attention can be developed; attention is the quintessence of our contact with our impressions, be they sensorial, visual, auditory or otherwise*. In this sense, transdisciplinary relearning resembles being born again, becoming a child again, returning to that state of complete grace, full of innocence without the intervention of obligatoriness.

This experience helped us to recognize beliefs and identifications, to relearn how to develop our cognitive abilities and to become aware of the possibility of relating ourselves to a living universe. By contacting our mechanization through questions, dynamics and bodily exercises practiced in the workshop, we come to recognize the importance we bestow on the mind for evaluating experience. Our mind is so important that we call it “I”, that is, we identify with our ideas, concepts, beliefs, assumptions, judgments, etc. We become aware of having lost our capacity for astonishment and contact with emotion, but above all, we become conscious that we are living life by

memory and not by savoring, in other words, by that ability to open up our senses to what *we are becoming* and living in this moment. Who am I? In answer we refer to our names, our personality and our academic degrees; rarely do we establish contact with the experience of perceiving our physical body with its sensations and emotions.

To summarize, this experience enables us to develop the *internal observer* so that we can relearn how to be in contact with what we are, what we feel, what we perceive and how we perceive it, what we think, what we smell, hear and taste. This way of being present can lead us to live the experience of life to its full depth, to contact the experience of that which is sacred, to experience our relations with ourselves and our environment. Training the attention to unite emotion and reason with the Embodied Being creates a different state of awareness that enables us to grasp both wisdom and beauty in just a few moments.

As transdisciplinary researchers we need to become aware of what is ours in a community, of what we are to achieve as facilitators of systemic processes within the context of research-action. Transdisciplinary systemic facilitation is obligated to develop an epistemological awareness devoid of the paternalistic and colonizing attitude that is present in many forms of social interventionism, with little success, in order to generate alternatives that are coherent with sustainability. We propose to be facilitators of the emergence of new processes, knowledge styles and creativity that are latent in communities and individuals.

Finally, the fiber of the earth appears, giving color to the context of movement and attention. The connecting guideline is sensitivity: feeling Mother Earth, sometimes dry and sometimes wet, sometimes hard and other times very soft depending on our moment with her; seeing her green and later yellow, smelling the dew that emanates

when you moisten her and water your crops, listening to the sounds of the birds in the place you cultivate and savoring its fruits: all of this is a wonderful gift from what we call *being present*.

By working with Eco-horticulture we relearn that everything in life has a process and that the earth breathes, transforms and communicates herself, having her own vital rhythms. The history of the area presently occupied by our school constitutes a good metaphor regarding the meaning of the relearning process to which we have committed ourselves. When we arrived here, the land was covered/invaded by undergrowth used for feeding cattle, African star grass, which obstructs the growth of other plants. Pulling this weed out by the roots, which were deeply and firmly embedded, resembles the process of relinquishing our own habits of learning and knowing which also are deeply rooted, not in the soil, but in the beliefs, assumptions, judgments, values, etc. of our cultural mold.

One of the activities in this workshop has consisted in turning over the soil, making beds and fertilizing with compost produced in the garden itself. Then, the act of sowing and watering the seeds gives a feeling of the care we should take in every movement and every word, but above all it connects us with the responsibility of being on this Earth, to take care of it and not to destroy it. As a result, we obtain the rewarding experience of harvesting and savoring the scallions, carrots, parsley, coriander, radishes, potatoes, chayote, fennel, sugarcane and, of course, corn. This careful and attentive relationship with the earth, her rhythms and her fruits, offers us the possibility of experiencing gratitude, the instantaneous gift; of discovering the potentiality of the intuition by exercising the attention, of lighting the fire within our Being with every act in order to nourish our care.

### **The Learning Community: Holarchy, Dialog and Self-Organization**

In parallel to the processes of self-knowledge, we are setting up the *Learning Community*<sup>v</sup>. Community not as something given, but rather as a result that is obtained by means of dialog and co-participation. During the development of the educative program, we have conceived the community as a space for upbringing, feedback and collaboration to create a feeling for healing and re-learning, a place of containment and care. Starting from the experience centered on the embodied being, the pedagogical processes through which this community has been brought into existence have been diverse, focusing on the humanistic, intellectual and cognitive transformation of all the participants. By sharing our emotions, *linguaging and emotioning* Humberto Maturana would say, we integrate and allow ourselves to make room for confidence and intimacy<sup>vi</sup>. It is in such settings that we have witnessed the emergence of processes of significant learning for life; it is there that living knowledge surges forth, i.e., the appropriation of concepts, notions and experiences that facilitate the auto-generation of a process of transformation in areas of learning filled with love, wisdom and feeling for a sustainable life.

