

In Dialogue

Ecosystem Activation in Latin America: Embracing the Complex Edges of the System

Eva Pomeroy, Dayani Centeno-Torres, Carolina Da Rosa, Viviana Galdames, Laura Pastorini, Janine Saponara, Mariana Suniata-Miranda

In March 2023, 160 leaders and change-makers from 14 countries¹ across Latin America participated in a four-day gathering held by the Presencing Institute² called the Ecosystem Leadership Program (ELP) in Latin America. The program is striking as an example of grassroots action taking place at scale. Participants

¹ The 14 countries represented were: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, México, Paraguay, Perú, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Venezuela; the event also included contributions from individuals in five countries outside the region: Germany, Spain, Kenya, Netherlands, USA.

² The Presencing Institute is an action research institute, co-founded by Otto Scharmer and colleagues, that works globally to support systems transformation using Theory U (Scharmer, 2016), a framework and change process that locates itself at the intersection of action science, consciousness, and social and organizational change. See <https://www.u-school.org/about-pi> for more information.

from multiple sectors, contexts, and corners of Latin America were selected from over 480 applicants through a careful curation process. A system of scholarships was created to ensure the event was inclusive and representative of the region's diversity. The program was supported by 20 partner organizations and was co-held, organized, and facilitated by a group of 28 individuals from across several countries.

Designed around three annual events, the program supports people in learning awareness-based systems change methods and tools, including ancestral and Indigenous knowledge, and connecting in a diverse, inclusive, participatory space that supports collaborative action. Multiple collaborations and prototypes have already resulted from the first gathering, including a participatory mapping exercise in a peripheral neighborhood of Recife, Brazil; an innovation lab at the Public University in Uruguay led by two participants who met on the Program which has yielded four tech prototypes so far; a joint intervention between Peru and Chile for cultural change in an engineering company; a Forum for bio-regional Landscape regeneration in the south of Chile, created and held by six Program participants, and a hub initiative started by Argentinian participants to face political disruption in their country.

In this dialogue, six members of the core holding team from four different countries take a moment of pause between the program's first iteration and the second to reflect on the experience and the conditions that enabled grassroots action at such a scale. They reflect on their intention to create an inclusive, multi-stakeholder, multisector, transversal enabling infrastructure for ecosystem activation in a regional context that is complex, polarized, inequitable, and, often, violent. Acutely aware of both the wounds that come from a history of colonization, genocide, and dictatorships, and the rich, wise, powerful, heartfelt, and vibrant nature of the continent, they consider what it means to offer a space of activation through healing and what it takes, on both an inner and outer level, to do so.

Participating in the Dialogue

All dialogue participants are members of the Latin American ELP core team.

Dayani Centeno-Torres

A communications consultant who applies Theory U tools to support community-centered and social justice projects. She is based in Puerto Rico.

Carolina Da Rosa

Project manager of the Latin American ELP. Based in Uruguay, her work supports projects related to personal and social development. She studied International Relations, is a Yoga teacher and currently studies ontological coaching.

Viviana Galdames

Faculty at the Presencing Institute and Associate at Creek.Presenciar, an

organization focused on enabling human spaces for Latin America. Her specialization is in learning design and the translation of theoretical and cognitive content into experiential learning processes. Viviana is based in Chile.

Laura Pastorini

Lead of Latin America Development & Learning at the Presencing Institute and advanced practitioner and international teacher in Social Presencing Theater (SPT)³. Her work supports the Spanish-speaking community of Theory U and SPT in Latin America and Spain. Laura is based in Uruguay.

Janine Saponara

Partner at Lead Sustentabilidade, an ESG Consultancy. In 2009, she led a project to translate the recently published Theory U into Portuguese. Since then, she has been a facilitator and researcher of the methodology for Portuguese speakers worldwide, including a multi-stakeholder initiative engaging politicians in the public sphere that formed the basis for her master's thesis.

Mariana Suniata-Miranda

Social Coordinator at Movi Institute, Counselor-Director of Diversity at SPORT Club Recife and Researcher at Sao Paulo University, Brazil. She is a nature-human rights builder, change-maker, and advanced practitioner in Social Presencing Theater.

