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Common Ground Program and the Collective Healing Circle: A Symbiotic Approach

Abstract: This chapter reflects on the transformative potential of collective healing as an inclusive, intercultural, intergenerational and interspecies practice. It is based on the implementation of the Collective Healing Circle methodology within a five-month residency program by Collective WEBS, Common Ground, which took place in Berlin and online from March 2024 to June 2024 with a group of 19 migrant women artists from 12 nationalities. By intertwining artistic creation with decolonial and biomimetic principles, the project fosters a space for co-creation, healing, and the reclamation of ancestral knowledge, ultimately challenging hierarchical and exploitative systems. The approach presented emphasizes the interdependence of all life forms, extending the concept of healing beyond human experiences to encompass the more-than-human world. The chapter underscores that healing is not merely an intellectual or emotional process, but one that requires engagement with the body, the land and the wider ecosystem. The collective nature of this healing process, grounded in reciprocity with both human and non-human communities, highlights the importance of mutual care, creativity and responsibility in shaping sustainable futures.

Keywords: Collective healing, intercultural, intergenerational, interspecies, artistic practice, decolonial frameworks, co-creation, interdependency, regeneration

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Introduction

Collective healing is an emergent concept that articulates the need to address the harms arising from oppressive and unjust power structures. This concept also conceives of healing as a collective process by which a community acknowledges and addresses shared traumas through promoting resilience, reconciliation, just society and well-being among its members. Thus the individual can achieve healing through collective processes.

What does collective healing mean and look like in times of interconnected ecocides and genocides, and in the face of the multidimensional crisis (political, social, environmental)? Healing starts with an understanding that the harms resulting from these crises, including climate catastrophe, wars, humanitarian disasters, and more, impact humanity at both personal and societal levels. It is important to recognize that these expressions of violence are embedded in contemporary as well as historical power structures, which are justified by exclusionary ideologies.¹ These ideologies not only perpetuate xenophobic, sexist and racialized violence, but also drive the exploitation of nature. As decolonial theorist Walter D. Mignolo² points out, modernity has systematically “devalued lives, knowledge and territories outside its narrow European horizon”, creating a “colonial matrix of power” from which human and non-human worlds continue to suffer. Underpinning these narratives are concepts of “otherness” and hierarchical relationships, which place us, humans, outside the fabric of the living world, creating the breeding ground for its depletion and destruction. And since human and non-human lives are entangled, this process of othering and distancing also shapes the way we relate to each other as human beings.

The present times urgently require a paradigm shift from pursuing economic growth at the cost of extracting and exploiting human beings and other beings in the living world to fostering the flourishing of all. Collective healing may provide relevant avenues to address structural injustices. It seeks to do so through a holistic process involving emotional, affective and somatic practices to transform divisive narratives and discriminatory ideologies, while fostering the solidarity of community. Against this backdrop, this chapter puts forward the argument that the concept of community needs to be better understood by locating it within a broader notion to include all living beings. Consequently, the idea of collective healing needs to allow the “collective” to move beyond its anthropocentric character to encompass the more-than-human who are equally constituted in

1 Greig (2024). *The polycrisis and the centaur: Hegemony, masculinity and racialisation*.

2 Mignolo (2007). *Introduction: Coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking*.

the “WE” and with whom we interact throughout our existence. As noted by Donna Haraway,³ the need to “make kin” highlights an urgent call to move beyond the self-centred frameworks of human beings and recognise the interconnected nature of lives across species. Furthermore, forging meaningful relationships with non-human beings is a way of “staying with the trouble” as a form of resistance against exploitative structures. At the heart of this chapter is therefore the assertion that healing can only fully occur when it encompasses all beings affected by instrumentalizing, hierarchical and oppressive systems.

Through an examination of the Common Ground, a five-month artistic residency program, this chapter seeks to show how it is possible to extend the scope and practice of collective healing (including healing the broken relationships due to the legacies of colonization and discriminative narratives) to the living world as a whole. The five-month residency program, which started in spring 2024 and took place online and in-person in Berlin, aimed to address the following questions: “How might we collectively transform our relationships from the soil up? How can we reimagine the roots of our systems towards interconnectedness and reinvent our relationships with one another and the more-than-human world?” To demonstrate what an inclusive approach to collective healing might entail, this chapter showcases how the Common Ground program applies the practices of collaborative arts as the basis for decolonization, community building and relational restoration between humans and non-human beings.

The chapter first delves into the structure, methodologies and activities that shaped the Common Ground residency. It explores the intersection of the four-fold collective healing process and the artistic practices employed, and seeks to highlight the potential of the arts to (inter)mediate dialogues that extend beyond rational perspectives. In particular, we use the “Flag” activity as a case study for illustrating how the arts can engage participants in collective healing that regards the more-than-human as active agents in the processes of trauma recovery and resilience building. The closing section reflects on the Common Ground’s impact that underscores the power of the collective and inclusive approaches to healing, suggesting that such frameworks are essential to creating sustainable, interconnected communities. In doing so, this chapter advocates for the transformative potential of artistic practices in transcending relational boundaries, fostering inclusive dialogues and co-imagining structural justice. By integrating these ethical commitments into a framework of collective healing, it concludes that a future of co-flourishing—one that embraces both humans and the more-than-human—is not only necessary but also possible.

3 Haraway (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the chthulucene*.

The Common Ground Residency Program

Common Ground was created by Collective WEBS (Weaving Educational Biomimetic Systems), also referred to simply as WEBS, a collective with a commitment to rethinking human interactions through models of sustainability that predate humankind. WEBS focuses on micropolitics, art and education as tools to subvert hegemonic narratives and foster horizontal approaches to learning, sharing and co-creating new possible worlds. At its core, WEBS is founded on the understanding of decolonization as a need for challenging the current multilayered crises as a whole—decolonization of the body, the mind, the land, the systems, knowledges and relationships. Its work is based on principles of community and trust building through educational and artistic practices.

The Concept

The Common Ground program is conceived as a collaborative network based on decolonial pedagogies, collective healing, and horizontal exchange and co-creation. It is rooted in decolonial approaches to knowledge and pedagogies which seek to challenge the hegemony of the Western knowledge canon. This knowledge canon fosters a fragmented understanding of the world and exclusive dualisms—such as objectivity/subjectivity, reason/nature, rationality/emotions, mind/body—in which one is granted with prestige and superiority in opposition to the other. As argued by Achille Mbembe,⁴ Western epistemic traditions separate the known from the knower. They rest on a division as an ontological *a priori*. What furthermore shapes the dominant Eurocentric knowledge canon, according to Mbembe, is that Western canon tends to disregard other epistemic traditions and conceive the West and its colonial relations as the norm. Knowledge therefore plays a key role in imposing a Eurocentric, hegemonic understanding of the world and in the colonial project through normalizing colonial languages and erasing native knowledge, to the profit of Western ways of knowing. Today, school curriculums continue to transmit Eurocentric categories of thought, excluding ways of knowing, being and perspectives that do not fit into them, and thus negating the existence of other experiences, cultures and histories.

