



PULSA

Conversations performances

L' A' I' N' O'

Español

Innovación  
transdisciplinaria  
N. A.

ecología

D. E. Y. O. R. P. S.

T. L. F. E. M. A. T. I. R.

I. N. O.

Desire

questions  
Community and Equity

Justice

memories

Nature

B. R. R. A. Y.  
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...Prig. No. 1 of 1972, 1973  
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**Narratives of a transdisciplinary art space creation  
in Solferino, Quintana Roo, Mexico.**

**Project Matiz Solferino**

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*A Major Project Report submitted to the Faculty of Environmental Studies  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

**Master in Environmental Studies**

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Canada

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## Foreword

The components of my Plan of Study, popular environmental education, ecopsychology, and decolonialism are interwoven in this project towards a transdisciplinarity represented in the narratives of creation of an art space in Solferino, Quintana Roo, Mexico. Through writings and images, the woven stories are not only told, but can be reinvented from diverse possibilities of combination and reading that this text provides.

*For you, Zaray...  
mother of seeds,  
life of my life.*

## Acknowledgements

Infinite thanks go to my Zaray for your joy, your love, your patience, and for being my greatest inspiration. I promise that many things are going to change for the better. We will play a lot, we will learn a lot, and you need to get ready because there are so many more tickles coming your way.

Thank you so much Diego for all of your support each day, for the deliciousness of the meals you prepare, and for sharing my conviction that personal growth is always possible when we can take a long, hard look at the pain and anger left by a war that has never been our fault.

I am endlessly grateful to my friend, dear Sandra, for your words and for reminding me of the greater purpose of my work when confusion and tiredness were sapping my strength. Thank you for believing in me, for pushing me, and for encouraging me to dream of a future full of life for our projects.

Immense thanks are due to Chris Cavanagh for guiding me and for setting the pace and tone of the emotions, ideas, and text. You have helped me grow so much. Thank you for being you: your open mind, your generous heart, and that authentic, hands-on attitude you have when it comes to life and relationships. For your dedication. For having believed in my project, my craziness, my struggles...in me.

Thank you so much Felipe Montoya for your incredible ability to listen, for your support in difficult moments, and for your clarity and understanding. Thanks to your listening and guidance, I was able to listen to myself and move forward. For the spirit of decoloniality that you embody and your inspiring struggle that have given me so much strength.

Thank you Morelia Montes for being a woman of strength, a woman of hope, a woman of dreams, a woman who is also a mother, a woman who knows how to be a friend, a woman of struggle...a woman whose tenacity makes the impossible possible. For renewing my confidence and letting me see myself in your truth-telling eyes. For your unconditional support, I can't thank you enough.

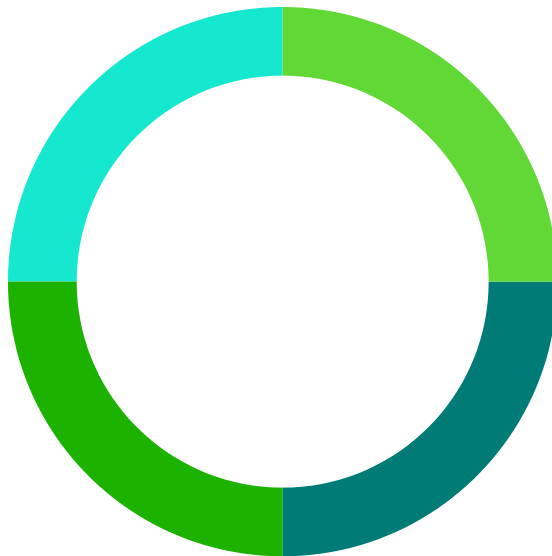
I want to express my sincere and deepest gratitude to the people of Solferino for their warm welcome, their kindness, and all of their support. For the children so full of hope, for the restless young people, for the trust and affection of the women. For you Aurelia and your family for your unconditional companionship, for you Adi for believing in a flourishing library, for you Pedro for being a true neighbor and showing me the noblest support imaginable. For each and every one of you who made it possible to weave this dream together and who continue holding it up.

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## INTRODUCTION

Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers  
and how one remembers it in order to recount it.

Gabriel García Márquez

This work seeks to consider the narratives of a Transdisciplinary Art Space (TAS) project undertaken in Solferino, Quintana Roo, Mexico. Part of my MES, this Major Research Project is an inquiry into the various subjective dimensions, as well as the potential for learning and expression, of decolonial processes that empower communities in need of personal and social transformation. It additionally brings together the stories lived and those yet to be lived that form the conceptual, physical, emotional, and spiritual underpinnings of a search to weave together the different dimensions of my life: my professional work as a psychologist, artist, activist, and now also from my role as the mother of my daughter Zaray.

This TAS represents the importance of fostering spaces for coexistence and social awareness, as well as the care and conservation of nature. This is promoted by creative processes that seek to recognize inclusion, diversity, and equality as core values. Equally important is the encounter with one's own subjective reflections, transformations, and changes that allow for autonomous choices representing desire and personal, social, and environmental well-being.

Therefore, in partial answer to the question that has been present throughout my course of study, I wish to share some of the stories in which it is possible to discern and describe the framework underlying certain subjective dimensions. Also apparent is the possibility of learning and expression of decolonial processes that empower communities in search of personal and social transformation.

This project is the story of a praxis: the construction, ideas, practices and impact of my general project, titled Project Matiz. Project Matiz utilized the decolonial option, with community arts centered on ecopsychology and popular environmental education experiences to facilitate emancipatory learning processes. This transdisciplinary approach challenges colonial paradigms and different forms of oppression, both personal and social, as well as their consequences and impact on the environment.

The way in which the Major Research Project's text is presented was thus of critical importance, with regard to its form and content and what they mean when taken together, to be addressed here.

Transdisciplinarity can be described as the possibility of going beyond disciplines and the pluriversal relation of all knowledge to uncover their dialogues, convergences, and divergences of ideas and feelings, a possibility not limited to the writing of stories, experiences, and reflections. I chose to use an idea inspired by one of my daughter's children's books, given to her as a gift in Colombia. I also used another book belonging to my supervisor, possibly the most beautiful edition I have ever seen of this kind of book.

I ended up writing my MRP as a book with multiple readings that recreates the stories and invites the reader to devise their own unique reading combinations and to generate their own insights into the project. In this way, the book encourages various distinct and emancipating experiences.

Each page of my MRP is divided into three stories in the style of the "head, body, and legs" mix-and-match books that let children combine the segments of different animals. In the "head" section at the top, which I call "Los Galeano," I relate one of my experiences from the TAS construction process. In the middle "body" section is found a generally visual story and sometimes the idea of a thinker, seeking to bridge the meaning between the upper, expository story and the lower, explanatory story. Finally,



the bottom “legs” part contains reflection via anecdotes capturing an integrated conceptual view of the experiences and impacts arising from my research project.

The three segments on each page can be interchanged for a multitude of reading and interpretation possibilities. Inspired by the work of the Uruguayan journalist and writer Eduardo Galeano, the top part, “Los Galeano,” gathers short stories that are relevant to me and the development and aim of my research project. The more than 40 stories were collected from my experiences and were related to my own subjective process, the physical construction of the TAS, my relationship with the Solferino community, and the activities undertaken so far, as well as the spaces and activities envisioned for the future of the TAS.

These expository stories at the top of each page seek to relate events from the project process at different levels, as events and feelings ever in search of personal emotion as well as the social, political, and aesthetic implications of the experiences. Ultimately, it was the storytelling of events involving signs that allowed us to make headway in the complex construction of a Transdisciplinary Art Space creation in Solferino.

The second segment, in the middle of each page, has more than 30 images, mainly photographs that I took. These images are meant to generate meaning by fostering dialogue with the other two segments on the page. At the same time, however, the images hold their own, independently depicting an event, a moment of the TAS process. Each one represents another possibility of language, a text-image imaginatively recreated depending on how the page is combined and read.

The interpretation of this segment is based on the reading of the other two. However, the possibility that it is the image itself that makes the connection between the other two segments possible is also admitted. It thus allows for a two-pronged reading: that of perceiving and filling the central image with content in light of the other texts and that of linking the other two stories. In the absence of words or symbols, the core function of

this wildcard is its ability to symbolize in the image that which can consistently give meaning to the lived story and the text of the explanatory story.

The third segment uses stories and anecdotes to explain or present a concept in a dynamic way that is less traditional, academic, or scientific. An anecdotal theory is constructed through explanations and interpretations of the ideas, most of which seek to connect single events or moments. The use of anecdotal theory—highly oriented toward the school of thought of popular environmental education—here is another attempt at transdisciplinarity. This consists of integrating into the reading and writing of reality content that advocates going even further, the moving toward a subjective contour that can speak, a theorizing missed by the subject that is revealed in those moments when he or she understands, as Jane Gallop put it, the importance of “[interrupting] what is too fixed, too abstract, too eternal and ahistorical by looking to the place where the literary is knotted to the real.”