Dialogue Facilitator

Eva Pomeroy

Research Lead and u-lab Faculty at the Presencing Institute and Affiliate Faculty of the Department of Applied Human Sciences, Concordia University, Montreal.

From Seeds to Scale

Eva: I'm coming into this conversation excited to have the time to dive deeper into what you've been doing, because I've read about it and it's just fantastic. I'm aware you're in between the first iteration and the second and it's exciting to capture the work and the initiative as it's actually happening.

You've mentioned that you're in different countries, speaking different languages and working across conflicts, so it's not as if this is a homogenous region. You're really working with what is, and that feels so timely.

³ Social Presencing Theater (SPT) is an embodied social change methodology developed under the leadership of Arawana Hayashi (2021). For a detailed description, see <https://www.u-school.org/spt>

So can we start with the ‘what’: what was and is the ELP, what happened, who came, what was the intention?

GAIA (Global Activation of Intention and Action) was a Presencing Institute program that arose in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a series of bi-monthly, open-access online sessions designed to support a global community to lean into the current moment by practicing global sense-making, help clarify individual and collective intention, and foster new action. The Theory U-based learning journey included guest speakers, moments of collective contemplation, dialogue, and social arts. Over 13,000 people registered for GAIA between March and June 2020 and seven language tracks formed both to make the program available in languages other than English and to curate the content and process for regional contexts. From the beginning of the initiative, a core team made up of the individuals in this dialogue and others formed to offer the GAIA journey in Spanish.

Vivi: I can share the first thing that came to me. I feel that in our Spanish GAIA track, we did a beautiful job of being together, sharing ourselves, taking more care between us, and making a special space for us to create or to be. I feel that we are trying to create this for Latin America: to have a big space where everybody can be seen and be receive. It’s much more a ‘mother’s’ way than a ‘father’s’ way of holding this space.

Laura: Thank you, Vivi—I love this idea of mothering because I think what we did was create an enabling infrastructure for ecosystem activation. This program was inspired by an earlier experience we had with Otto (Scharmer) in Chile which was an activation with 100 leaders in 2022. These were 100 leaders who were very young leaders, activists, and grassroots leaders, and so the idea was, yes, we need to bring the Presencing Institute Programs to Latin America, but also, we want to inform our programs, our methodologies, our worldview with this local experience. We wanted to include local and regional knowledge, these other forms of wisdom from the Indigenous ancestors, but also from the different cultures that live together in Latin America.

It was creating this enabling infrastructure not only to learn concepts, methods, and tools, including Indigenous wisdom, but also to exchange and co-inspire with each other across different types of leadership, different sectors, and different levels of impact. It was also living the experience of going through ceremonies, being in nature, being all together. This earlier program had these different ingredients that made this proposal special and that we took advantage of when activating this regional ecosystem through the Ecosystem Leadership Program.

Mariana: I think the program is the regional expression of the global initiative of changing making after the pandemic [Spanish GAIA]. So now what we must do is we must act and innovate and put people together—multicultural, multi-

language. Even in the Spanish language people speak different Spanish and that's the whole blessing of Latin America. This sort of cycle of regeneration and innovation: being together and being able to see each other and see the other, being able to think differently, being able to relate and face the conflicts, and to stretch a little bit the collaboration.

But, at the end of the day, we must act. There are no more words for everything that we are experiencing all over Latin America. So that's about changing mentalities, changing behaviors. The program is reuniting leaders and change-makers from multiple sectors and multiple contexts to see each other and learn how we can improve our capacities, how we can improve our abilities, how we can relearn—learn again—how we must do things.

Dayani: I agree with everything that I have heard. I would add, looking at it months afterward, that amidst the crisis we are all in, and all that we have to do in our own countries, ELP was most significant because of the opportunity to be and work together. It grabs my attention that the possibility of being together is what holds the vision of a common future.

The objective was to bring people together to learn tools and practices for their own projects, and somehow explore the bigger ecosystem. But, in the process, I think that the most valuable thing that happened was being together after the pandemic. To actually sit down and have dinners together, listen to the music together, experiencing the ceremonies together. That level of connection will be key when we have to actually do difficult or profound work together. This is already beginning to happen. Participants are collaborating on ideas and projects. I think we were not as clear about that result when we were planning. It is a beautiful result that keeps on giving beyond the experience.