Within the context of an epistemological break with the old forms of conceiving the process of knowing, the learning community becomes indispensable in order to contend with the anguish of abandoning certainties and facing the challenge of building knowledge/praxis from a starting point of complexity and uncertainty. It is this kind of situation that may enable the participants to develop the possibility of opening themselves to questioning, which is a basic condition of transdisciplinary re-learning, as we have mentioned previously. In order for the question to arise, it is necessary to discover an interest that is always accompanied by an emotion, that is, a personal motivation that emerges and resounds in the learning community.

The central characteristics of the transdisciplinary attitude: aperture, tolerance and rigor, have been cultivated in the *dialog circles*, in which the learning community has elaborated its communication processes. Rigor in language: learning to listen to ourselves and to others, learning to be careful of our words and to recognize the significance of silence, learning to find one's correct place before the Other<sup>vii6</sup>. Aperture implies accepting the unknown, the unexpected, the unforeseeable; aperture to new levels of perception and aperture toward other levels of reality. It implies giving birth to a new manner of thinking, focused not on the answers but on the question (Nicolescu, 2002). Tolerance that results from recognizing the right of others to entertain ideas and truths contrary to our own with a sense of empathy permits us to transcend the action resulting from dualistic oppositions and antagonisms toward *evolutionary* levels of action, inclusive and not exclusive.

In the mastership program, the dialog and the circle, as metaphors of an holarchic organization, have been ideal strategies to facilitate the processes of transdisciplinary relearning, for which it is necessary to break with the conventional hierarchies and stereotypes of education. In this sense we are proposing a pedagogical act which, in the context of the circle, questions *de facto* the conventional hierarchy regarding the figure of the professor -possessed with knowledge, wisdom and power-. In the circle of learning, all the participants occupy the same spatial position and all have visual contact with the others. This is a way of reflecting in practice, in the pedagogical act itself, the underlying intention of breaking with the conventional relations of power by designating the professor as *co-learner* and the student as *co-apprentice*. The co-learner is distinguished from the co-apprentice, not for his/her knowledge, but for having the responsibility of guiding the process, of facilitating the intervals and experiences conducive to significant learning.

In contrast with the forms of evaluation used in conventional systems, here we are generating collective feedback processes, in which self-evaluation is amplified towards eco-evaluation, a systemic evaluation process, in other words, towards collective sharing, where each individual confronts the self-perception of his/her own performance, employing criteria of presence, quality, participation and commitment to the process of transdisciplinary relearning. In the *circles of self-eco-evaluation*, we are breaking with the hierarchic and linear forms of evaluation, where the professor measures the amount of information accumulated by the student in the educative act. Here, we do not try to measure or to test the student's knowledge; instead, the object is to generate a reflexive, open, participative and self-managing process to be applied to the performance of each individual and of the collectivity as a whole, a process in which not only the co-apprentices are evaluated, but also the co-learners within the communitarian process itself. In the *circle of self-eco-evaluation*, each one reflects upon his/her own process of relearning; thus, this dynamic contributes to the process of significant creative learning that we are striving to achieve.

In contrast to the individual methods used to generate research processes in most programs of higher education, we are attempting to generate a collective process of transdisciplinary research through the notion of accompaniment. In this way, the work of research-action occurs within a collective process of reflection, where all of us are co-participants in each of the individual investigations. In these investigative experiences, the object is to transcend the separation of thought from action and to incorporate the personal and community dimensions into the process. Likewise, "The object is to exercise faculties for approaching reality that involve the domains of intuition, creation and improvisation, in the sense of ambivalence and ambiguity in regard to the unknown... The spirit of creation is at the heart of existential research-

action, since we cannot be sure of what will happen.” (Barbier 2008: 6-9). In this sense, the group of accompaniment is the space containing the uncertainty and the promotion of creative imagination before the investigative process.