For the chapters of this text, I have established four sections, each titled according to its particular focus. However, these should only be understood as a reference. The sections are as follows: 1- On Subjectivity, 2- On Space, 3- On Praxis, 4- On Poiesis.

1- On Subjectivity: This section emphasizes the part of my personal journey in which the various colonizations and oppressions, as well as the unconscious manifestations in which these are replicated, were contemplated through the lens of my new role as a mother. Also discussed is the importance of reviewing the fissures where they may have arisen in order to contrast the feeling of connection or relationship with nature and that of being one with nature.

2- On Space: A section recounting my particular path, as well as the coincidences and support that helped me to achieve the construction of this project. It is the story of a path that would seem to have traversed me more than I traversed it.

3 -On Praxis: These stories involve an exercise with children aimed at empowering the community of Solferino through reading and writing activities at the town library, the strengthening of critical thinking, and the vindication of their indigenous Mayan history.

4- On Poiesis: This section contains the narration of a dream, the promise of the creation and production of art as the need to provide shape and expression to that which subjectivity and the community cannot give voice to. The stories of the different spaces and projects composing the proposal of the Transdisciplinary Art Space of Project Matiz are cast here in time and space.

Each aspect of this process has been one of profound richness for me, from the project in Solferino to the overall experience in the MES and the construction of this research project. This despite the personal difficulties I have faced in recent years and the irony of not being able to count on or afford housing in Toronto. However, I was offered an apartment by Toronto Housing to live in with my daughter in February 2018.

I think it is of vital importance to emphasize the importance that the narrating and being narrated of this story-creating exercise holds for the TAS. This is because it is this process that allows language to transform personal and social knowledge so as to integrate visions that embody new individual and collective identities. These new identities represent a profound understanding of a decoloniality that must first pass through subjectivity.

## ANTECEDENTS

8 years ago, i meet by chance in my readings a place call Hotbox. Without even have never been in Mexico, i found an island “Black whole” in Mayan, at north of Yucatan peninsula. So, i continued my search going deeper in every aspect related with Mayab, (original name Yucatán en maya language) finding its wonderful richness as well as its struggling with corporations’ acquisition of land for Resorts and golf camps and the consequent deforestation of Holbox and in general in the Mayan Riviera.

In that imaginary traveling in the Mayab i found in a video a wonderful environmental leader who was talking in a way that i was moved by because her words just seemed be exactly what i would like to express. She, Morelia Montes, was so clear, she could understand deeply so many elements of the Holbox struggle particularly. So i decided to looking for her in social media to make contact and start a dialogue that allow me to contribute with whatever process was needed to resist. So, she was there, and i was surprise also to knew that she was Colombian-Mexican, had lived in the city i was born and her sister, an great artist (singer and actor) that i admire and i had met long time ago.

Then, i realized that i was kind of “walking the word” as indigenous in Cauca say. I was feeling like i was living a book already written. So, i went to Holbox and meet Morelia on Spring 2014. The environmental educator, animal defender, environmental leader and great person just received me with a big hug i never forgot. We started an amazing communication, that not only have helped me to understand the region its beauty, its problems and struggles but to contribute to its social and environmental resistance.

In the way to Holbox island there is a 800 population town called Solferino. Located 13 kilometres from the port of Chiquilá in the western limit of the Yum Balam Protection Area of Flora and Fauna, a national protected reserve, part of the ecological province of Yucatán in the biogeographical region of Yalahau.

I started to spend more time in Solferino as this little town woke up my rainforest memories from Colombia and allow me to reconnect with nature and a communitarian life of which I am very grateful. Knowing its people and feeling their affection became a special bond that i hope to keep for the rest of our lives.

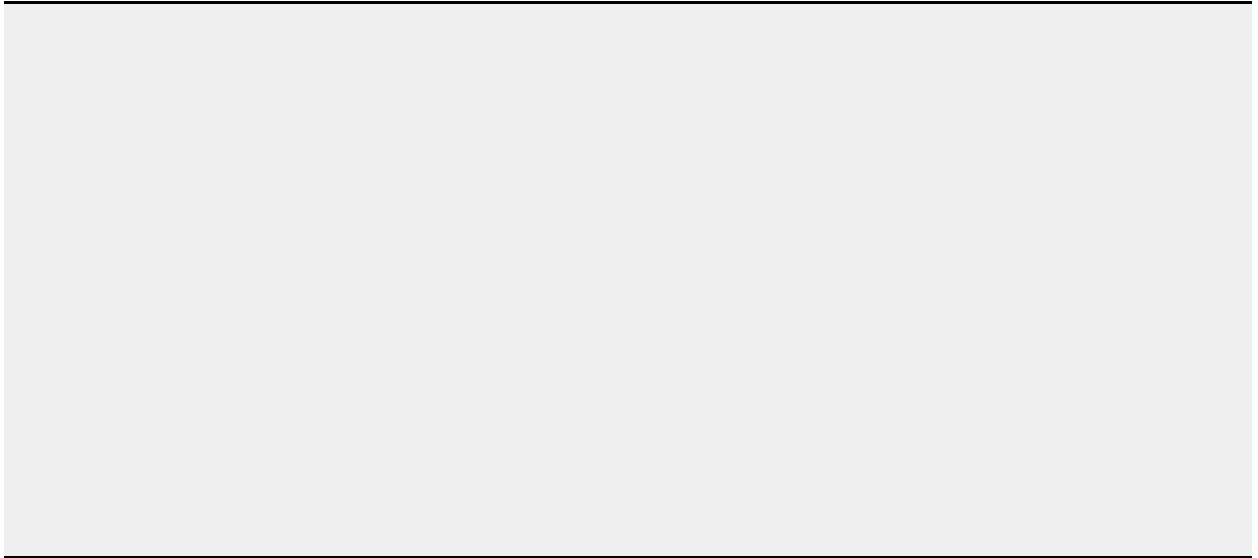
Thinking with Solferino community about different ideas of resistance and decolonialization, we started to work in different activities that were the base of the today's 'project of the creation of a transdisciplinary art space with the collective dream of make possible another social and cultural more inclusive narratives.

We were working on these resistance activities on Summer 2015 when a friend of the town of Solferino told me about a land that was being sold by a Canadian couple. At that moment my mother had told me she wanted to inherit her house that had been sold to my brother and i. So, i decide to talk with the Canadian couple and bought their land. After these years, we count with little house called Casita Mágica, the physical first stage of the transdisciplinary are space in Solferino.

My encounter with the wonderful Mayab was happening at the time i became a mother, i started my Master in Environmental Studies, trying to putting together social change, psychology, art, and environment, all the pieces of my personal puzzle.

Everything I learn from the rainforest, my family, the indigenous woman who raise me, landscaped my life. Now i continue trying to recreate for my daughter and people in Solferino and any place in Latin-American. Searching for deeper relationship with a world that reflects the complexity of my own nature and subjectivity.

On subjectivity...



As I sought to make sense of the paradoxes of my life amidst assorted pains, lessons, and lassitudes, Orlando\* asked me a question that seemed to contain at its core the answer to the various continents of my search. “Just what do you mean by ‘Mother Earth’?” I at once understood that Mother Earth had come to mean for me the maternal ideal, the dream of a mother I wish I had had. I understood that this urgent longing to return to Mother Earth implied a return to my idea of a mother, a going back to my inner territories, to my subjective roots, in order to be the mother I wish to be for Zaray.

\*Orlando López Firpo, clinical psychoanalyst



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This urgency is evoked by the question of the place of motherhood and by my concurrent desire to remake myself, to break with the repetitions that paralyze me, like condemnations of my most essential story. It is a search for a subjectivity allowing surrender, like that fertile surrender of the earth to offer nourishment and diversity to all. My desire is for my daughter to have reflected back at her a mother who embodies reciprocity, compassion, and a capacity for caring, or in whose gaze these can at least be recognized. And perhaps even more so that she finds a maternal reflection greater than her mother.

The Spanish word *manto* is used for both a blanket and the earth's mantle, the layer between the outer core and the crust. I thus discovered that the earth's mantle represents the place of the mother, conveying an idea of protection. It is the same emotional mantle that nurtures and strengthens in my daughter a subjectivity that allows her to develop as a free being and embrace her name, Zaray: "mother of seeds" (in the Arhuaca language of the Arhuaco people, who live on the southern side of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains in Colombia).