4 Mbembe (2015). *Decolonizing knowledge and the question of the archive*.

According to Santos,⁵ there is no global social justice without global epistemic justice. That is to say, that there has to be equity between different ways of knowing and different kinds of knowledge. Decolonizing knowledge is thus a project of disobedience regarding the hegemonic narrative and a struggle for epistemic justice, of resisting different aspects of domination. As formulated by Burman,⁶ it is about resisting:

The subjugation of subjectivities (“Be who we want you to be!”); epistemic domination (“Know what we want you to know and in the way we want you to know; create the kind of knowledge we want you to and in the way we want you to!”); and ontological domination (“Live in the one and only world we recognize as real!”).

The decolonization of knowledge therefore takes place on several interconnected levels: ontological, epistemic and subjective. As proposed by Simmons et al.⁷ in their project for decolonial pedagogy, the goal is to:

[D]ismantle these barriers, creating a tapestry of knowledge that reflects the interplay of realities, cultures, and ideas. These engagements challenge traditional power dynamics and bridge the gaps that have historically divided societies, nurturing a sense of togetherness that transcends borders.

By bridging various knowledge systems, such as Western scientific approaches and Indigenous knowledge, the Common Ground program challenged the rigid boundaries often placed between these domains, as well as the hierarchies which exist between them, inviting participants to engage in dialogues that embraced epistemologies.

At the subjective level, it reconceptualizes community as a way of learning and unlearning, being, relating and empowering one another, rooted in the power of micropolitics and affection. Suely Rolnik, in her keynote for the Guggenheim titled *The Micropolitics of thinking: Suggestions to those who seek to deprogram the colonial unconscious*,⁸ advocates for a micro-politics of thinking to deprogram the colonial unconsciousness that structures our desires, subjectivities and our way of perceiving the world, arguing that the possibility to be affected by others and by the world, in our desires, emotions and our bodies, is a political position inherent to decolonizing knowledge.

5 Santos (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (1 edition).

6 Burman (2016). *Indigeneity and Decolonization in the Bolivian Andes: Ritual Practice and Activism*.

7 Simmons et al. (n.d.). *Decolonial pedagogy and curriculum inventory (DPCI)*.

8 Guggenheim New York (2015). *Suely Rolnik deconstructs the colonial unconscious* [Video].

The Common Ground program therefore framed healing as a collective process taking place at the personal level of interaction and embedded in micro-systems of exchange, emphasizing affection as both the possibility of caring for others and of being affected by them. In this sense, the project presented here is grounded in the recognition of the power of cultivating micro-ecosystems where these kinds of encounters can take place and which shape processes of meaning-making.

From an ontological perspective, in seeking to bring forth the more-than-human aspect in these healing processes, the Common Ground program reinforced the importance of connecting across species boundaries. Haraway's notion of "response-ability" is key here, as she suggests that living together requires "learning to be truly present ... in response and in responsibility".⁹ This framework of response-ability provides an ethical grounding for recognizing plants, animals, ecosystems and other more-than-human beings as co-participants in healing rather than mere resources.

A key element of Common Ground was to acknowledge the multiple elements that form any living system at every level, considering learning processes as living systems that are composed of people, bodies, times, objects, landscapes, weather, memories, language, and so on, where each layer is embedded with potential meaning that co-creates an interactive web. This critical approach to knowledge making highlights the "situated, embodied, and partial" character of knowledge, which emerges in webs and networks of relationships among human and more-than-human actors, including things, bodies, institutions, histories and practices.¹⁰ Learning is therefore not merely a cognitive process but is embedded in the lived body and its interactions with the world.

The Common Ground methodology builds upon the intersection of embodied knowing, decolonial approaches and collaborative arts. Artistic and creative practices affect us through our senses and emotions and thereby challenge the way we perceive and relate to the world, conveying meaning through our senses. As argued by Rancière, art is not merely about promoting social change or being part of a political agenda. Instead, art, especially collaborative art, is about creating the conditions for a different kind of engagement with the world, one that opens a space for the political by disturbing the order of perception.¹¹

During the Common Ground residency, we adopted this ethic by incorporating artistic practices to encourage participants' direct engagement with natural

⁹ Haraway (2016), p. 102.

¹⁰ Haraway (2007). *When species meet*.

¹¹ Rancière (2004). *The politics of aesthetics*.

elements—soil, seeds and plants—as a means to confront their personal histories, traumas and aspirations for resilience. The activities invited participants to work with and consider how natural beings are also impacted by, and are participants in, exploitative systems. As Anna Tsing reflects, species' survival amidst human environmental degradation suggests that "survival is a shared affair",¹² compelling us to consider more-than-human beings as intertwined with human survival and healing.

By placing artistic practices at the center of this process, the program sought to question the way in which we perceive and relate to the living world and to the "other", bringing our individual and collective sensitivities into the process of learning and unlearning. Artistic and creative practices facilitated the group's process of communication and sharing, sometimes on complex and painful subjects, by enabling participants to connect with their bodies, senses and emotions. They also served as powerful tools for individual and collective transformation and for exploring other possible futures and relationships through radical imagination.

The Participants

The participants of the Common Ground program consisted of a group of 19 women and non-binary artists from 12 nationalities and diverse migration backgrounds. The majority of the participants were young people aged between 22 and 32 years old.

The recruitment process involved completing an application form followed by an interview. It was made through a wide open call and spread both in the networks of Collective WEBS and international platforms such as Artenda and Artconnect. It focused on creatives, youth with migrant backgrounds and preferably based in Berlin, and prioritized women and non-binary people. The questions were formulated by the organizers of the program based on previous experiences of similar art and/or education programs. The questions intended to:

- Understand the applicants' backgrounds and interests, as well as their commitment to the collective process.
- Ensure a diversity of creative practices, mediums and learning processes.
- Ensure a safe and brave space of exchange.

¹² Tsing (2021). *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins* (p. 281).