### **Creativity expressed in community**

*Forming a single whole with everything that lives means that virtue abandons its rigorous armor and human intelligence its scepter, and that all thoughts are erased in the presence of this universe which is eternally one, just as the laws that fetter the artist`s genius vanish before Urania means that inexorable Destiny renounces its sovereignty, that Death breaks the pact that has joined it to all beings, and that indissoluble union and eternal youth embellish the world.*

Friedrich Hölderlin

In consistency with the efforts that generally stimulate the collectivity of the Eco-Dialogue Station, in the mastership we undertake actions leading to the personal experience of relearning what it means to live in community and all the minutiae that go with it, such as reaching decisions and agreements by consensus, assuming individual and group levels of commitment, becoming conscious of the need to maintain a balance of forces between women and men, between reflection and experience. From the beginning, therefore, we have procured to incentive moments of self-revision that allow us to cultivate an attentive and responsible awareness.

Said moments are resources of support for the difficult art of sustaining conscious attention. A particular instance is the experience we call *Journeys of Profound Dialogue*, inspired explicitly by the proposals of David Bohm, Jiddu

Krishnamurti, Linda Ellinor and others. Instead of starting a dialog with a specific purpose, in them we observe how it unfolds from our thoughts and reactions, from the assumptions we drag with us from our personal histories, that is, somehow we become witnesses to our habitual ways of reacting and thinking. Regarding this, Bohm says: “A dialog can take place not only between two but among any number of persons, in fact, if it is done in the right spirit, one can enter into a dialog with oneself. The image provided by this etymology (of dialoguing) suggests the existence of a meaningful current flowing among, within and through those implicated in it” (1997: 29-30).

How do we conceive knowledge, that is, how do we give birth to it? The moment we pose the question about this word, a multitude of ways of relating to the world immediately crowd around the door and we become aware that there is more than one way of knowing. Those other ways of knowing offer us extensive worlds to explore. One principle of the mastership has been to regard both teaching and learning as a diamond with many facets. In the words of Basarab Nicolescu, “Learning to know also means being capable of establishing *bridges* –between the different disciplines and meanings and our interior capacities. This transdisciplinary approach will be an indispensable complement to the disciplinary approach, because it will mean the emergence of continually connected beings who are able to adapt themselves to the changing exigencies of professional life, and who are endowed with a permanent flexibility that is always oriented toward the actualization of their interior abilities.”(2002: 133). Let us discuss some of the worlds and knowledge forms that have played a relevant role in our academic activity: creativity, spirituality and playing.

*Creativity* appears as a potentiality to those who activate, practice and cultivate it from any area of knowledge (the physical-mathematical, biological or administrative-economic sciences, the humanities or the arts). It offers an enrichment and an aperture

comparable to the moment when a plant finally blooms and its aroma and the color of its petals enhance its beauty; that was what our ancestors in Anahuac referred to in the chanting or florid speech used among them. The Nahuatl expression *in ixtli, in yollotl* - a face, a heart<sup>viii</sup>-, acquires special importance when speaking about the artist's occupation: "To become a creator, like the ancient Toltecs, one must first be a complete man: owner of a face, owner of a heart" (Leon-Portilla, 1995: 433). Toltecs are those who feel themselves committed to the preservation of the culture inherited from their ancestral grandparents, something that is extended to all scopes of human activity; creativity also has a place in the working day of a farmer, a fisherman or a housewife: vocations, domestic technologies, knowledge of skills transmitted from generation to generation. Through the coexistence of different cognitive approaches and diverse modes of expressing the creative act, an enrichment of individual visions takes place, new levels of knowledge and new forms of relating ourselves to the world emerge: this is the collective and participative knowledge built up through a respectful and critical effort of articulation. For this, comparative and connective resources, contrasts, dialog and personal experience enter the game.