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"Regarding the 'core self,' Winnicott (1963) maintained that in all of us there is something that is neither created nor maintained through social relationships that begins with the infant-caregiver relationship."  
(Castrillón Fernando, Vakoch Douglas A., 2014)

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Of great importance to me is the warmth generated by the body, the contact, the touching of another person, that closeness that seems increasingly unknown and forbidden in societies and culture. Such closeness allows those who draw near to each other to comprehend a value of care, respect, and reciprocity, captured by Fernando Castrillón: "Holding and handling provide the most important interface of infant and environment in the sensations of skin contact between mother and infant, which in the infant's experience, initially blends and connects more than separates or demarcates a boundary." In this sense, contact with the jungle and the perceiving of its sounds, smells, textures, and relationships, can reinforce a fundamental learning process for the shaping of subjectivity, like the mother's embrace and gaze.



It has been the search for a place, a place as a woman, as a Latin American, as a mestiza, but at the same time for a place where I can live with only those social determinants provided by my subjectivity. To live in such a place based on who I am is possible, but there remains the question of how I live in the other, how to be lived in, and how others have been or are living in me.

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“The true houses of memory, the houses to which our dreams lead us repeatedly, the houses enriched by a faithful oneirism, defy all description ... I mean a distant voice in myself that may be the voice that everyone hears when they listen in the depths of their memory.”

(Bachelard, Gaston, 1957)

Perhaps one of the most significant challenges posed by social transformations is to deeply recognize the other at the same time that one's own changes are occurring. It is a kind of personal discomfort in the face of one's reality perception schemes, coinciding with judgment-free listening and observing, which leads to the creation of places of difference and the embracing of diversity. This can be observed in one of the most powerful impacts of the community outreach I've seen beginning to emerge among the girls who have attended the library activities. They increasingly pay attention to and respect their words and actions, examining relational dynamics that challenge the culture of a town where patriarchy has long prevailed.

Originally from the island of Holbox, she was now working as a housecleaner in Solferino. She was the married mother of a three-year-old daughter and had an easy smile. We spoke often. Perhaps what I found most unsettling about her were her frequent questions about how a woman should act in various circumstances. I came to sense that she needed to hear herself speak in order to smash the rigid paradigms of a culture that offered her few options. When I returned the following year, I learned that she had begun working on earning her high school diploma, taking advantage of a new government program for adults. The last time we spoke, she had the highest grade in her mathematics class, which she told me she dreamed of studying.

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From the time of my first visit to Solferino, the people of that town have welcomed me with a warmth and affection that I missed, and with a reflection that has allowed me to recognize my own various oppressions. Above all, they have received me with the generous possibility of being transformed by our encounter.

How can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings,  
participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation?

(Freire, 1970)

In the process of raising my daughter, one of my greatest personal crises has emerged from what she confronts me with and teaches me. In this listening process, limits have appeared like a dragon's roar, fire from the pain emanating from my history and deep fears that I urgently desired to face. There is a need to put those closest to me in their place, individuals from whom I have felt abuse. More than anything else, it is understanding the need to set aside a place for myself and connect with these various places of mine. It has been like a return to the jungle, in which the fire has begun to be extinguished by touching the damp soil and passing through the trees of the cool jungle where I now reside. In this observation and understanding of the relationships I find there, I see that they have given me an immense healing power that I discern in myself to, above all else, comprehend my limitations.

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“I believe that ecopsychologists have it right when they say  
it is not we who will heal nature but nature will heal us.”  
(Castrillón Fernando, Vakoch Douglas, 2014)

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I have wanted to inquire into those ties that have allowed others to harm me. This process implies the understanding that only insofar as I understand how the structures and systems that have taken hold in me work can the patterns of subjective oppression be appreciated. “[T]he patient may not be able to avail the healing that nature offers without first reaching into the deeper recesses of his or her individual psyche where experiences of insecurity, alienation, and shutdown have been internalized and crystallized into complexly layered structures during the growing-up years.” (Castrillón Fernando, Vakoch Douglas, 2014, 19).

How to stand before her, what a mother I am, is the question that has founded my motherhood. To be with her from the vulnerability, from the knowledge of my abandonment, the inclusive dreams and their development. Then I only had my struggles to deliver to Zaray, the lucid and clumsy attempts of my story to stop me from the family and social shocks and falls. Then I have decided to make of the failed, a possibility with that completeness that the earth offers, that which is reality and metaphor, the habitat for a subjectivity with different landscapes.



“Human desire is the desire of the Other.” With this forceful statement, Lacan wholly removes this from the sphere of biology, understanding that the subject desires as an Other; that is, he or she desires from the point of view of another. In this way, seeking to grasp at least part of the desire in which my daughter is inevitably inserted, I have considered giving her that which has remained in the paths I have travelled and believed in throughout this desire: the recognition of the Other, nature, and creation through art. These tripartite dimensions are meant to support my daughter and me, their convergence serving as the point toward which I orient her upbringing and allowing us to continue to grow, which is also part of this desire.

When walking with my daughter, I have experienced the immensity of the jungle that shelters us and makes us part of it. At the same time, it informs us of its greatness, delivering our identities as emotional metaphors, a strength embodied in its time and laws.



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I have wanted to call the tremendous opportunity for understanding made possible by the perception and experience of nature for one's construction of identity an emotional metaphor. More than mere images stored in the memory, these remembrances are part of the very formation of the subject. Such metaphors are stories that penetrate our lives and are their foundation, beautifully expressed by Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*: "When the dialectics of the I and the non-I grow more flexible, I feel that fields and meadows are with me, in the with-me, with-us. But forests reign in the past. I know, for instance, that my grandfather got lost in a certain wood. I was told this, and I have not forgotten it. It happened in a past before I was born. My oldest memories, therefore, are a hundred years old, or perhaps a bit more. Then, this is my ancestral past. And all the rest is fiction." (Gaston Bachelard, 1957.)

Life has given me the opportunity to live in Colombia and Canada, each place taking its meaning from the other, a dual home inhabiting my identity. Added to these are the new landscapes, journeys, and experiences I have lived on Mexico's Caribbean coast. My thoughts and feelings are continually infused with the territories dwelling inside of me, as if these were one.

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Because cognitive maps play an extremely important role in developing the ability to solve spatial problems, they have a high adaptive value in human life. Cognitive maps indicate where to go to meet individual needs and how to get there.

(Charles J. Holahan. 2006)

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The maps drawn within me as stories, affections, and daily projects are the continuum of a line that fractalizes in the constant search for change and social justice. Marcel Zimmermann helps me to understand how my identity can be traced like an open map, even if uncontestably drawn by the lines of a certain affection rather than cognition. "The mind mapping method has stimulated the imagination enormously and has allowed us to take the first steps in demonstrating that our mental images of places and space in general can be considered cognitive structures, the result of mental operations that develop, transform, hierarchically organize, and differentiate."

I realized that I needed to sow the seeds of my dreams in fertile soil to create an experience, a project centered on a territory of collective inclusion, creation, and expression sans physical, symbolic, or disciplinary boundaries. Such a project would need to be grounded in an aesthetic for social change that could only come about by involving myself alongside the Other, nature, and art.



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“The territorial behavior of the subject is highly socialized, insofar as it does not depend exclusively or directly on the physical properties of a place but also on its symbolic attributes, integrating perceptions, knowledge, and assessments about the meaning and use of the site.” This is how Henry Granada described the need for a territory of my own in which all of the interests, desires, and dreams of my life can converge. Solferino, Mexico has provided me that inclusion, as the community can both offer physical space and receive the dreams of the Other with a confidence that can make them come true. Despite the difficulties and great fragmentations, it is currently going through, this community has allowed me to dream again.

For the first time, I was living, sleeping, eating, and listening to birds singing with my daughter in the wooden house I had built for myself and for everyone. I thus allowed myself to take the time to feel the generous power granted to me by the spirit of its materials and the process of its construction. Most important was the magic of feeling that I belonged—the belonging of experiences, memories, and sharing already turned into stories and transformative narratives for the children of the town, the friends, the co-conspirators, the culture, and my daughter



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Living in the house was simply the experience of living in myself once again. It was akin to walking inside of myself, traversing the various spaces of a house long unvisited or of which I was not even aware. It was to embody the possibility of an idea of a room of oneself, and that I wanted to live in with my daughter. A nest that I no longer remember well, which I held as a reality or dream. Merleau-Ponty's words may be apt here: "The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears. It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which find their unity when I take up my past experiences in my experiences in those of the present."



On space...

I had long wanted to visit that wonderful country of Mexico, with its indigenous resistance, its nature, its history. It was a richness that for years I attempted to take in through readings, my imagination, and the stories of friends. In my mind, I especially lingered along the Yucatán Peninsula, crossing landscapes and time. A time abundant in the archeological traces of a civilization that is still alive and that would become my reality. Never did I suspect that my destiny would be imbued with the meaning of a Mayan world insistent on walking down the paths of my life.