There were a total of 46 applications, with half invited to the interview phase. There were four groups of three to five people based in Berlin, and one group of seven people based in diverse places. The non-Berlin-based group took place separately to address the specific needs of potentially online-only participants and to understand each person's availability and commitment to join the whole process. Every pre-selected participant received the following instruction to prepare for the interview: "Go for a trip on the landscapes of your identity. Bring to the meeting a piece of your fertile soil. Could be: an object, a seed, a memory, a drawing, a sentence or whatever material your inner environment has."

The instruction was formulated by the organizers based on Yoko Ono's book *Grapefruit* as a way to engage the group in personal conversations. After introducing the program structure, interviewees were invited to share their reflections and personal stories, and then reflect and interact with someone else's statement. The main focus at this stage was to see how the potential participants would engage with the individual/group dynamics.

After the interviews, the selection process was based on the following criteria:

- Commitment/availability to the whole program.
- Diversity within the group (nationalities, migrant backgrounds, creative practices, education backgrounds, etc.).
- Ability to engage within a group, to be in collaboration and cooperation with others.

In terms of the artistic practices, the program aimed to have people sharing and experimenting with different mediums and processes. There were painters, performers and musicians, as well as people working with smell, film and digital, and textiles and organic materials. The goal was to promote a space of exchange that invited participants, both amateurs and established artists, to explore their creativity, stories, traumas and resilience in multiple ways. Having multiple perspectives in terms of education background and learning methods was also a premise of the project. The goal was to create a space for participants to engage in mutual learning regardless of formal titles or hierarchies of knowledge. Both creative experimentation and education processes merged in the framework of the project, supported by Paulo Freire's ideas: "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other."¹³ One of the participants later pointed out that for her the selection process

¹³ Freire (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*.

was an important plus of the project as it did not ask for a CV or portfolio. She noted that the process and criteria promoted horizontality within the group, where participants are not measured by their previous titles or achievements.

Regarding the commonalities between the participants, the vast majority had a migratory background, whether through forced displacement, personal choice or ancestral stories. Some had migrated continents to pursue education or better working conditions; others were forced to leave because of political constraints. Much of the group held a multiple identity, with their ancestral roots in a different land and culture to where they were born and raised. The connection point of seeking for belonging even in such diverse conditions directly related to the title and topics of the program: What is and how do we find common grounds?

The Structure and Methodology

The Common Ground program ran online and in-person from March 2024 to June 2024. The key concerns of the program were to acknowledge and recognize the prevailing structural injustices that perpetuate power dynamics and the oppression of certain groups, and to transform and transcend the narratives that separate humans from the more-than-human and from one another, leading to the Common Ground collective's new vision for a more collaborative world. To achieve these objectives, the Common Ground program adopted a three-fold pedagogical structure that included research/inquiry, acting upon our agency and co-creation. The program was structured so that each phase could build on the previous one to facilitate an evolving journey of shared understanding, creative expression and community engagement.

Phase 1: research/inquiry

This phase is rooted in the dialogues between multiple ways of knowing, including Western academic researchers on narrative change, Indigenous science and artistic practices, to provide interdisciplinary and intercultural bases for meaning-making processes. This phase took place in the form of weekly workshops that provided interdisciplinary and intercultural foundations for meaning-making processes by creating a common vocabulary among the participants. By doing so, the aim was to break the knowledge barriers and hierarchies that sustain the current oppressive power dynamics. This was instrumental in fostering a fertile ground for challenging colonial, patriarchal and neo-liberal power structures, as well as the collective narratives that shape our ways of thinking and acting. In

the words of Michel Foucault: “Power and knowledge directly imply one another ... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”¹⁴

In the first workshop session, we explored with Dr David Anderson Hooker the concepts of “narrative change”, “dominant narratives” and “power structures” in order to understand how oppressive structures are reproduced and can be challenged. The second session, with Nontoko Sedibe, took a closer look at “decolonization” and “Ubuntu”, analyzing power structures and inequalities, also within the Common Ground group. The third session, with Carla and Timei from the Janeraka Institute, focused on the preservation of Awaete Indigenous knowledge and decolonization in relation to knowledge and land, as well as art as a means of connecting with the living world.

In the second part of the research phase four artists and activists presented their work. Lis Haddad addressed the interconnection between our bodies and more-than-human beings through the work of Nastassja Martin and her relationship with wild nature, while Silvia Noronha and Olivia Fert questioned our anthropocentric vision of matter and landscapes. Yazmany Arboleda shared his immersive installations and his political commitment. These sessions stimulated reflection on artistic practices to materialize the concepts studied and enable participants to reach out to wider communities.

Phase 2: Acting upon our agency

This second phase is based upon the idea of sharing responsibility for the micro-ecosystem we are co-creating. It does not mean to individualize the solution but to engage with the agency each one has to support the collective transformation. Our understanding of agency is rooted in Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed that regards agency as a premise and a goal: “It is a process through which people—individually and collectively—become aware of their ability to intervene in the world, to transform it.”¹⁵

It was during this phase that UNESCO’s Collective Healing Circle (CHC) methodology was officially presented. A dedicated weekend opened the in-person stage of the program on 4 and 5 May 2024, with the first meeting of the program participants mediated by activities focused on the CHC methods, which are

¹⁴ Foucault (1975). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*.

¹⁵ Freire (1970).

unfolded in the next section. Although elements of the CHC framework were present throughout the program, this weekend retreat was the first time that participants met face-to-face and formally engaged with the four healing components of CHC.

During this phase, following the reflections of the first phase, and with theoretical and practical input from the facilitators, we moved on to the in-person element in Berlin. In order to create a horizontal exchange network where everyone was both learner and teacher, this six-week phase included four hours of creative workshops per week, led by the 19 participants. It was based on Paulo Freire's concept that "Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students."¹⁶

Phase 3: co-creation

The **co-creation phase** was designed using the premises of Adrienne Maree Brown and Donna Haraway, and their invitation to experiment, exchange and collaborate. During this third and final phase of Common Ground, participants spent a month co-creating artworks in different media, drawing on the dialogues and practices developed during the previous phases. Mediated by collaborative artistic and creative practices, this phase was based on the understanding that language can limit the expression of trauma and difficult experiences, while creative practices foster emotion, connection and individual and collective transformation.. In this spirit, this phase involved translating the participants' experiences, reflections and emotions into tangible works of art.

Beyond the "hands on", a deeply impactful part of the co-creation phase was the inherent negotiation within the social dynamics of the group. As a group sharing the same space, the individual versus collective element was constantly being balanced, therefore dialogue, politics, leadership and decision making were some of the implicit learning points of this process. The creative practices were furthermore a means of stimulating the imagination of other possible worlds in which attention to the other, human or more-than-human, and cooperation are put at the centre, inspired by Donna Haraway's concepts of "response-ability"¹⁷

¹⁶ Freire (1970).