Mariana: I would like to echo Dayani's point about being together because we were also sharing traumas, collective traumas. We were also sharing wounds in a very sacred space, I might say, or in a very cared-for space. Leaders care about everything—problems and people—and the question is, who cares about them? Who cares about us? I think that's also a point here, how we can care for the leaders so they can also keep moving.

Inclusion: Opening to the Reality Around You

Caro: I was also thinking about the diversity and the inclusion. That was one of our goals too, to be able to learn from people that are in the margins of the system and bring them to the center. The wisdom of the original people was also a very important part of the program and we had the Abuelas (wise and respected female leaders of the original people). That's why scholarships and the support of organizations were key to bringing in people who otherwise would have never had the chance to come. That's a challenge for us and it's still one of our main goals: to try and bring in people who are doing an amazing job in their communities and perhaps never have had the chance to reach this kind of experience. They have so much richness to bring to the conversation. I also feel

this inclusion considering Latin America as a whole—including Brazil because we also notice that we have a separation that got very clear when we came together—even organizing this was a challenge because of language.

Eva: So, you are doing the thing that so many people are aspiring to do in terms of working across difference and working with difference. How do you manage to do this at the kind of scale you have, bringing in different cultures, as you spoke about, and respecting those and integrating them? I know this is one of the most diverse programs the Presencing Institute has ever held. So, just taking a step back, what's happening? What happened and what is it that you're doing that is making it possible to integrate so many cultures and languages and knowledge systems? How was it possible for this to come together?

Laura: One of the main intentions was to be really inclusive in terms of socioeconomic context. That's why we had a model of support from different partners and also a model of support where those who can pay to support those who cannot pay. We had a really high rate of scholarships: thirty-nine percent of participants received partial or full scholarships. So we could have people who couldn't even pay for their tickets to come, people who live in the middle of the Amazonia, in the mountains, or in very isolated communities. We were really trying to be inclusive in terms of accessibility to the program, and representative in terms of who was in the room. From 480 people who applied, we selected 160 participants who were the most representative possible in terms of sectors, in terms of gender, and in terms of countries. It was a very complex puzzle that we were doing moment by moment because the universe that you have, the total universe of participants, changes all the time.

So, I think that was a really good job that was done around this representative inclusion, but it wasn't only who was in the room but how they were in the room. For example, we have Indigenous people in the room, but what is the place that we give to the Indigenous knowledge or wisdom? Is it just to check that we have it in the program or do we really respect that knowledge enough? For example, the Abuelas⁴ were the ones who did the first program design. The Abuelas, who were leading the ceremonies, did the design of the process. They said, "We have to organize the event design around these ceremonies."

They were the first ones involved and not the last ones. I think that made a big difference. Sometimes in Latin America, it's not so easy to integrate different sectors, different ethnicities, and different classes but we were strongly convinced that it was the right thing to do. We created the container, for both the

⁴ Abuelas, literally translated as "grandmothers," are female elders. In this dialogue, they are also referred to as Elders.

Elders to feel acknowledged and valued, and for the participants to respect the knowledge of the Elders as equals and feel respected in their own diversity and difference.

Being coherent with what we teach is also very important in terms of design. For example, with a fishbowl⁵ we put in the center those who came from the most complex edges of the system. Those were the central voices. We worked on a 4D mapping exercise⁶ with a very tough reality from the Colombian Pacific. It is a place that has a lot of violence, and poverty. It's been abandoned. They have very, very hard realities and their situation really touched everyone's heart. They were really an inspiration for us and putting their story in the center made people realize things they didn't know. We had people from Colombia saying, "I didn't know anything about this reality in my own country."

There is something about being open to the reality you have around you to be truly inclusive and coherent. What we did, for example, with a local activation in Uruguay was that we had deaf people in the room, we had people with different disabilities in the room, we had someone building the 3D mapping with their feet because they didn't have arms. We tried to bring all these organizations that work with disability, with ethnic and gender issues and make the space available for them. We measured the carbon print and compensated for it. We cared about what kind of materials were used in the room, also the food. We had this design and all this structure that was really inclusive but also the spirit of this inclusion was there.