I have always had a profound sense of not belonging anywhere, neither from a standpoint of territory, citizenship, or thinking. Instead, I identify with and see myself as a cozy and uneasy patchwork quilt of valuable fragments, scraps from my history, my formation, and my own constructions. As a kind of constant margin, from where my subjectivity seems to locate itself. “A border subjectivity [...] Border thinking stem[ming] from the imperial/colonial difference of power in the formation of subjectivities.” (Mignolo, Walter 2007)

Then I came across a female environmental activist from the island of Holbox who was fighting for the conservation and defense of the island's resources. She expressed in a documentary an environmental concept drawing on social elements and values, and listening to her I felt that she was very clearly expressing something that needed to be said. It was as if they were the exact words I myself would have chosen. I got in touch with her, a Colombian-Mexican woman and the sister of a great singer-songwriter I knew and grew up listening to in my hometown of Cali, Colombia. Her name was Morelia Montes, and she would become a guide and support for the construction process of my transdisciplinary art space.

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“Many small people, in small places, doing small things can change the world.”

Galeano, Eduardo

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Mignolo would say that the genealogy of decolonial thought is pluriversal (not universal). This diversity is so hard to achieve and understand, even when strongly desired. He says that “every knot in the network of this genealogy is a point of departure and opening that reintroduces languages, memories, economies, social organizations, subjectivities, splendors, and miseries of imperial legacies.” It is thus necessary to extrapolate these departure and opening points to personal searches in the encounter with other pluriversalities that make decolonial turns possible. These are processes that pass through the subjective, the recognition of the subjectivity of the other, and finally other subjectivities.

Ten minutes from the Mexican Caribbean and located in the protected Yum Balam forest reserve is the town of Solferino, a Mayan village that has provided me with the opportunity to carry out my transdisciplinary art project. Its physical manifestation in Casita Mágica makes it possible to welcome artists and residents, both local and foreign. These visitors not only develop their artistic practice but also contribute to the community by making this encounter a creative and enriching process for both sides through art, environmental education, and decolonization processes.



It is essential to create spaces for the expression of those voices—worlds—devastated by the ideas of “progress,” “development,” and “modernity.” This constitutes an act of resistance against these processes and movements, giving way to new conversations about who we are in Latin America and new meanings for developments and processes. “Speaking of decolonial aesthetics is a proposal that tends to place the terms in a new conversation to talk about our concrete experiences of being in the contemporary world, where other voices are heard and heeded, beyond the voices and discourses of experts.” (Gomez, Pedro Pablo, Mignolo, Walter 2012)

We walked. We walked a lot. Arm in arm, my daughter and I walked in the delicious heat, our skin glistening with the sweat that makes you feel alive and that light that seems to let you see more. Indeed, we were seeing more and better. While I was unlearning, Zaray was learning from the chickens and birds we passed, the constant greetings of the people, the recognition of each tree. Look at that one full of mangoes! And that one whose fruit our neighbor gave us! And there were all the avocados we ate. Each path seemed to be and was life itself, not knowing what we would find, what new flavor, color, texture, or emotion we would stumble upon next. We walked in the company of the jungle until something stopped us in our tracks: a beautiful and imposing snake perhaps one and a half meters in length wanted to cross the road that had intruded into his jungle.



These Solferino roads are filled with stories. Stories to be deciphered about the jungle, the town, its people, me and my daughter. These stories told by the road are revealed in our perceptions of the surroundings and become stories between and for us with each step. Our walk is rich in imagination and the reality of the jungle, a metaphor for all that is human. “We need another story that will help us remember or imagine a universe filled with a rainbow of values, an infinitude of life forms, a bounty of places, an abundance of lifeways, a cornucopia of experiences. Or rather, we need a multiplicity of stories. Biocultural diversity may very well be that inexhaustible fountain of stories.” (Montoya-Greenheck, Felipe, 2013)

The bark of the sapodilla tree, called *pachtabla*, was left lying in the jungle after the tree was cut down and only its heartwood hauled off. I decided to use *pachtabla* to build the walls of the house by collecting and recycling this bark. It was preserved as it was found, with scars from the cuts from gum harvesting seen in most of the heavy and resistant planks. Therefore, what each *pachtabla* has to say went into every wall of a nest that inspires feelings of deep gratitude, recalling the life and history existing in every corner of the space that generously extends us warmth and a sense of belonging.

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“The house of our birth has inscribed on us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting. We are the diagram of the functions of inhabiting that house and all other houses are but variations of a fundamental theme. [...] The house of our birth is more than a body of residence; it is an oneiric body, each of its spaces a shelter of dreams.”

-Gaston Bachelard, 1957-

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The house is made of a wood whose nobility, strength, and roots I feel drawn to learn about. The interwoven walls are arms that provide unforeseen assurances, with strength to continue with the construction that goes beyond me and is in spite of myself through a texture and hardness long ago nourished by soil that gives testimony of an ancestral power that calls and protects me.

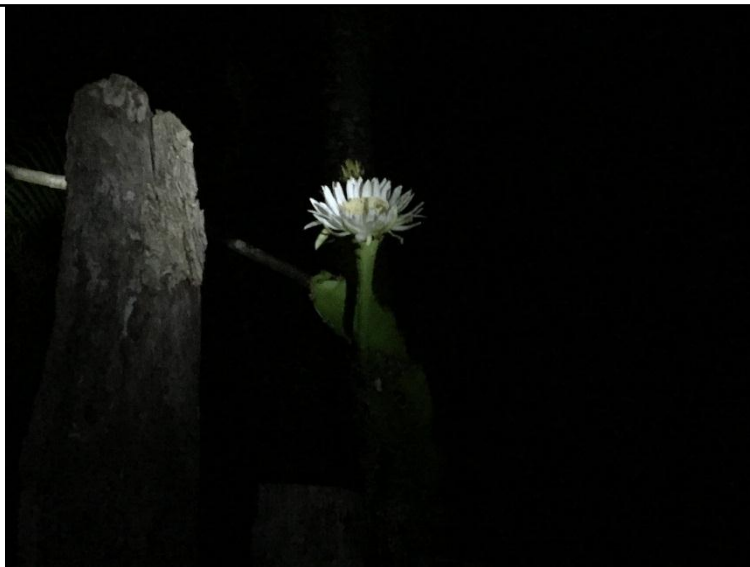
“The phenomenology of the imagination requires that images be lived directly, that they be taken as sudden events in life. When the image is new, the world is new.” (Bachelard, Gaston, 1957)

As time went by, some of the fragments of the pachtabla bark making up the walls of Casita Mágica began to fall off. What came to be revealed were labyrinths, enigmatic lines perfectly carved in the hardest wood in the region in a way wholly unimaginable. I did not care to think that such beautiful creations of extraordinary shapes and figures could be the result of the debarking insect *Dendroctonus mexicanus*, often considered a pest to be controlled by the Mexican Forest Health Technical Committee.



The *Manilkara zapota*, or, sapodilla tree (called the *chicle* tree in Spanish, from the Nahuatl *tzictli*), originally from the tropical forest of Mexico, was used by the Mayans in the lintels of their temples. It has also been a source of work for the town of Solferino, specifically the harvesting of gum, or, a gummy polymer extracted as a resin from the sap of the tree. However, there has been a shift over time from this use to the use of its wood due to its resistance and durability for making furniture, supporting a great deal of the town's economy.

If our walk during the day delivered the joy of meeting a different being with each step, the surprises of the night were not to be outdone. The stars hung wonderfully close, we were regaled with the songs of frogs and crickets all night long, a few fearsome scorpions made an appearance, and there was no end to the spiders, which we only discovered when we held the light next to our eyes. We quickly learned to walk differently at night, with a confidence granted by the reflections in our memory that the light had left us.



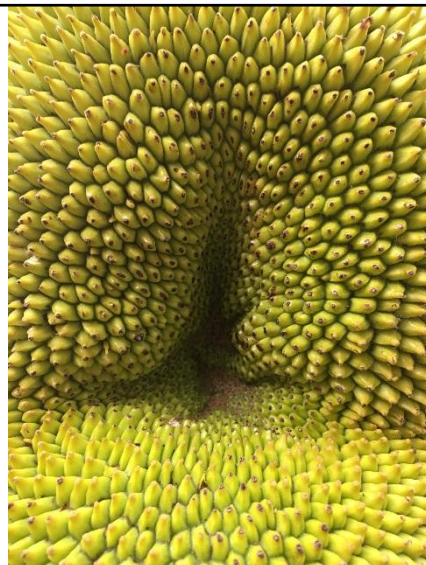
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In the city, day or night makes no real difference outside of tracking the passage of time. The difference between day and night in Solferino, however, is an experience of two immensely different worlds. Nighttime offers up experiences whose beauty, simplicity, and complexity linger forever in one's memory, such as the Queen of the Night flower (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum*) that blooms at night for a few hours and only a few times each year. The chance to glimpse the movement of its petals as if working in complicity with our perceptual time prompts gratitude for the ability to share in its movement and that short-lived quality of its life.