¹⁷ "Response-ability" is a term developed by Haraway in *Staying with the trouble* and refers to the capacity to respond ethically and actively to the complex, interconnected challenges of the world, especially in the face of environmental and social crises. Haraway emphasizes that "response-

and “multispecies agreements”.¹⁸ It was also a direct integration and interaction of the body engaging with organic and not organic materials, soil, wood, textile, water, clay, sound, exploring them and relating to them as active actors. The resulting works were presented in a public exhibition during Berlin Refugee Week, which ran from 18 to 24 June 2024 at the Haus der Statistik in Berlin, and invited the wider community to engage with the collective process of the residency. The exhibition extended the dialogue between members of the group to wider communities, who were able to experience and interact with the artworks. As others take part in the process and join the conversation, they too are transformed by the experience. This phase underlines Common Ground’s commitment to creating a healing ripple effect by extending the ideas and practices of the residency beyond the initial participants.

The project also integrated UNESCO’s CHC methodologies and premises, including its foundations on intergenerational, intercultural and interspecies dialogues as essential elements of healing. In particular, the CHC is premised upon a conceptual framework that understands the current crises that deeply affect individuals and societies involve multidimensional harm resulting from systemic historical oppression:

This framework suggests that an approach to collective healing must integrate processes of acknowledging the historical nature of collective trauma, addressing the effects of transgenerational trauma as experienced by the descendants of both the formerly enslaved and the enslavers, restoring and reconciling the disrupted relationships, and demanding and working towards fair, just restorative systems.¹⁹

The intergenerational/intercultural/inter-group dialogue and inquiry (IDI) approach draws on the recognition that following the wounding of exploitative harmful systems, and their enduring legacies, communities tend to live through the pains and sufferings in silence over generations. Therefore art and embodied practices hold the potential to heal beyond the rational linguistic constructions, especially starting with youth, who tend to be more open to experimentation, and then fostering intergenerational dialogues, opening spaces for exchanging

ability” is not just about individual action, but about collective responsibility, attentiveness and accountability to other beings, human and non-human. Haraway (2016), p. 102.

¹⁸ In Donna Haraway’s work, the term “multi-species agreements” refers to the ethical and relational commitments humans make with other species, and challenges anthropocentrism by emphasizing interdependence and the need for mutual care across species boundaries.

¹⁹ Gill (2024). *Collective healing: Towards just societies. Handbook for facilitators and co-creators* (p. 64).

knowledge of resistance, the wisdom of resilience and the practices of healing that have been embodied by generations of ancestors:

These processes invite participants to feel and explore sites of trauma in the body, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, values, and even spirit, as well as those materialising in the complex webs of relatedness between people.²⁰

Reinforced by Paulo Freire's approach regarding the need to look at the past as a way of understanding who we are so that we can "more wisely build the future",²¹ the IDI offered spaces for participants of all ages in the Common Ground program to listen, seek and attend to ancestors through artistic proposals that served as a motive to start addressing intergenerational traumas. In the context of Common Ground methodologies, we also incorporated the understanding of "healing" as a multidisciplinary and multispecies dimension of collective trauma, acknowledging the harmful consequences of exploitative and oppressive systems for the more-than-human world.

Integration of CHC methodology within Common Ground

By organically incorporating in its structure and content UNESCO's four principles for CHCs—acknowledging historical trauma, restoring dignity, fostering interconnectedness and envisioning justice—and by creating a constant dialogue between them throughout the different phases, the Common Ground program created a space for vulnerable sharing, collective learning and interspecies dialogue. Below, we explore the distinctive aspects of Common Ground's structure and methodology, followed by a discussion of how these elements intersected with the CHC framework to deepen participants' experiences of healing and community building.

We furthermore delve into how the body was integrated throughout the program as a key aspect of the healing process. Finally, we will see how, by integrating CHC components and fostering connections with the natural world through artistic practices, Common Ground has demonstrated an inclusive approach to collective healing that goes beyond language and rationality, engaging with the deep layers of trauma and resilience within individuals and the community.

²⁰ Gill (2024), p. 66.

²¹ Freire (1970).

A Circular Approach to the Four Pillars of the CHC methodology

In this section, we will explore how the four principles of CHC are approached within Common Ground, looking first at the CHC weekend, and then more broadly at the program as a whole.

Common Ground Collective Healing Circle Weekend

The Common Ground program's in-person stage began with a two-day series of art and healing activities informed by UNESCO's CHC methodology, which we will be focusing on in the rest of this chapter. Through creative exercises, open dialogue and activities designed to engage the body, mind and spirit, this gathering fostered a sense of co-responsibility, co-creation and co-dependency as bases of healing dialogues that permeated the following parts of the program.

The Collective Healing Circle took the following shape and form. Seated in a circle, and having grounded themselves through embodied exercises, the participants began the day's session with short workshops led by UNESCO-trained CHC facilitators around two of the four pillars. These aimed at introducing the key concepts relevant to approaching these pillars to the participants. In the second stage, the floor was left to the participants to appropriate the proposed concepts by engaging their personal biography.

In this way, the first day of activities focused on the first two pillars of CHC: the recognition of the harms of inhumanity and their after effects, and the restoration of a sense of integrity and human dignity. The workshop of the day introduced the notion of structural injustice, as well as race, class and gender identities, highlighting the intersectional nature of oppressive structures, but also the multidisciplinary nature of the identities that make us up and define us in the eyes of society. On the basis of these reflections, the participants were invited to share their personal experiences. One after the other, the participants present began to tell stories linked to their intimate and family biographies, in a spontaneous and organic way.

As the stories unfolded, they echoed each other, and the participants picked up on elements shared by another person, creating links between personal biographies across geographies, cultures, ages and, more generally, differences. But also, as each person spoke, certain themes became more and more evident and shared by the participants, notably the interconnected traumas linked to gender inequalities, the systemic discrimination linked to forced migration and experiences of displacement, as well as experiences of searching for belonging. Despite

coming from different cultures, religions and nationalities, participants found that power structures and oppressive narratives overlapped and converged in their stories. The group also explored how these legacies continue to shape their lives today.