Janine: I think I can bring some reflection on that because since we set up the call, I have been really thinking and preparing for this and what I went through, Eva, relating to my inner condition as a source for this movement is the 'let go.' The 'let go' for me is everything in this process, all the time breaking my paradigms and just listening, really listening and learning from the group as a core team here. Related to the inclusion of participants, I know that, in terms of Brazil, because of the scholarships we were able to have diversity. I know in all other countries this happened too, so I do believe that in our program we should pay attention to this transfer of money from class A to class B, C, et cetera, because we need to provide that. This, for me, must be a goal for us. How can we be inclusive? This is a question and a goal.

⁵ 'Fishbowl' is a facilitation technique that places a small group of participants in the center of a space to have a discussion and a larger group in a circle surrounding them to listen and bear witness to the inner circle members' experience.

⁶ 4D Mapping is an embodied exercise from Social Presencing Theatre. In the structured process individuals are guided to embody key roles and form a dynamic embodied 'map' of the system, making visible its current reality and its emergent potential. See <https://www.u-school.org/4d-mapping> for a full description.

Eva: I actually have a question for all of you. I know that, in my context, you could come up with scholarships but still not necessarily access the folks that you really want to have present because you don't have the relationships and you don't have the pathways, but it sounds like you do. I was wondering if maybe you could say a little bit more about that.

Laura: Yes, I think the alliances were key for that because we contacted key organizations around Latin America that have contact with their own leaders. They know these leaders. For example, we offered these partners the possibility for different organizations to bring some of their own leaders—leaders that they work with, leaders that they have identified that are difficult to reach, that are working in different themes that we are interested in addressing. One organization in Chile got together about a hundred leaders and from those hundred leaders, they took 10 to send them to the program. There was this curator work and many of the organizations that were supporting our programs brought their own leaders or suggested some leaders that they knew. So that was also something that was really interesting. We also chose some of those leaders as what we called ‘activators’ in the program. So those voices were heard in some parts of the program or in some groups.

Activators are special participants that bring an important voice that needs to be heard, most often from the margins of the system. We invite them to play a similar role to "guest speakers" but in a horizontal way, not as mere inputs but instead engaging in the process. They bring a different perspective on the ecosystem, as they perceive it from a place that is not central or hegemonic and, therefore, they are able to activate what some call "unlikely dialogues".

(Personal communication, Laura Pastorini, October 2023)

For example, we had eco-systemic groups to work on five different topics or areas of work: regeneration, social justice, inclusion, wellbeing, and new economies. We wanted to have some representation from new perspectives on those topics that we were addressing, so we brought “activators” with experiences or cases in each topic, to share their stories and co-inspire their peers.

Vivi: Another element that supported and created the proper social field of transformation was to hold classes and dialogue in the Spanish language, translating Theory U and Social Presencing Theater in Spanish gave us permission to access grassroots communities: the real problem owners that we want to work with, so Theory U was accessible only to an exclusive group as consultants. We tried to make Theory U accessible in our continent. We hosted special sessions answering questions and even helped out to fill out the applications, one by one. I think that we also open our hearts and our minds to

these groups of people. We have them much closer, their own reality became OUR own reality, I feel that when we make the U in Spanish.

Laura: We took care of them. When they arrived in the country where the program was, we took care of them from the moment they arrived in the plane to the moment they got back onto the plane. That makes it very easy for people who don't usually travel, for example. We also took care of making them feel included and safe, because for some people it's very usual to take a plane and travel, but some others never took a plane before.

Janine: Following this, I would like to share that in Brazil with the Brazilians, what Laura invited me to do was to really think about the presence of the whole country. I took all the five regions of Brazil, and then I searched; I profoundly researched what were and still are the sources of pain in these regions that we should address. As a continental country, we have a lot of issues but in different areas. In Amazonia, for example, I went to women, Indigenous people, and Black people living in the forest, fighting to have some source of economic activity.

And then, when we were activating regional—in this case, the North region/Amazonia state—and local community leaders, we shared with them this opportunity to participate and, at the same time, our need to attract young and regenerative emerging leaders. It was then I met Victoria—the only Brazilian appointed by the UN as a Regional Focal Point in Latin America and the Caribbean in the Constituent of Children and Youth in Sustainable Communities. She was one of the people that we decided should be an activator because what she represents: she's a Land Champion recognized by USAID⁷, she's from a Black and Indigenous family, and she's recognized worldwide by the French and other countries' Embassies for her work.