The little streets of Solferino are short and many are still unpaved. I am afraid of the consequences accompanying a call for development, which buries culture and ravages values, bringing consumption, alienation from the land and community, and a lust for money. All are symptoms that generate not only the plundering of natural, material, and cultural wealth but also personal wealth, generating uncertainty and distortion of identity, hence its replacement by religious fanaticism in the town. Walking down the streets, I learned this year about plans to pave several streets in both Solferino and the new Solferino, a new town already divided into plots of land.

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Walking through the streets of Solferino is also to inquire about the direction of the walking. Where am I heading in this search for inclusion of myself and others? In this linking of realities that can be expressed in their autonomy and no longer be stolen by colonization, by that shift that leads all the way to the idea that it is possible to walk the word itself, like the indigenous people of the Colombian Cauca region claim. How to continue walking in a resistance that ceases to be one, so as to avoid saying anything more than what one is resisting? But rather remaining in my subjectivity, being in community, communing with nature, and that being an acknowledgement in itself, without any external justification to account for our own determinations and fate?

On one side of the house, almost in the center of the piece of land, is a beautiful, leafy cedar tree that covers much of the sky visible from the house with its foliage. We have learned from its changes and smells and watched little plants grow from the seeds that seem to fall into little wooden boxes and then bloom in abundance. This was my welcome to this house, and I was pleased to be able to receive friends from the community who in one way or another have participated in this construction process. However, I must admit that I was surprised that most of the comments I heard after pointing out the cedar tree concerned the number of boards I could make from its bark.



The relationship is not established around the use of the tree, nor from the images or representations it may inspire. No, the question that the cedar has produced in me is found in the confrontation of two existences: that which is liable to arise from my existence, to understand as the presence of the tree in front of me. Martin Buber would have said, “The tree is no impression, no play of my imagination, no aspect of a mood; it confronts me bodily and has to deal with me as I must deal with it—only differently. One should not try to dilute the meaning of the relation: relation is reciprocity.”

I had no way of knowing. When I arrived in Solferino, I met a Colombian anthropologist who has lived in the town for many years and who in the past gave refuge to members of the M-19, an urban guerrilla group that operated in Colombia in the 1970s and 1980s. One such member who passed his convalescence in her house was Antonio José Navarro Wolff. A student and later professor at the University of Valle, Navarro Wolff was one of the M-19's most distinguished leaders. The explosion of a grenade thrown by a soldier when Navarro Wolff was in a café in my hometown of Cali led to the amputation of his lower left leg. Today Navarro Wolff is a survivor of state-sponsored violence and is a Colombian senator.

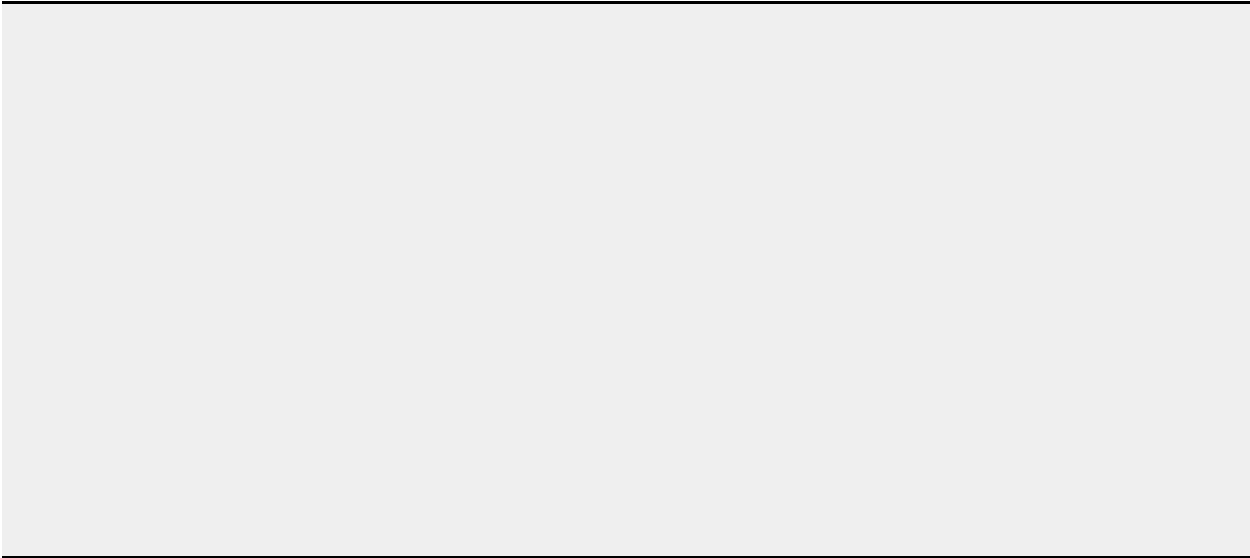
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“The territorial behavior of the subject is highly socialized, insofar as it does not depend exclusively or directly on the physical properties of a place but also on its symbolic functions, integrating perceptions, knowledge, and assessments of the meaning and use of the site.”

Grenade, Henry, 2001

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My mother told my brother not to wake me up that Saturday, the day I was to take the entrance exam of the University of Valle. I had applied to the school because there I could double major in psychology and drama. Years later, when I was graduating as a psychologist from the Javeriana University in Cali, she confessed to a political scientist friend while drinking aguardiente that she did not wake me up that morning out of fear that I would join the M-19, which was nourished by the intellectual debates of the country's main public universities. My mother learned belatedly that since the time of my high school graduation, I had vowed to never join any armed struggle, my deepest passion being for social struggle. I guess she still does not know me.



On poiesis...

The first time I visited the town of Solferino I was struck by the beauty of its trees, by the magic of this small town in the middle of a lush jungle. While walking its streets, I came across a library located on the west side of the town square. It was the Xlah Kah Municipal Public Library, which in Mayan means “old town.” The library was empty, though I noticed a woman resting her head in her crossed arms on a window. It appeared to be a place full of life but currently in repose, as if sleeping during a period of disregard, a place without a place unsure of how to inscribe itself in the story of its people.



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These narratives about the creation process of the Transdisciplinary Art Space in Solferino feature a praxis that draws on popular environmental education in order to join different conceptual perspectives with individual and collective actions seeking to create spaces for social resistance to so-called progress and development. That is, to new values that fracture and trivialize community dynamics and traditions. Such a praxis forms part of the processes of understanding and strengthening a context centered on oneness with nature in which values, rituals, and cultural expressions build resilience and repair the historical memory of the community.

I became fascinated by the wonders of the Solferino library, obsessed with the idea that, once I started living in the town, the image of the woman in the window would be like a painting in a museum that I could gaze at each time I passed by. I wanted to know why what for me was an extraordinary space didn't seem to be special to anyone else. It was hardly the first time I had felt this way. Nonetheless, the thought of all of the power and possibilities represented by this space compelled me to introduce myself to the woman from the window painting. I thought to tell her how taken I was by this space full of stories, countless stories that I couldn't help concocting in my head.



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The practice of popular environmental education that I have sought to weave into my work with the library centers on stories' power to tell, create, recreate, and produce knowledge. This knowledge is generated by the narration of what the community experiences, how it lives, its problems and possible solutions, traditions and roots. It also includes the dreaming and imagining of what one would like to see built or prevented from happening. Stories are agents of meaning, filling the void left by dispossession, uprooting, neglect, and forgetfulness. Doing the exercises featuring different participation techniques here, especially with children and young people, empowers them, restoring the power, security, and confidence needed to recognize their own story and continue telling it to each other.

I greeted the library director and from there blossomed a friendship, allowing me to become part of the life of the library. She told me that library director was a political position and that few children visited the library unless they had a special school assignment. That is, few visited for the mere love of reading. She told me that every year the library offered a month-long summer course for children to do arts and crafts. However, she commented, she herself was not a creative person. I shared my belief that everyone is creative and mentioned that I enjoy reading stories to children. She should count on me for anything she needed during the workshop held in August 2016.



These processes of community arts and popular environmental education unearth the pain and oppression of the Solferino community, elements that manifest in various ways (such as the proliferation of churches: roughly 15 in a town of 900 people). At the same time, the diverse participation practices seek emotional enrichment and strengthening for the community. As Mariano Algava put it in his 2006 analysis *Jugar y jugarse* (“Play and Playfulness”), the techniques we use are meant to entertain, recognizing and promoting joy as a fundamental part of the struggle for the empowerment and resistance of the Solferino community.





The days passed and each story worked its charm. The children finished their workshop at the library and on graduation day collected their drawings and crafts with pride. Despite feeling that something had shifted and that the children were beginning to be thrown off balance by the stories, it was too early to identify any appropriation on their part of their library, their space. The teaching style of the director during the workshop had no hope of breaking down certain invisible walls that the children perceived and that prevented them from feeling that the space was wholly theirs. Instead, it was more like a new classroom with a surprise at the end if they attended. Though they may have enjoyed the stories, they were still unable to dream them.