On the second day, activities focused on the third and fourth pillars of CHC: strengthening interconnection, and envisioning just and sustainable futures. After participating in outdoor activities, the group reconvened in a circle to share stories of resilience and survival from their families and communities. Building on the work of the first day, this activity invited participants to reflect on the strengths and coping strategies of their ancestors and to explore how their cultural heritage has equipped them with the resources to face contemporary challenges. It also invited participants to consider the more-than-human as a teacher of resilience and sustainable ways of relating to one another. The activity began with an extract from Robin Wall Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass*,²² which describes how the "three sisters", bean, corn and pumpkin seeds, are planted together in a gardening method practised by Native American peoples. Based on a biological and scientific study of the interactions between these three species, Kimmerer teaches us how, planted together and thanks to the unique characteristics of each plant, they create an environment where they all benefit from each other's presence. This ecological lesson opened the day's sharing circle, presenting symbiosis as a metaphor for human and more-than-human healing.

Throughout the sharing circles, the facilitators chose not to intervene too much in the powerful process of community building that was being woven before their eyes. Indeed, as the discussions progressed, a process of solidarity and mutual recognition emerged, weaving together distinct but interconnected experiences. After providing a theoretical framework, they mostly let the natural flow of the conversation take over, occasionally stepping in to restart the discussion, as the participants were very engaged and responding to each other.

Very quickly, the group created a particularly deep and transformative space for sharing. One of the reasons for this is certainly the pre-existing connection among the participants forged during the first online phase of the program. After each workshop, at least one hour was dedicated to discussion and sharing of experiences among the participants. This process of connecting individual experiences and sharing personal/intimate aspects of one's life seemed to have successfully created both a common vocabulary and trust among the group, as

²² Kimmerer (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants*.

participants felt understood by one another and began to see themselves in the other. These initial stages thus had established a basic framework for the rest of the residency program, creating a shared space based on trust that allowed the participants of the sharing circle to lay themselves bare and to confront intergenerational trauma by engaging deeply with each other's histories.

We observed that, although we proposed to engage with each of the four pillars, the most intense engagement during the two days revolved around the first pillar—acknowledging historical trauma—with participants intensely engaging with one another's personal and family trajectories, experiences of migration, exile, and the passing of traumas through generations. More importantly, while pillar number two—restoring a sense of human dignity—was not tackled directly, on the second day when pillars three and four were introduced formally, and then throughout the rest of the program, a constant dialogue was established between pillar one and pillar three—fostering interconnectedness—and pillar four—envisioning justice.

One could argue that pillar four was naturally deeply present throughout the weekend, much like the thread weaving the framework of the Common Ground residency from day one, or like the reason the participants decided to join the program in the first place.

Indeed, it was this collective desire and will to imagine other possible futures that made this discussion about individual and collective trauma and this moment of deep sharing possible. And it is also through this collective yearning for other forms of relationship with one another and the living world that the idea of interconnection of pillar three became increasingly tangible within the group. This understanding of interconnection was achieved in a purely organic way, in a collective process that emphasised reciprocity, individual differences and the mutual responsibility of the participants and organisers towards each other in the creation of the shared space. Through these moments of oral sharing, but also through the playful exercises and creative activities proposed, and in continuity with the first phase, pillar three, strengthening interconnection, materialized in an almost tangible form.

This experience within the Common Ground group shows us that, in practice, the four pillars are not necessarily easily separable from each other if we wish to leave the discussion open, as they are implicitly in dialogue with each other.

The question then arises as to whether it is relevant to address them separately. Through the experience of the weekend, and more specifically the in-depth formal exploration of pillar one that took place on the first day, and with regard to research in critical race theory, postcolonial and gender theory, it seems that the proposal of theoretical tools is highly useful for better understanding and articulating one's personal experience in the light of structural

dynamics. The sharing of intimate histories and experiences between participants also provides a mirror effect, enabling participants to read their own experiences in a different light and step back from the traumas and structural injustices they have experienced. It is through this process that critical consciousness (can be achieved, enabling individuals to free themselves from structures of oppression.

It therefore seemed appropriate to maintain a theoretical distinction between these different pillars in the first instance, and then to address them in an organic and circular way in the discussion, adapting the focus according to the needs of the group and the collective dynamic.

CHC Methodology within Common Ground as a Whole

Overall, what emerges from this experience of the CHC weekend is that the four pillars were deployed in a non-linear fashion. The participants in the CHC weekend followed a circular process, moving back and forth between the four pillars and weaving links between them, finding anchor points in the first phase of the Common Ground residency. It appears that the principles of the Collective Healing Circle were organically entwined with the Common Ground program structure as a whole, going beyond the weekend centred on the CHC methodology. The discussions unfolded during the CHC weekend had a profound effect on the collective, and the reflection around these pillars continued in various ways after the weekend, in phases two and three. Indeed, one of the key aspects of the Common Ground residency was to offer participants a space to express their experiences of CHC through artistic means. For example, one participating artist led a workshop offering a poetry writing session, which was later transformed into a performance at the opening of the exhibition. In this way, she captured the collective process of healing and sharing:

So we think we have processed our traumas, and we are aware of our being, but then while doing the exercise, there was this moment where the trauma resurfaced ... it took over you. And you have to find the energy to deal with it again. But this time, you have an entire community supporting you, holding that space for you, being there for you, and you're not alone. And when you process trauma as a collective, it has a certain power, it gives you a sense of belonging, which is not possible to experience without solidarity. And that experience is something that happened during the process of writing our poems from where we come. To understand how deeply our roots go down in history, in geography, in society. To acknowledge that we have so much history with us, and we all are there for it, and we all are witnessing that history and being there and holding it and accepting it together as a collective. It was healing for sure, there is no doubt about it. And I think this collective healing in an artistic process has led to very powerful outcomes, as the poems that then turned into a performance.

These discussions also encouraged participants to look back at their conversations with their elders, particularly their grandmothers, in order to better understand the trauma and resilience passed on within their families. This intergenerational reflection became a deep and recurring theme for the group, reverberating throughout the artistic and creative activities, and culminating in an art installation, *Ancestors Roots*, which was presented at the program's final exhibition. This interactive installation invited visitors to reflect on the themes of belonging, identity, migration and roots. Participants wrote a letter to their ancestor and associated it with a photo of significance to them. Written in many different languages, these letters were an opportunity to ask ancestors questions they had left unanswered and to unearth untold stories that had been lost. Visitors to the exhibition were then invited to write a letter to their ancestors on printed postcards. These are example of the anonymous letters:

You gathered so much knowledge. I feel you trying to show us the way. How do I tap into all you have learnt? How do I stop the cycles that go on?

To the ancestors I know and the ones I have been disconnected from; Thank you! Thank you for carrying me advising me and meeting me at the river. I live in your legacy and you live in mine. Ubuntu!

Dear Ancestors. What did you hope for when you went to the Americas. What were you running from? Where were you heading? Did you feel sorry for the people of the land you lived on? What were your dreams made of?