This method of searching—through local community leaders—helped us arrive at the right people. For example, I found Carlos, an Indigenous man in Brazil, in Sao Paulo, who is linking Indigenous knowledge with universities like University of São Paulo (USP). Then, in the other four Brazilian regions, the same. So we developed a way of finding people—through alliances, through researchers, calling, searching over the internet and social media. Then, our scholarships and our participants came from this: in which region do we have which pain? This is what should be addressed by our program.

One last thing, the way of taking care of them: It was fundamental for inclusion because, as Laura said, some people are not used to taking planes internationally. There were some people calling me saying, "What about my plane? What about the transportation to the airport?" So, taking care, in some

⁷ USAID is an acronym for the United States Agency for International Development.
<https://www.usaid.gov/>

cases, meant sending money for them because we had the flight tickets, but they didn't have a way to get to the airport. And the language, of course, was crucial. As Vivi said, if it was not in Portuguese or translated to Portuguese it would be impossible to include anyone.

Eva: I'm curious, what is it about Latin America as a region that would make inclusion so central to what you're doing?

Dayani: Well, being excluded for 500 years. Exclusion, as a result of colonialism, is very present every day in our lives—be it because of language, ancestry, or race. It's interesting because, at moments, it's very present, but at some point, it's so common that it becomes unnoticeable, almost invisible. So it's imperative to always bring it to the front... Life, in Latin America, is about always bringing the need for inclusion to the front.

Vivi: I was thinking that even in Spanish Gaia as the first moment, we were really strong in saying, "Hey, we want to serve you in Spanish." Because here in Latin America when you speak English it is because you're really this little, little part of the whole society. Most of the time it is because you went to a good school, etc. so you are part of a small privileged part of society. We started holding the space with that consciousness and strength. We started with our own transformation, holding the space between us and meeting as a team, almost sacredly, once a week to talk about us and how we were leading our own pandemic issues, all this in our native language.

Dayani: That fabric that was woven from GAIA was integrated into ELP.

Vivi: This experience in Spanish GAIA helped us when Laura first had this idea of ELP. We could say: "Yes, let's do it" because we already had our way that allows us to put our inequality, which really hurts in our countries, to put it in front. We agreed: if we do it, we need to be inclusive.

Laura: There is something about legitimating being merged and melted all together, being in the same melting pot. We encouraged and created a safe space for this mix of not only sectors, areas, and levels of impact but also origins, socioeconomic contexts, and beliefs, something that in our region is not so common. People could let go of their identities, which is the key to true generative listening, attention, and action. There was something about this permission that was given to mix and merge and leave the habitual positions that people have.

If you put the marginalized voices in the center, then you give these voices another power. I think it creates a power balance, because a recognized voice of "power" (the well-known Presencing Institute, a Professor from the MIT Sloan School), invites the voices of the margins of the system to the center, which legitimates that movement.

Mariana: The social texture is based on the values of colonization, of being different, of being the one that comes from abroad, the one that comes from the land, the one that was mixed. So it's based on oppression and violence. Culturally

we are still promoting the things, the problems that we don't want to create. But we're still creating them together. So that's the point, how we create abilities, meta abilities, to observe what is happening, including ourselves.

Eva: I'm struck by two things. One, your acute awareness of power and power dynamics—speaking it and putting it forward. Then connected to that is that you live it each in your own domain and your own lives, the power and inclusion issues. So you speak from your own experience of being in a colonized context, and then you're simultaneously reaching out saying, "And from where we sit, there are those who are excluded, and we bring them in." This isn't even a question; it's just what's so striking right now, this acute awareness of power.

Archetypes of the Feminine

Eva: So maybe if there's a question related to this, it is around what you were talking about, Vivi, at the beginning when you were talking about the matriarchal, the feminine being present or being the way of holding the space. The ELP is very much a group of women coming together. So, is there anything there? I'd love to hear you all speak a little bit about that, the matriarchal and power and inclusion.