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Each day the children spent time writing a paragraph about something from the previous day that they had strongly liked or disliked, or that they simply wished to share. A recurrent theme was fear, represented by strange sounds, images among trees, or shadows in their houses. The regular surfacing of fears and the growing need to talk about them with their classmates pointed to a perception among the children of being in a space free of judgment and prejudice. Such a perception empowered them to express their fears, and to make sense of them both individually through writing and before their classmates through reading. But above all it instilled in them the confidence and courage to face these fears.

When I returned to the library in the summer of 2017, I met the newly elected library director. She wasn't unknown to me: I had long been fond of her delicious sopes (savory corn cakes) and panuchos (stuffed mini tostadas), while my daughter was in the habit of ordering her cheese empanadas (turnovers). Now she would be working in the library during the day. We quickly found ourselves talking about ideas we had for the town's children. Her interest in the library and eagerness to do more for the space filled me with optimism and the hope of seeing the library finally move to increase the sense of ownership and enjoyment by the children and greater public of Solferino.



The work with the Solferino library based on reading and writing touches on the need to foster reading at different levels of reality and the possibility of a critique of the consequences of coloniality. Writing provides an opportunity to write history differently, a decolonial way that underlines its potential for originating in the autonomy and decisions of the children and young people of Solferino. Consequently, the children, director, and library assistant raised new questions that challenge “the various modern/colonial modalities of social classification (‘race,’ ‘gender,’ class) and the dynamics of domination and exploitation, both material and subjective, in which they arose (Quijano, 2000). This, in itself, is an achievement of this process.

In addition to the traditional arts and crafts offered by the library in the 2017 workshop, I proposed other activities to the new director. These included continuing with the reading of stories; a fun, active, and verbally participatory reading comprehension activity; the creation of a small journal of stories in which each child would write a paragraph-long story each day; a printing exercise using a model printing press; and a mural for the children to design and paint using the library as a theme. Trying to anticipate what the children would enjoy, I had brought my projector and we set up a screen to show movies during the final week and begin a movie discussion forum.

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Freud put forward the technical rule of what he called “evenly-suspended attention,” writing in 1912 that “It consists simply in not directing one’s notice to anything in particular and in maintaining the same evenly-suspended attention.” This seemingly simple idea is one of the elements that I find most contributes to popular environmental education. This listening that refuses to privilege any one element of discourse allows for the expression of the other and, what is more, makes possible its own listening. Using this tool in the work with the library, I observed that it opened up spaces for the children to express themselves freely. It also gave the director and her assistant the confidence that they could be heard without being judged and without fear of having their words or actions questioned.

In the end, we were able to do all of the activities I proposed. The children's favorite craft was getting to design their own foam visor. The printing exercise amazed them and together they printed the quote "What is essential is invisible to the eye" from *The Little Prince*. Everyone worked hard to paint the mural with great care. They were thus filled with stories told, listened to, discussed, and written, all of which forced them to analyze various aspects of their reality and use their imagination. The movie discussion forums were held on *Princess Mononoke* by Hayao Miyazaki and *Kirikou and the Sorceress* and *Kirikou and the Wild Beasts* by Michel Ocelot. The children preferred the Kirikou movies, identifying with the life of the character and recognizing the importance of maintaining a connection with nature and of being leaders for their community.



The Mexican tradition of muralism is widely known, representing as it does the movement of anti-oppression and revolutionary expression ushered in by the Mexican Revolution that began in 1910. However, this tradition is unknown in Solferino, even though the island of Holbox has a mural festival a mere 30 minutes away. According to young people I spoke to, the town's most recent delegates (the highest authority in the town) have prohibited painting on walls. Still, the desire to do just this remains for children and young people, which is why we proposed to paint a wall to represent the library. A sense of belonging and pride was then generated by their involvement with the library and by their "taking" of one of the two most visible walls in the town. Though paint was indeed scarce, the children successfully appropriated their own tradition.

The 2017 director of the Solferino library told me that the Quintana Roo libraries coordinator was refusing to contribute materials to which the library was entitled. Days before learning this, she and I collected a little money to buy notebooks and pencil cases for the children's graduation day. She shared that she was tired of asking for what she needed to work with the children such as paint, paint brushes, and paper and constantly receive very little or have her reasonable requests denied. After a talk with the coordinator, he agreed to give some notebooks and pencils to the library on the last day. If they had ever been delivered, there would not have been enough for all of the children.



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To gather stories told, created, read, made visual, or expressed in any other form is to seek to strengthen the discourse and mirrors of identity, its models. Above all, it is to generate spirit, the strength to continue creating critical culture. Lorca evoked this when he wrote about *duende*, literally “spirit” or “magic”: “*duende* is a power and not a behavior; it is a struggle and not a concept.” There must be a call in revolutionary processes to seek what lies at the core of dignity, that ineffable ethical and aesthetic force. Similar to *duende*, it is only born in the fight for social change, equality, and recognition of difference. It requires going further by feeling that every action or idea must attain that grit, vehemence, drive, determination, and courage inherent in the *duende* of freedom.

And then came the graduation day of the Solferino library summer course. The children were happy, filled with the satisfaction of a process that had been intensely lived and enjoyed. Word had gotten out that a movement was taking place at the library, that many things were happening, and particularly that children were coming and were very happy. The mural seemed to remind people of the presence and value of the library, which was welcome. Maybe that's why the closing ceremony saw the unexpected visit of Emilio Jiménez, mayor of the municipality of Lázaro Cárdenas. He was joined by the Quintana Roo libraries coordinator and the delegate of Solferino, who wanted to congratulate the children for their work on this, the last day.

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Free association is a technique in psychoanalysis where people express everything that comes to their mind during treatment sessions: their ideas, images, emotions, thoughts, memories, and feelings, without any kind of censorship, structuring, or filtering. I have embraced a version of free association in art creation and collective creation since my work with young people demobilized from the Colombian armed conflict years ago. The readings and participatory analysis of them with the children in the library of Solferino reaffirmed for me the liberating power of spaces—in any language or art form—that destroy the subtle manifestations of oppression.

The director of the Solferino library wanted to take advantage of the mayor's presence at the course's closing ceremony to ask for two things: an update to the children's book collection and a projector for the library. So, we spoke to him at the event and did not let him go until he agreed to both requests. Like a typical politician, Mayor Jiménez was quick to assure us that the children's collection had already been designated and would soon be sent to the library. He also told us that several projectors were available and asked the director to stop by City Hall to pick one up. The following week, she went on two occasions to meet with the mayor to see these promises fulfilled. However, he could never be found and she was sent from office to office entirely in vain.

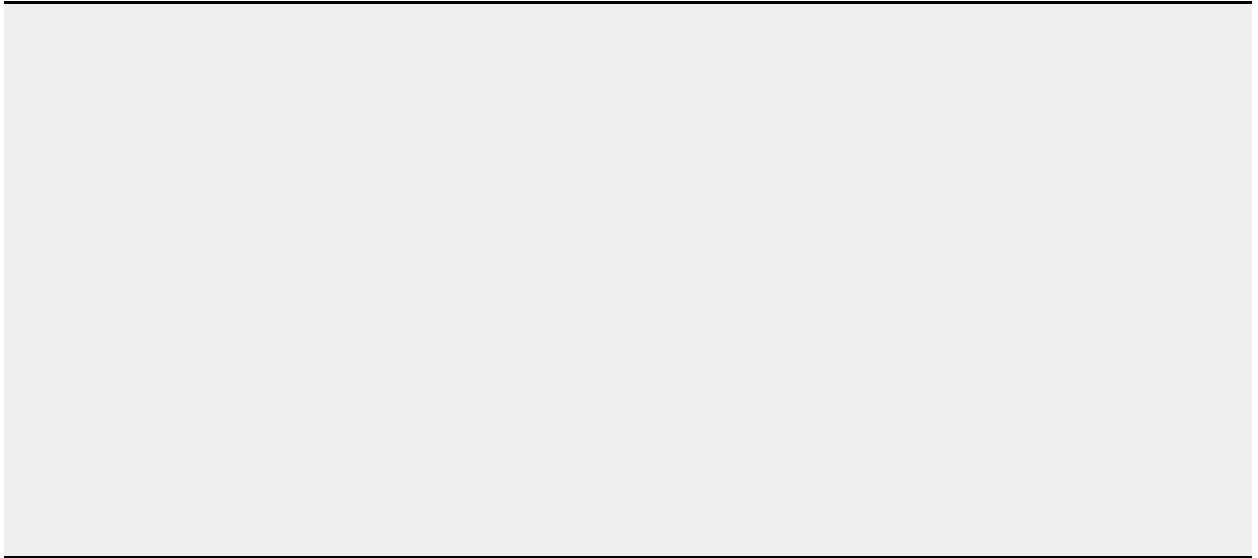
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In addition to participatory activities with children, the popular education process extends to the structure of anti-oppression that shelters those who are part of the system. In this case, the library director began to acknowledge the different pressures that kept her from having the resources for the children that she needed, as well as her responsibility to confront this corruption. These pressures also caused her to reflect on the oppression that she endured as a female employee, and as a mother and wife. As Paulo Freire wrote, these processes respond to a humanist and revealing pedagogy in which “the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to transforming it.”