These engagements with the themes of the CHC, through their materialization in artworks, reached a broader audience. By centering the past on the creation of the future, the hope is to disrupt the hierarchy of progress hidden beneath a linear perception of time—the idea that one can only exist at odds with the other. Embracing our ancestral roots and giving them space in our existence allows us to reunite past, present and future within ourselves, which is a crucial element not only of individual healing, but also of shaping the kinds of conversations across time and space that can foster a sustainable future. The shift from individual to collective memory can play a crucial role in reshaping our cultural and societal identities.²³ This process involves both remembering our ancestral experience and wisdom and imagining how they can be transposed into future scenarios. Allowing a continuous interaction between past, present and future experiences, and understanding time in a non-linear way, is a way of disrupting the narratives of linear progress embedded in Western thinking. Indeed, the idea of non-linearity, or circularity, is echoed more broadly in Indigenous cultures' approach

23 Bachleitner (2022). Collective memory and the social creation of identities: Linking the past with the present and future.

to time, and particularly in the worldview of author Robin Wall Kimmerer, for whom time is often conceptualized as circular or cyclical. Kimmerer also puts forward the idea that the non-linearity of time is linked to a vision of the interconnection between all forms of life.²⁴

The Common Ground program, beyond the CHC weekend, thus offers a space to explore these collaborative processes and alternative temporal frameworks through art, poetry, letters and other forms of entanglement.

Bringing the Body into the Collective Healing Process

A key aspect of the Common Ground residency and its application of the CHC methodology was the understanding that knowledge is not produced in a vacuum but is deeply connected to the bodily experiences of those involved. As anchored in decolonial theory, this perspective challenges the Western notion of knowledge as abstract, objective and detached from the lived experiences of individuals. As argued by Solney Rolnik:

The main operation of Western modernity culture, including colonialism, most important and most successful micro-political operation is the anaesthesia of the knowing body: the anaesthesia of this capacity to be affected by the world, as a field of forces, and this obstruction of our access to sensations, to tension, in order to affirm the ethical, political function of thought.²⁵

Against this backdrop, Shahjahan argues that:

Bringing awareness to our bodies helps us acknowledge and dismantle hegemonic knowledge systems that privilege the mind. Reconnecting to our bodies provides us a different locus of articulation for our theories and experiences. Furthermore, acknowledging our bodies helps us bridge theory and practice.²⁶

The question that arose within Common Ground was thus: How do we restore the feeling body as the knowing body? How could we enact this idea of the body as a bridge between theory and practice? By developing activities and exercises within the Common Ground program, we tried to anchor the ideas and theories at the heart of our reflections in the body's experience in order to truly incarnate

²⁴ Kimmerer (2013).

²⁵ Guggenheim New York (2015).

²⁶ Shahjahan (2014). Being 'lazy' and slowing down: Toward decolonizing time, our body, and pedagogy (p. 489).

other ways of relating to the living and to each other. In this way, we sought to propose activities that encouraged a different way of paying attention to the world and to others.

Throughout the first, online phase of the program, participants were given embodied and creative exercises called “instructions” that were designed to prepare them for the session ahead. Based on the principle of instructions performed by artists such as Yoko Ono or Marina Abramovic, these exercises aimed to disrupt the normal order of things, question our ways of relating to our bodies and our environment, and invite the senses and the imagination into the learning process to explore the themes addressed during the sessions. During the second and third phases, which started with the CHC weekend, centering the body became a key aspect of the collective process.

Common Ground’s methodology therefore aimed to invite participants, in their own bodies and in the environment around them, to share moments of play as a means of creating other forms of temporality and being in the world. The proposed activities were key for creating a space that allowed heavy emotions to co-exist with playfulness and joy. Furthermore, recentring the body, the connection to one another’s bodies, and anchoring it in its surroundings not only prepared participants for deeper, emotionally charged dialogue, but was an inherent part of the healing process as it involved understanding that trauma is stored in the body as well.

Fostering attention and deep presence, we started each day of the weekend with a guided meditation, seeking to bridge the senses, which helped the group to ground in the space and in their own personal experiences, as well as balance the body pressure.

Both days of the weekend also started outdoors, with embodied exercises aimed at fostering awareness and connecting participants to themselves and the surrounding landscapes around them. These exercises were also moments of play and non-productive time, where the body explored movements and gestures outside its usual repertoire, with a view to inventing other possibilities for action.

For instance, in the exercise titled “Singular movement, plural resonance”, participants gathered and formed a circle in the green area of Treptower Park, along the river Spree, in the south of Berlin; each person was then invited to create a movement, which could be a dance or an expression, and the whole group would imitate the moves. Afterwards, anyone could say the name of another person and the group would remember and reproduce the named movement. This exercise brought the group together in a joyful experience where trust and vulnerability were invited to the space in a moment of freedom of expression. The necessity to pay attention to other’s movements in order to replicate them seemed to foster an awareness of the relational values between the individuality and the collective.

Participants were then invited in a series of exercise to run, walk, look up the sky and look down to the earth in order to foster a grounding in the environment and to enter in relationship with the more-than-human beings that surrounded them. Another outside and embodied activity we proposed was about disobedience, where each participant shared a story of disobedience while also disobeying the normal “order” where one talks and the other listens. Here they were invited to stand in a line in groups of five, with their shoulders touching, and share their story to the larger group with a rule to interrupt one another. Listening not only to each other’s voices, but also to the movement of their bodies that accompanied their speech, this activity invited them to become one organism, the movement of one body interrupting the other, and to co-create a new collective narrative of disobedience.

With this invitation to embody disobedience, to create a disobeying collective body, as well as to establish relationships with more-than-humans beings, these exercises aimed to remind participants of their inherent place within a broader ecological system, one that has supported both human and non-human regenerative strategies across generations. This was also a key element of the Flag activity, which accompanied the second collective healing circle, and which we will explore in the next section.

Challenging traditional, mind–body dualisms, Common Ground thus aimed at emphasizing the importance of lived experience and the ways in which the body is involved in knowledge and meaning making. Inspired by Donna Haraway’s work, “embodying knowledge” is linked to the idea that human beings are always situated, embodied subjects, whose experiences of knowing are shaped by their physical, emotional and social contexts.²⁷ Knowledge is not just something we acquire or think about abstractly but something we “do” in the world, informed by our lived, embodied experiences.