In an effort to develop the distinct states of creativity with which we are endowed, we underline the constant awareness that we have proposed to maintain in order to confront the habitual practices which frequently become obstacles to efficiency, e.g., when we find ourselves declaring that only a chosen few are destined to become creative; when we fail to recognize our advances in an attempt to convince ourselves of our own impotence; when we devaluate the capabilities of children or the qualities of adults that keep us in contact with childish imagination (such as curiosity and innocence, for example). We have become astonished at ourselves upon losing our fear of ridicule, for at the same time we learn to trust and to offer security. Respectful

affectivity becomes our protective covering. Here we have one of the reasons why we believe in the necessity of questioning our learning habits. Some of the questions posed by Ivan Illich seem unavoidable: “ What should teaching be like? Will people continue regarding it as a service -or merchandise- that can be produced and consumed more efficiently if the pertinent institutional arrangements are made? Or should we undertake only those reforms that protect the autonomy of the students, their personal initiative to decide what is to be learned and their inalienable right to learn what they like, rather than learning something that will prove to be useful to another?” (Illich 1977:10).

*Spirituality*, which we customarily associate with the scope of religions, mysticism, myth and ritual, has much to contribute to the resources of cognition; here we regard it as a pulsation intrinsic to our nature that enables one to accede to a sensitive and respectful attitude of serving, attentive to both individual and collective needs, to the internal and the external. It is not only a thing of human relevancy but an emerging need of the present: “Reality reduced to the subject has produced traditional society, which has been demolished by modernity. Reality reduced to the object leads to totalitarian systems. Reality reduced to the sacred leads to fanaticism and religious integrism. A viable society can only be one in which the three facets of Reality coexist in a state of equilibrium” (Nicolescu 2009: 56). In our academic effort, particularly, spirituality is directly related with the work, done in company and rigorous in the designing of proposals, in the praxis or in implementing projects, as well as in the use of holarchic and polyphonic resources for the processes of ecologized learning.

Within our community it is only natural for each member to assign distinct meanings to spirituality, spiritualism, spirit and related words. Beyond this, I feel sure that we share the perception of one and the same spirit that floats equally above each of us, that makes itself present whenever the community returns to gather every day,

perhaps like a book that comes to life the moment it is opened. Thus considered, spirituality turns out to be that lovely secret that keeps to itself but, paradoxically, is well understood by everyone. At this moment I can imagine the dance with perfect cadences and synchronization exhibited by a school of shiny fish in the ocean, or a flock of murmuring doves in the sky. And what is more, as we saw in the previous chapter, this sentiment is not just to be kept as a pretty adornment in our discourses; it must incarnate, stay on the ground, and this can occur at various levels. On one hand, there is my constant intention of being conscious of my own being and my present becoming; on the other, it means to practice listening to the rhythms of life while working with the earth, the plants and the animals; and finally, to maintain in our conversations with others a state of communication that is attentive, interested and disposed to growth. We do not seek to levitate; on the contrary, we desire to immerse our hands and feet completely in the wet mud. In this case, the ecstasy experienced by Saint Theresa and Saint John could rightly be called fervor for the planted seed and for the well-harvested tuber.

*Playing*, or to examine it from a broader perspective, the playful impetus conceived as a way of relating to oneself, one's neighbor, the community and the universe in general, is accessible not only to children as a cognitive tool to prepare them for life, but to any human being that is disposed to make room for enjoyment and reflection in his/her working days and in moments of communication and collaboration. In a memorable passage in which Georges Bataille investigates the moment when the human being becomes different from the animal, he states: "Surely, that beautiful expression from Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (the playing man, in particular, the admirable game of art), is much more convenient, being the only proper one. It alone answers with desirable precision to the *Faber* of Neanderthal" (Bataille 2003: 50). It is not unusual in

playful moments to encounter fine truths that touch the soul directly, making themselves clear without any mediation from rational processes. It seems to me that many of the intellectual efforts to prove hypotheses in the course of scientific history have germinated in such moments of joyous illumination.

This sort of free play is a culture broth that can later be poured into cognitive-communicative experiences. The artists that paint under the impulse of a vision that seems impatient to emerge from the imagination are quite aware of this, as are the children who encounter the means of communication between a bed, a boat and a medieval castle while playing with some pillows and bed sheets. The same can be said of an artisanal grandma weaving designs on her loom that overlap into colors and figures; of an engineer who, upon projecting a bridge, includes such diverse elements as the resistance of the materials, tectonic forces, the appropriate flow of traffic and the ecological impact; or a teacher anxious to facilitate and participate in this path that we have named transdisciplinary relearning.