On praxis...





The Solferino Transdisciplinary Art Space of Project Matiz appeared when I was trying to integrate different pieces of my life: working with people, art, concern and fascination for nature and the earth, my training as a clinical psychologist, and my professional practice in psychosocial education. Years in the making, this dream swelled when my daughter was an infant, in the many questions that this master's gave rise to in me, in the context of the sale of my parents' house after ten years, and in the middle of the most forceful personal questioning of my story. It was this whirlwind of events that would establish the foundations of this project.



I believe that the need to think about and create a space invariably speaks to the need to transform subjective spaces. The desire is to make this a reality through certain processes, legitimizing it, and it becomes possible to do so in a truly decolonial way if these processes or spaces arise from the questioning of the influence of culture, its systems, and ultimately the colonial matrix of power on my own subjectivity. It is in this vein that the Bogotan artist Martín Alonso Roa poses the aesthetic search as one that passes through decoloniality. “I consider it fundamental to investigate, understand, incorporate, and revitalize the aesthetic form and its narratives as part of my own human conformation.”

One of the most enriching experiences of my life took place during the five years that I studied psychology in Colombia. At the time there was a project called the Comprehensive Training Workshop in Corporeality and Expression offered by the Cultural Sector of Javeriana University, in which it was possible to explore all art forms from a search for sensitive experience rather than technical training. This experience as well as the interactions with the extraordinary facilitators planted in me the possibility of understanding art as a human dimension inherent to our emotions, perceptions, and conceptions, as opposed to external expressions or the refining of technical processes. This process forged in me not only a way of feeling and thinking about the world but also genuine inspiration for my life of aesthetic commitment.



The alternative structure proposed in the Comprehensive Training Workshop of a sensitive search and of critical thinking of the artistic experience made a lasting impression on me and would forever mark my journey, including my Transdisciplinary Art Space proposal. But surpassing this is the aesthetic and epistemic disobedience of a group of artists and athletes at that time. As Mignolo would put it, “disobedience of the rules of the artistic task and of the rules of the search for meaning.” It was a liberating, decolonial proposal whose influence reached beyond the university walls, until the university felt that its Ignatian pedagogy was threatened, and the leaders of the Cultural Sector stepped down.

Another influence on the creation of this Transdisciplinary Art Space was the comprehensive symbolic care model that I developed 20 years ago for young people demobilized from the Colombian armed conflict. This model sought to combine artistic practices such as poetry, painting, handicrafts, yoga, capoeira, and theater with the psychosocial processes of post-traumatic stress management of young people who had participated in the conflict in logistics, intelligence, and combat roles. The basic aim was to create spaces for the resignification and symbolization of the difficult experiences lived in the conflict, as well as re-establishing ties with families, educational support, and introducing career possibilities. This holistic approach was applied to the many dimensions of the young people's lives.

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Only to the extent that they realize that they are "hosting" the oppressor can they contribute to the construction of their liberating pedagogy. As long as they live in the duality in which to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor, this contribution is impossible. The pedagogy of the oppressed—which cannot be created by the oppressors—is an instrument for these critical realizations: the oppressed and their oppressors as manifestations of dehumanization.

-Freire, Paulo, 1970

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In addition to artistic expressions as a play-based alternative or as psychotherapy, for the purposes of social reintegration it was necessary for young people who had been demobilized from the armed conflict to institutionally break that from which they could not be demobilized subjectively. The idea was to propose a model to break the dehistoricizing and reindoctrinating intentionality of the places that had taken in these young people. This model principally involved institutions through three overlapping approaches: the integration of all aspects of life of young people to avoid repeating the fragmentation of war, putting an end to the idea of a new life devoid of history when they were marked by their history in the war, and a resignification of this history not influenced by religious indoctrination this time.

The Solferino Transdisciplinary Art Space of Project Matiz consists of two plots of land. On one an ecological cabin in which workshops are held was built. Meanwhile, the second stage of the project, a theater, is being built: Maloka Matiz, a space for exploration of the performing arts as well as the traditional topical discussions of Project Matiz. Currently, the Casita Mágica cabin can also accommodate workshop instructors and facilitators, as well as artists interested in a retreat close to nature to focus on their work, whether of a personal or communal nature. Located between the town of Solferino and the Yum Balam forest reserve, this space also seeks to be a home to various community arts initiatives.



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The Solferino Transdisciplinary Art Space of Project Matiz is the project of a space for freedom. A space to be, to make a wide range of aesthetic experiences and ethics possible. The decolonization of emotions, sensations, and one's own reflections that allows those of others to also be recognized. This is possible through the creation of new paths of encounter in which we commune with nature as part of our own currently fractured existence. In *Decolonial Aesthetics*, the artist Martín Alonso Roa expresses with great clarity how the possibility of eroding the colonial thinking in each of us lies in the observation of our natural territory: "rivers, forests, moors [...] that have in themselves a language, an aesthetic, and a dynamic, and that await a presence that is more consistent with their history and more careful with their memory."

The Solferino Transdisciplinary Art Space of Project Matiz will soon feature another space called Matiz Gallery Café. This will chiefly be a space for dialogue, bringing together the experiences and histories of Solferino residents: their work, trades, and stories. Their experiences may also be exhibited via different expressions—photography, painting, and other visual arts—contributing to the dissemination and appreciation of activities of the community. Cultural roots weakened by tourist development of the region also stand to be strengthened. The Matiz Gallery Café will seek to provide a space for meeting and exchange that encourages the weaving of stories with art, with openness to alternative narratives to the proliferation of 15 churches in a town of scarcely 900 residents.

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"Decolonial aesthetics [...] seek to dismantle the Western myth of art and aesthetics (decolonize art and aesthetics) in order to liberate the subjectivities that necessarily orient their work to satisfy the criteria of art and aesthetics [...] workshops, round tables, and public debates have been proposed to further the conceptualization of the decolonization of aesthetics and the liberation of *aisthesis* (feeling). In both spheres, both operations with symbolic elements (installations, sounds, bodies, colors, lines, designs, etc.) and decolonial conceptualization, we seek to expand both analysis of the colonial matrix of power and decolonizing processes, working to decolonize knowledge, feeling, thinking, and being." (Mignolo, 2010).

Mexico's muralism tradition is highly representative in Latin America. This art form can be found throughout the country, including the island of Holbox, a mere 30 minutes from Solferino, and whose international public art festival is growing. Solferino does not have any murals, though, despite its proximity to the island. For this reason, I invited a young man in Solferino and a group of graffiti artists from the nearest town, Kantunilkin, to participate in a space in Solferino for dreams to be cast in murals, as we were able to open its doors with the current delegate. In the past, it was these same delegations that prohibited painting on walls and removed any artwork on them. We hope to start this year with a large wall that I was authorized to paint, starting in the park with the children from my workshops at the library.



Arturo Escobar would say that the works are deeply attuned to the relational forms of being in the world. This has helped me to understand that the absence of expression in Solferino—on its walls both indoors and out—was most likely owing less to an absence of desire or artists and more to an absence of political will. Also influential is the growing moralistic perspective spread by the town's approximately 15 churches that such interventions are closer to vandalism than art. The diverse relationships, perspectives, and searches of the town's young people, more than of anyone else, are failing to find spaces and "surfaces as topographies to live on until the beginning of a deep understanding of place and attention to communal logic and interrelationships with the environment." (Escobar, 2016)

Another proposal is to create a different space encouraging the creation, visibility, and listening to of the voices of children and young people through a radio station for Solferino. A computer was donated for this purpose, but it first required considerable technical repairs, which caused setbacks. As luck would have it, a pair of dreamers from Mérida arrived in Solferino to work as trail guides in the new natural park: Isaura and Arturo Barcenas. Isaura is the town's first communications specialist, and Arturo has a degree in mechatronics. Both are passionate about promoting environmental education for children and young people, so we will be meeting again in June to turn this dream into reality.



One of the most important concepts in the development of spaces of transformation is participation. The potential appropriation by young people of their own processes and thinking in this Radio Matiz project could mean the opportunity to create, express, and disseminate their voice. Such a voice would enclose the reflections, questions, and processes dwelling in young people. What is proposed is an integrated process to open spaces within the community that may currently be clichéd or almost non-existent. Once everyday lives and conceptions are confronted by the expressions of the young people, transformations and cultural growth are sure to be generated by this collective, free, and participatory expression.