The Flag Activity: A Case Study of Art, Interspecies and Healing Processes

This part delves into the co-creation of what became the artwork entitled *Flag*, which was one of the most powerful activities, connecting past and future, materialising the reflections unfolded in the previous sections around the cyclical nature of time, our interconnection with the living world, as well as bringing the focus on

27 Haraway (1988). *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*.

the body and the senses in the healing process through artistic co-creation. Bringing together the different CHC pillars, it highlighted how art can bridge the realms of human and more-than-human in a collective healing process. Conducted on the second day of Common Ground's CHC weekend, this experience invited participants to interact with soil, seeds and each other's stories, using art to embody and materialize a symbiotic relationship that acknowledges both trauma and resilience. Through the Flag activity, participants co-created a shared symbol of regeneration, embedding stories of pain, ancestral resilience and visions for collective healing in an organic, tactile piece of art.

Part One: Soil, Patterns and Interconnection of Traumas

As we were researching how to anchor the CHC within creative practices, we developed the idea of the soil as a metaphor for collective healing. We drew on recent research that explores the metaphorical use of soil in collective healing processes, particularly in contexts of environmental racism and colonial legacies. It is a potent metaphor to address historical injustices and promote socio-ecological repair.²⁸ Artists have also used soil-related imagery to reconnect with land and challenge colonial narratives, and soil-based metaphors have been used to discuss Indigenous knowledge and land ownership.²⁹

For this activity, we invited the participants to sit in a circle around a large blank canvas with a pile of soil in its centre, symbolising both the ground we come from and the earth we return to—a visual and sensorial presence of our interconnectedness with the more-than-human world. Facilitated by the CHC-process mediators, the sharing circle began, and participants were invited to vocalize their personal stories of generational, individual and/or systemic traumas and life wounds. We connected these with the idea of “poisoned soil” as a materialization of harmful narratives and systems, highlighting the idea that the poison can contaminate the soil but is not the soil itself, and the soil's potential to be healed. Just as oppressive narratives can contaminate an individual's and communities' inner landscape, so too can society's historical harms linger in the collective memory. But soil teaches us the capacity of restoration when nurtured. This metaphor became especially poignant as participants discussed their migration experiences, the search for belonging, the multilayered identities they

28 See Shostak (2022). ‘When you heal the soil...’: Environmental racism and socioecological repair in contemporary urban agriculture; Goburdhone and Dombroski (2023). Thinking with soils: Can urban farms help us heal metabolic rifts in Aotearoa?

29 Pongen & Bosman (2023). Epistemologies of Land Relations in India's Tribal Frontier.

carry, and the current disturbing moment we are witnessing with correlated genocides and ecocides.

As they did so, each story shared was accompanied by a gesture of taking soil from the pile and spreading it outwards from the centre. The soil patterns traced pathways, each beginning at the core and branching outward, visually representing the interwoven stories of harm. The sharing of these stories thus involved not only speech, but also a movement of the whole body to reach for the soil at the centre of the circle and to spread it on the canvas. This gesture, as well as the tactile interaction with soil, was grounding, allowing participants to focus on the movement and let the story flow, feeling the earth in their hands, shaping its way on the canvas and witnessing how each contribution joined the others.

The stories and emotions shared revealed our collective capacity to build homes and trust that are not only tied to a place but to the communities we create and sustain. One participant said about the whole Common Ground Process:

There were so many emotions. And it's not just the good ones. We are all collectively sharing and feeling and breathing. We shared our rage and were able to confront each other about certain things that people may have made us feel... There is so much more vulnerability that comes into that when you can share some of your fears and insecurities with another person. You can see it in the art that we have created together, and you can see it in our process and how it's part of unlearning that you are not a burden to other people, and that we are actually caring, deeply caring about each other. We are a community and that's what it means to breathe collectively. When someone else feels alone, angry, or if they are feeling grief, I want that to be part of the conversation as well. And I feel like since day one we had that.... And without that vulnerability we can't create the kind of spaces that we have created.

The soil became more than a passive element but instead an actor in the sharing process, holding memories, texture, colours, smells and knowledge just like each story in the room, and allowing participants to let go of their stories as they let go of the soil, depositing it in the collective space.

Part Two: Seeds, Ancestral Resilience and Shared Roots

For the second part, we invited participants to draw from the experiences and strategies of their ancestors, and to reflect on what these can teach us about how to collectively and individually face contemporary issues. The sharing also sparked a collective desire to engage more with our roots and an awareness that the future is not about the new but about the sum of the roots of the past and the seeds we nurture in the present. Robin Wall Kimmerer's introductory

reading furthermore highlighted the potential for collective growth and transformation when individuals bring their individuality and gifts to a shared space, while fostering an environment where everyone flourishes.

Inspired by this concept, participants approached each other in a spirit of mutual support, with the intention of confronting and healing deep-rooted traumas together.

With each story of resilience shared, participants created patterns with the “three sisters” seeds on the canvas, honouring their communities, memories and lands, and paying homage to the resourcefulness of those who came before them. Seeds, representing potential and regeneration, symbolized the enduring capacity to grow and transform. Seeds hold memories of life, and they carry along the knowledge of how to thrive. As participants added seeds to the canvas, they also honoured the symbiotic relationships of their ancestors, both human and more-than-human entities, seeing these connections as integral to survival and flourishing, and as knowledge sources. As the participants engaged with these elements, the lines between personal and ecological healing blurred, challenging the traditional separation of human and non-human experiences. At the end of the activity, the emphasis slowly shifted from acknowledging trauma to celebrating resilience, drawing upon ancestral wisdom and more-than-human connections to foster a vision of healing that extends beyond the individual and human collective.

The seeds were placed deliberately, each representing a story, memory or lesson passed down. This act of artistically seeding was a moment of collective ritual, the planting and cultivation of collective intentions, repeated practices of vulnerability, and other forms of interrelation; with the aim of restoring the soil we share and make it possible for other futures to emerge. These contributions were fixed on the canvas to ensure that the patterns of soil and seeds would hold. In this way, the canvas became a living representation of this shared ritual, containing both the weight of the past and the possibilities of regeneration. We called it *Flag* to represent the territory of coexistence for the wounds and the healing, the ancestors and the future, the humans and more-than humans.

Indeed, *Flag* became a symbol of the Common Ground project’s core aim: to create a space where every participant—human, plant, soil and spirit—is co-responsible for the whole belonging. Through this collective and emotional process we became more aware that challenging coloniality and intergenerational trauma and seeking collective healing require articulating a political ecology. A political ecology recognizes the imperative to address the wounding inflicted upon the human and the more-than-human through systemic transformation.