Some of our activities have had the explicit intention of bringing these notions into play, be it as curricular educative experiences, as elective courses or workshops, or as stages within the structure of a forum. During the first semester we opened a department which we named Play Space and in which we organized festive gatherings and visits to cultural events. In collaboration with the Community Theater project of the Theater Faculty in our University, in November 2008 we traveled to the Center of Indigenous Art and the archeological site of El Tajín in Papantla, Veracruz<sup>ix</sup>.

The first edition of the workshop designated Participative Space for Community Creation was offered during the semester of February-June 2009, and during its sessions we were favored by the presences of professors Rodolfo Reyes and Nicolás Núñez<sup>x</sup>. We

have proposed this workshop as a meeting site for the varied world of individual creativity, the plastic, poetic and theatrical vocations, offered with the intention of clarifying what we generally call *the soul of the district*, that is to say, the group of shared coincidences that gives cohesion to this or any other community and expresses itself as aesthetic experience.

The program of activities prepared by co-apprentices and co-learners for the seminar *Transdisciplinarity and Sustainability: Encounter with Basarab Nicolescu* in February 2009 included some expressing the interest of the program in generating moments in which creativity, spirituality and playing could find a space for live manifestation. For the inauguration of the lectures, the duet “Silence in our Midst”<sup>xi</sup> presented a concert of alternative music; the subsequent workshop of *Ecopoiesis* culminated in a banquet and party in which everyone joined: organizers, visitors and Basarab himself. The visit of our Romanian mentor concluded with a second visit to Papantla and El Tajín, where we gathered with our Totonacan friends in a circle of the word and attended a lively rehearsal of the work *Talakánu*<sup>xii</sup>, which was presented in the corresponding 2009 edition of *Cumbre Tajín*.

During the same semester we had a course called “Mesoamerican Philosophy: ritual and dances from *tolecayotl*”, which turned out to be a workshop of dances from the Nahua-Toltec tradition under the direction of José Islas, master of said tradition, and of Laura Montoya, from the National School of Anthropology and History in Mexico City. We gathered once a week in a dancing circle around a *huehuetl* (Aztec drum) in order to turn this cosmovision into practice, with hearts alive and palpitating to the bodily movements, with the cadences and harmonized rhythms of the participants, rattles and gourds.

As a follow-up to our collaboration with the Theater Faculty, the participative and collectively created work *Descent to Gilania*<sup>xiii</sup> was presented in the installations of this EcoDialogue Station about the middle of the same year. In 2008, an antecedent to this took place in the kiosk of said Station with the presentation of an episode from the itinerant piece *Tlazoltéotl: Ravine of Illusions*, which started at the entrance to the USBI-X Library and ended with a festive dance in the open forum amid the gardens and lakes of the campus that surrounds us<sup>xiv</sup>.

For October we collectively organized the symposium *Toward a Transdisciplinary vision of the University: Ecology of Knowledge for Local and Planetary Sustainability*. The workshops offered in it made it possible to experience the aesthetic poïesis of the artisanal work of spinning and weaving cotton, modeling in clay and bodily movement, among others. On this occasion we repeated the experience begun in the Encounter by closing the day's activities with a communitarian dinner and a final party.

Creativity, spirituality and playing: these three notions have become the central axis which traverses all of our space and time. Whenever a contrary deviation occurs as the result of discussion, dispute or explicit anger, it is without doubt these three beacons that put us back into the site of shared dialog. We can bring up other interpenetrating notions that we find present in our work as academics. Thus, we have already mentioned terms such as awareness, art, poïesis, dialog, expressiveness, sensitivity, acceptance, respect and enjoyment. We wish to transcend declining norms by dis-identifying creativity as something pertaining exclusively to the artist or the inventor of new gadgets, spirituality to nuns and hermits, and playing as an occupation belonging in a non-transferable way to childhood. These intentions, which surely had been sprouting in personal histories long before the appearance of this collectivity, have found an echo

in the proposal of transdisciplinary methodology, the same as in systemic thought, complexity and human ecology during research-action and collaborative inquiry.