I had the good fortune to meet Ani and Homero, who enjoy working on topography projects, traveling throughout the peninsula, and volunteering on educational birdwatching hikes in the jungle with children each weekend. With the help of binoculars, they identify and study each species they sight. I decided to join them in the summer of 2017, supporting activities such as a documentary on Toh birds (the “clock bird”), a bird raffle game for children, and “Coloring My Birds,” the first two held at Casita Mágica, with 10 to 15 children participating in each session. This experience of discovering birds and spending time with new friends was very enriching for me and my daughter.



My certificate in environmental education from York University has served to reinforce the importance of alternative educational proposals to the prevailing model of consumption. This is palpable in the case of the children and young people of Solferino, with reflection needed to confront the predatory and touristic growth in the region. Additionally important is the implementation of sustainable practices and education in environmental values to formulate environmental ethics borrowed from the ancestral Mayan culture. Included in these ethics are the relationships and care that this culture has long recognized. It is an educational endeavor to provide both tools of environmental protection and sustainability and a reaffirmation of a profound truth: that we are not **only** part of nature but also, when fully aware of her complexity, are nature herself.



My daughter Zaray's everyday life went from attending the George Brown College Daycare for a few months to spending several months at the Chetumal Preschool in Solferino. This process of similarities and contrasts in their respective approaches to childcare and the gradual attachment to the teachers gave the GBC Daycare director, Debby, an idea. Her idea was to initiate a conversation between the two spaces, an idea embraced by the wonderful preschool director in Solferino, named Chari. The decision was made to create and share "visual letters" to share the scopes, limitations, teaching styles, and teaching processes of each place, in the hope of building a relationship for future mutual support.



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The exchange of knowledge as the possibility of a participatory encounter undertaken by the two schools in Solferino and Toronto promises to enrich both perspectives with practices and conceptions for higher-quality care and education of students. Solferino stands out for its environmental education efforts and use of scarce resources, as well as its warmth and creativity, added to the great dedication on the part of the preschool director and teachers, despite the economic hardships they face daily. The opportunity to participate in a dialogue will also enable teachers to be empowered regarding their work and, above all, allow for great growth for all involved.

The vision of the Transdisciplinary Art Space of Project Matiz derives from the possibility of generating spaces for different languages with graphic, literary, musical, performance (theatrical and dance), and video elements, among others. It will be that time and space in which the children and young people of Solferino can play based on curiosity, exploration, discovery, and creativity, but also based on the conceptions of others, reality, and one's own subjectivity. I have already begun to realize this dream, joining with others to construct the poetics of a project full of possibilities for enjoyment, reflection, care, and joint creation, one that will be both individually and collectively emancipatory. It is a vision of considering life in all of its nuances. It is a nuanced reality.

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The importance of generating spaces lies in the possibility of these being generated in some way in the body. At the same time, however, they are space and creation, that is, a body able to raise its voice, with this voice emerging from a body that finds the space to be voice, form, movement, color, and image. A body that becomes and projects itself into space in a state of creation. Subjects who find in expression a mirror to be adopted or confronted, but who have this opportunity of space in the time of their own searches and personal and communal rhythms. Spaces that cannot be directed more from the body than by their own freedom, and that are but a canvas on which their pluriversality is traced.

Some of the ideas we have for the different spaces are the following: running parallel to the technical set-up for the Radio Matiz space is the idea of creating a radionovela, or serial radio drama, about a Mexican indigenous heroine named Xuxil (tentative name). Such a program would seek to raise awareness of the struggles and methods of indigenous women and indigenous communities generally on behalf of human and environmental rights. The story would be created and told by young people working with the radio station, allowing them to reflect on and identify with the character and her experiences. It would aim to reflect the various challenges as well as achievements and longings contained in the personal and social searches for justice and good living in all real and fictional stories.



Creating and telling stories is part of popular education praxis. Stories let us negotiate, break, propose, and promote new paradigms to transform the reality of oppressed subjects and contexts. The very possibility that young people with precious little space for expression in Solferino could, through a radio station of their own, create the story of a female indigenous leader is emancipatory. It will make known certain, largely invisible paths of both the town and overall region. In the meantime, “Xuxil” has become a pretext for residents to tell each other about their difficulties, longings, and struggles. The goal of this narrative construction is to put forward new narratives of relationships that push back at the boundaries of silence, exclusion, and power.

These women are my best friends in Colombia, one an artist, communications specialist, and storyteller, and the other a psychologist. Passionate women both. Although I had introduced them to each other in the past, they did not stay in touch because I was their link to each other and I live far away. However, my intense personality made me almost obsessed with seeing them work together due to causes, dreams, and even abilities that only I could see. After a great deal of insistence, they began to work together, founding the Arikundiri organization (meaning “I am walking and I am alive” in an indigenous language) last year. It fills me with pride and joy to know that Olga, Hanna, and I have planned the first participatory workshop for May 2018 for reflection on and creation of stories for the women of Solferino.

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The foundation of storytelling spaces is the ability to foster critical dialogues. Also important is the need to build transitions to stories where the pain, mistreatment, and oppression, as well as the longings, illusions, and dreams, of the women of Solferino can be recognized. Narration allows us to both personally and culturally transform those who deny us egalitarian relationships. The former involves the possibility of identifying with and reflecting on stories shared with us; the latter, the possibility of being reflected in the construction of the stories that we are capable of narrating about our daily lives. Finally, there is the possibility that new narratives for both our personal and social lives will result from these dynamics.

Among the wide-ranging visions for the Matiz project is that of strengthening the reading and writing workshops in Solferino, continuing with Mayan and Greek myths and beginning with various Latin American indigenous myths. Also in the works is a puppet adaptation of Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, to be worked on and presented by the children in Solferino and Toronto. The main goal is to enrich knowledge about the diverse and frequently overlapping stories that underlie Latin American mythology and thought. Other goals include highlighting the importance of these stories to the children attending these discussion spaces and helping to promote critical thinking and empathy.



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Both the reading/writing and reflection workshops and those of the various art forms proposed in the Transdisciplinary Art Space are based on the spiral model of collective learning of popular education. These workshops with children and young people seek to challenge inequality in power relations. The spirals also suggest the structural movement in social change. Proposals include the recognition of the experience and knowledge of participants, reflections that identify patterns of inequality, recognition of new information and theories that can be referenced, posing of new strategies for action, and application of what has been learned.

## LESSONS LEARNED

1-One learning element that I have been developing and that is reflected in the TAS is the need to think about and carry out processes and projects via a comprehensive approach. This proposal considers a praxis on different arts and a view that combines analysis of the individual and collective, together with a reading of the subjective and social. The importance of intimate reflection and participatory practices is also highlighted.

2-The ongoing construction of stories that recount decolonization processes is important, whatever the method, art form, or mode of expression used. The goal is to construct new narratives that break with the prevailing power relations and systems of domination, thus allowing for the identification and embodiment of other stories that foster transformation and social justice.

3-In order to promote processes of community empowerment, it is essential to question and deeply analyze from a critical subjectivity that emancipates people from underlying oppression, often even the most well-intentioned social empowerment projects.

4-Create spaces that foster dimensions that the disciplinary tradition and colonization have been undermining, such as fantasy, imagination, play, creation, collective creation, a return to symbol-based reading, and creativity as a form of resistance and struggle. The goal of such spaces is to tear down the walls put up by the colonial matrix of power to divide society. Explore possibilities of poetry in rationality and its potential to support more inclusive processes and dynamics.

5-Popular environmental education, the analysis of ecopsychology, and decolonial thought are proposed as valuable tools that are strengthened through transdisciplinary interpretations. This approach enriches critical thinking and personal and community praxis.

6-Both in the writing—in which I had to go in depth into the different stories of my journey and their various theoretical elaborations—and narration of anecdotal theory, it is essential to strike a tone that is coherent and that at least attempts to approach the subjective searches.

7-The questions that arise vis-à-vis oneself and community dynamics, as well as the expression of both, imply a political exercise in which the Other is recognized from the possibility of examining and transforming oneself.

8-Artistic practices constitute the very dimensions of an exploration of the expression of the community of Solferino, seeking to discover a nuanced interpretation of the current and traditional contexts to connect with nature, their roots, and new challenges in resistance to the economic and tourism development of the region.

9-Despite the focus on transdisciplinarity in this project, a certain irony must be recognized in the posing of a disciplinary approach, the attempt at its transcendence notwithstanding. This is owing to the fact that the decolonial search is fundamentally being proposed from the perspective of epistemological turns that lead to knowledge that is more inclusive, comprehensive, diverse, and emancipatory.

10-The construction process of Casita Mágica became the metaphor for the deconstruction of my own vital moment. Beyond my TAS proposal, the poiesis as a creative impact that entailed the development of my subjectivity has allowed me not only to traverse my emotionality, pain, and oppression, but also to inhabit myself from new spaces.

11-Solferino's richness and warm generosity have allowed me to, together with the community, construct and find hope that at once challenges and liberates us.

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