Conclusive Remarks: Healing as a Collective, Collaborative and Co-creative Practice

This chapter has proposed an approach and application of collective healing as an inclusive practice that draws on intercultural, intergenerational and interspecies collaboration. By extending learning and collaborating to the more-than-human, and recognizing our entangled lives within ecosystems, this approach offers a pathway to resist the oppressive forces that underpin modern systems of exploitation and exclusion. The project's emphasis on an intercultural, intergenerational and interspecies dialogue was especially evident in the process of creating *Flag*—a hands-on, sensory engagement with both the traumas and hopes of human and non-human communities that explored the always under-creation beauty of coexistence.

Weaving Artistic and Co-Creative Processes into the CHC Approach

Artistic practices played a central role throughout the CHC process. For instance, to conclude each day, participants were invited to take part in a multisensory art experience combining sound and painting with clay and pigments, incorporating the movements of their brushes and hands into a soundscape. Each participant was provided with brushes, clay, pigments and glue, as well as a canvas on a wooden support to which a sensor was connected. This painting moment invited participants to paint, inspired by the discussions and emotions shared during the day. Each brushstroke contributed to an audible representation of the individual experiences, merging the visual and auditory elements into a unified creation. This artistic activity underlined the collective aspect of trauma and resilience by making each participant's contribution an integral part of the soundscape experienced by all, creating a profound sense of co-responsibility and interdependence.

By engaging in material and visual practices—such as working with seeds, soil and the canvas—participants were invited to create tangible representations of their experiences and to deposit the emotions linked to trauma outside themselves. This act of creating something material allowed for the emotional weight to be expressed in a form that could be transformed and moved beyond, opening up the possibility for healing.

Through somatic practices, embodiment and affect, the artistic process allowed for a shift not only on an intellectual or emotional level, but also within

the tissues of the body itself. This embodied dimension of art making enabled participants to know their experiences not merely as concepts or ideas but as lived, physical realities. The creative act, in its incarnated form, became a powerful tool for deep, somatic change at both the individual and collective levels.

Artistic creation within a collective also enabled and facilitated encounter and connection among participants who hadn't physically met before, which enabled the trust and vulnerability necessary for collective healing. For instance, it offered ways of meeting and communicating spontaneously, beyond language, by doing something together, by sharing a physical space, and by listening to others' proposals and responding without using language but by involving the senses, emotions and affects. In this way, artistic practice enabled a field for experimentation, creativity and imagination that was essential to the CHC process.

By weaving together CHC's methodology with the decolonial and biomimetic principles of Common Ground, this weekend created an experimental space for participants to reclaim their ancestral heritage as a source of resilience, creativity and resistance, ultimately sparking important steps for collective healing. The weekend demonstrated that healing is not solely a rational nor linguistic process but involves engaging with the body, mind, spirit and the wider web of life. Through art, participants explored the complex relationships that sustain them, imagining futures that honour the dignity and resilience of both human and more-than-human communities. This weekend, in many ways, laid the foundation for an ongoing commitment to collective healing, underscoring the potential of creative, inclusive approaches to foster healing in ways that language and reason alone cannot.

The act of working directly with earth and plant life, notably during the Flag activity, created a tangible connection to themes of growth, decay and renewal. By "making kin" with natural materials and recognising the resilience of seeds and soil, the Flag activity embodied Haraway's call for cultivating kinship that goes beyond blood relations or human-centric ties. The activity demonstrated that healing is a non-linear process which can involve cycles of death and rebirth, mirroring ecological patterns and offering insights into how resilience can be developed through reciprocity with the more-than-human. This hands-on experience showed that healing is not a solitary act but a collective, interdependent process that encompasses not only humans but the ecosystems, materials and stories that shape and sustain us.

Making Kin—Incorporating the More-than-Human into the Healing Process

For CHC and IDI methodology this might be a path to be deeply explored and incorporated in the future. Some concepts may be expanded or transformed, such as the concept of “dehumanization”, which, while seeking to address the harms created by oppressive and exploitative structures, is inherently anthropocentric and excludes non-human elements. This concept furthermore often assumes a universal humanity, implying a shared identity or set of attributes which characterize humans. However, this overlooks the multiplicity of cultural understanding and worldviews related to concepts of humanity and personhood. Different groups, depending on their historical, social and cultural contexts, experience and conceptualize dehumanization in vastly different ways. A framework of dehumanization that doesn’t account for such differences can risk imposing a one-size-fits-all definition of humanity, reinforcing the very imperial and monocultural assumptions it seeks to critique.

Some interesting questions that arise in regard to the CHC methodology include: How could non-human elements be incorporated into the healing process? How could non-human agencies be acknowledged for resilience and resistance processes? What language could be used to facilitate this understanding? How could the hierarchical and harmful divisions between the multiple humanities and the non-human world be reconciled and thus shift towards a collaborative mindset, starting from the field of well-being in projects and methodologies like this one?

Ripple Effect

Concluding this chapter, one question remains: How does this experience continue to unfold beyond the program participants? We must consider how to ensure that these collective healing processes truly resonate with social struggles that demand direct action, such as the reorganization of economic resources, the decolonization of knowledge and the rebuilding of communities destroyed by decades of exploitation.

The collective healing process appears to have created a space where participants could heal together and support one another in a process of acknowledging trauma, holding space for one another’s emotions. As a result, they left that space with a stronger sense of self and individuality, and of what they can give to their communities, which mirrors the lesson of the three sisters explained by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

In the words of a participant artist:

I feel much more confident in my capacity for what I can handle. I feel like a person who can make things that matter. I feel like I know better where my strengths are. I know the ability I have to create the things I want to see in my community. And I never thought I have the drive or the creativity or this effect on people. I feel activated, I feel like I've been charged. That it was always inside of me and I didn't know how to bring it out.

As Brown points out in *Emergent Strategy*, “what we practise on a small scale sets the patterns for the whole system”.³⁰ This underlines the importance of everyday acts that shape and reshape collective relationships. The collaborative and embodied approach of the project encouraged participants to experiment with and develop practices of horizontal sharing and radical empathy that recognize more-than-human beings as essential allies, an active part of the creation of the ecosystem, helping participants to shape a practice of collective healing that transcends human concerns alone. This transformative and regenerative experience awakens in the participants a sense of responsibility to keep acting for a more just and sustainable future.

As one participating artist put it:

I think that as artists and participants in this residency, it is our responsibility to give and share, and this residency has been all about that, giving, taking and exchanging, learning laterally and horizontally, understanding each other's strengths and weaknesses, and then collaborating on that basis. It hasn't all been easy, but that's the process and that's what makes it worthwhile. For me, it's certainly about growing like a tree.

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