Laura: I would say that it was not planned, but it happened that we are a lot of women. I think there is something natural in the way that we relate to each other that has to do with trust, with enabling, something about mothering. Mothering brings the reminiscence of the uterus form, creating the container; it's more like container-building than something more directive. I think creating the container, this enabling, creative space, has to do very much with what we call mothering.

It's curious because it enabled a different perspective on gender issues, in a very patriarchal system that has a lot of gender violence, a lot of femicides everywhere, and a lot of gender abuse in Latin America. So, I think that it enabled a different space where we had, for example, what I call a 4.08 gender approach represented in one of the Colombian young leaders of the Pacific, a 23-year-old activist from the Colombian Pacific. He's a male and he was representing a female project, a so-called "seedbed" project of women from very critical and violent contexts. That was something very touching for me, these

⁸ The concept of 4.0 is drawn from Otto Scharmer's Matrix of Social Evolution (see Scharmer, 2016). Originally applied to economic models, the matrix outlines the shift in structures from centralized and top-down (1.0) to decentralized and competitive (2.0), to networked and stakeholder-focused (3.0) to generative and ecosystem aware (4.0). This model, and particularly 4.0, is then applied to a range of sector areas and refers to a mode of operating that is dialogic, decentralized, and operates from an awareness of the ecosystem around a particular issue or domain of work.

new masculinities. I think that happens when you open this kind of space with a different posture, not a patriarchal nor radical feminist posture but instead this more mothering posture or space-holding for whatever wants to happen. It enables a new form of being feminine and being masculine and all the possibilities in between.

Dayani: I'm just realizing something about the relevance of the feminine. It is true that mothering was really important with the Spanish GAIA track, because it was a moment of taking care, of bringing something new to life. But what sustained this experience for me as a team was sisterhood more than mothering. We are very strong women and we have very particular work styles, but no one questioned one another about what had to be done. If Mariana said, "Go there," I went there because we trusted each other in our shared intention for the ELP experience. I want to bring this up because in Latin America we tend to have this myth about the mother and the relevance of taking care of others. Mothering is beautiful, but I really think that what made our team work was sisterhood. I had difficult conversations with people. I know that other people had difficult conversations with each other, but when we had to be there at 7:00 AM and do whatever had to be done, we were committed, available, and totally open to do our part with our sisters.

I think we should highlight this to take it down a notch from the motherhood myth and uplift the solidarity of the sisterhood, which is very empowering. For me, thinking about what I felt in Uruguay and what I feel now, it is sisterhood.

Vivi: I love this idea that in our "in between" moment, between the first and second program, we are talking about moving from motherhood to sisterhood. I love it. In some conversations that we have been having here in Latin America, sometimes it's difficult for us as women to have a voice or to be in some spaces because it's just the way it's been. So, when Dayani says, "You have to be there," I will be there because I really trust in my sister and trust that we are "together on that."

In my personal experience, many times, men or the established power, when they tell me "Let's go there" I go, because it is my nature. But when we get to where we are going, I find that the other person leaves me out, doesn't include me. I don't see it as something about a particular person's personality. Instead it's like a phenomenon learned from school onwards. It is part of colonization too, a way we have been understanding power. Imagine what would happen if power served us to give visibility to what we do not see and include, instead of a power that's about 'winning.'

That's part of the colonization too. It's the same pattern in women and men.

Mariana: As an anthropologist, looking at the gender issue here that Laura brought—that new genders are coming, are emerging, I like this very much because there are many. We are different women with different styles. I would say that I am a woman, but I have a very strong masculine style and way of doing things, so I'm also working with it. The whole team of participants in the

ELP were 65% women and one trans woman. So this is also representative of who is down there on the grassroots doing the change. Who is there dealing with the social problems?

So that's very representative of the way of doing things in Latin America. The challenge here is how we can bring this all together and present it as the way it is. When we are dealing with what is coming from the field, and what is coming from the program, we can see that also that women are leading the initiatives. So that is also an expression of who we are representing, who are the people dealing with social problems. Nevertheless, we are still engaging both men and women because the point here is what Laura said: go beyond the gender issues. It's going beyond.

Sourcing Eco-System Action: Intention, Relationship, Purpose

Eva: This sparks another question. As we talk, the amount of work you have put into this becomes abundantly clear—and I'm probably only seeing a small part of that. When I think about the amount of work that you have put into this, one of the questions that surfaces for me is, what motivates you? What is it, on the most personal level that has brought you here that keeps you going? Your own motivation, your highest hope?