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<sup>i</sup> The notion of alternatives for development proposes a vision that places more emphasis on forms of organization and of sustainable living that emanate **from** local/regional needs and potentialities, rather than on development per se. It feeds on critical perspectives that have **considered** development as an ideology of domination imposed by the upper political and economic levels of global hegemony. (Esteva, 2000:67-98; Escobar, 1995:5-20, 2000: 169-176; Long, 2007:73-106; Rist, 2002:13-36).

<sup>ii</sup> Among the most representative authors inspiring this search we find: Fritjof Capra, Gregory Bateson, Morris Berman, Leonardo Boff, David Bohm, Riane Eisler, **Ivan Illich**, Humberto Maturana, Francisco Varela, Edgar Morin, Basarab Nicolescu, Jiddu Krisnamurti.

<sup>iii</sup> The term “transdisciplinary” appears in **answer** to the needs to express, especially in the field of teaching, the necessity of **overstepping** the **boundaries** between disciplines and of **transcending pluri-** and **interdisciplinary** perspectives. Transdisciplinarity does not oppose disciplinary learning but complements and stimulates it, from the standpoint of a reflexive attitude that is always open to questioning and to paradoxical discovery. The notion of transdisciplinarity reminds us to the development of an attitude when confronted by the process of knowing (Nicolescu, 2002:119).

<sup>iv</sup> Our pedagogical practices includes the use of other manners of designating students and professors.

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<sup>v</sup> The Evolutionary Learning Communities are systems of local and alternative **learning** that seek to **catalyze** social transformation toward the creation of **sustainable** and evolutionary futures (Laszlo 2001; Altee 2003).

<sup>vi</sup> The notions of emotioning/**linguaging** are retaken from the Biology of Knowing, which conceives the process of **learning** as part of the social biological nature of human being. So it is that, in the flow of our emotions and our conversations, in experiencing the **moment**, we **synthesize our** evolutionary history as a species and as individuals living in a specific historical space and time (Maturana 2002).

<sup>vii</sup> “...If I find the correct place in myself, at the moment in which I address myself to the Other, the Other can find the correct place in himself or herself and thus we can communicate. Because communication is first of all the correspondence between the right places in myself and in the Other, it is founded on authentic communion, beyond all dream or all fantasy or desire to manipulate the Other. Rigor is therefore also the research for the right place in myself and in the Other at the moment of communication” (Nicolescu 2002: 120).

<sup>viii</sup> According to the studies of Miguel León Portilla, this expression refers symbolically to what we might call ‘moral physiognomy’.

<sup>ix</sup> There, besides having contact with dynamics of the anthropocosmic theater and with self-knowing exercises from the dances bequeathed by Gurdjieff (well-known Russian thinker, founder of the Institute for Harmonic Development of Man, in France), we were well received by Totonaca **grandparents**.

<sup>x</sup> Rodolfo Reyes is an experienced dancer who drinks from the fountains of popular Latin America traditions; Nicolás Nuñez is a man of the theater who wrote the book “Teatro Antropocómico” (dramatic proposal for remaining connected to the **teluric** forces of the universe through the “living moment”), the dynamics of which have been kept in experimentation for more than three decades in the Workshop of Theatrical Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, in the nation’s capital.

<sup>xi</sup> This duet of guitars and flutes plays music without a score, expecting that the sounds that consider themselves invited will appear of their own account.

<sup>xii</sup> *Talakkánu*, a transcultural theatrical work, means “mask” in the **autochthonous** language; it constitutes an effort to unite the creativity of different traditions. Actors raised in the **Totonac** culture and contemporary actors from the western slope shared this process of community **participation**.

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<sup>xiii</sup> Descenso a Gilania was prepared by a group from the Alternative Theater Workshop at the Faculty of Theater in its 2008-09 edition. Both the dramatic text and its corresponding setting appeared intertwined it being understood from the beginning that the active participation of the invited public was essential for all present to reach the “living moment”.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Tlazoltéotl. Ravine of Ilusions*, alludes to any path that delves into the depths of personal infernos in order to be disposed **outward** the achievement of purification, tranquility of **soul**, pardon of guilt, etc. The reference point used to this end was this **Mesoamerican** goddess, who at least once in her lifetime ate human inurities during the ceremony in honor of Tezcatlipoca.