Dayani: What keeps me going, the thing that I love about the team is sisterhood. Why do I do this work? It's a sense that it is good, but it's also a sense of justice. I love that Viviana said, "this needs to be in Spanish and this needs to be in Portuguese and our people need this." I don't care what needs to be done for it to happen, our people need this experience.

Vivi: I can jump there because I remember one moment when we were in the ELP that I was really in my shadow just doing, doing, doing, doing without rest I was moving some chairs in a really crazy way. It was 6:00 in the morning. Suddenly, Flor (another holding team member) who's not here, but she's here, took my hands, looked at me and said, "Hey, what are you doing?" I said, "I'm moving the chairs because we need the chairs and all that." And she said, "Stop, I will do it. Go and rest a little bit." She showed me something I wasn't able to see.

I want that for people. I want people to feel that you've seen them, that you'll treat them with love. I feel that planning our second version of the program we are trying to build a structure that allows people to feel that and that they can be who they are.

Janine: The thing that I believe that unites us in this sisterhood as Dayani said is the same intention. I can feel that we have the same intention for the program, which is to build a container, to allow people to be together, to explore their sources, and then transform some system in their countries when they go back.

Mariana: I will jump in. I think it's Latin America Unite. It's always a very... It's important to look at the bridge that we're building. It's also about the building of this network that began a long time ago. And there are different pieces and elements and many stories that we can tell now.

Laura: I think that building on the community spirit. We walk in circle, we walk in community here. All our traditions, all our Indigenous traditions walk in community, horizontally. Connecting to our source and to that spirit, trusting that that's the spirit that can heal our wounds, bridge the differences and the polarization and all that violence. I think it's reconnecting that tapestry or that fabric, this trust in our inner wisdom and our “basic goodness.” Arawana Hayashi⁹ calls this *inherent capacity*, trusting that we have it and all we need is creating the conditions for it to appear, to come to the surface, to be alive.

One story that I remember strongly was the story of an Indigenous leader from Guatemala. He's a very important political leader in Guatemala. At the beginning of our event, we wanted to have all the voices of the different traditions that were in the room, the Indigenous traditions. He was a little bit reluctant and he said that he didn't want to connect spiritually with his tradition because he was now in a different spiritual tradition, and he was at the ELP only as a political leader. During the different ceremonies, he got more engaged in the traditional practices and one of the ceremony leaders was an Abuela from Guatemala, representing his tradition. At the end of the program, he said that he got connected with his animal of power in one of the ceremonies, who told him to go back to his roots. So he went back to Guatemala and reconnected with his indigenous spiritual tradition beyond the political, so with his spiritual roots, with the source. Then he wrote to me and said, “Thanks for making me believe again!”.

This happened to many participants, I guess, that they could believe again, that they could trust, that they discovered something new. I think that's transformation, right? You need to transform yourself to transform the world. There is no chance of transforming anything if you don't really get transformed yourself. And I think this courageous skill of being able to transform yourself was what we cultivated in that space. Courage needs trust as a basis. That's my belief. So if you cultivate the soil of trust, then you can be courageous to change.

Caro: About your question about our motivation—my personal motivation. While I completely trust this group of women blindly, I also feel like my personal motivation is my daughter and children in general. We had a short conversation

⁹ As described above, Arawana Hayashi is the founder of Social Presencing Theater and author of *Social Presencing Theater: The Art of Making a True Move*, 2021, PI Press.

with another team member, and she said that her teenage daughter had lost hope in humanity. I said, "We cannot allow this." And this is my motivation personally.

Eva: That's a beautiful final comment. Thank you.

Post-script

Laura: This interview touched us all deeply and, when it finished, we had a brief conversation and we agreed that what really moves us and holds us as a team, what ignites and tends the fire is: love. This is both universal love that sources compassion and inspires our work, and relational love or the love between us, that allows us to embrace our vulnerability, connect to our hearts, and hold each other as sisters.

References

- Hayashi, A. (2021). *Social Presencing Theater: The art of making a true move*. PI Press.
- Scharmer, O. (2016). *Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges* (2nd edition). Berrett-Koehler Publishers.