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Rethinking Creativity from the “South”: Alternative Horizons Toward Strengthening Community-Based Well-Being

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Introduction

The global South is not a geographical concept, even though the great majority of these populations live in countries of the Southern hemisphere. The South is here rather a metaphor of the human suffering caused by capitalism and colonialism at the global level, and a metaphor as well of the resistance to overcome or minimize such suffering... It is a South that also exists in the global North. (Santos 2012: 51)

How we conceive creativity in a society is based on what we believe about the sociocultural and political nature of this society. For the purpose of this chapter, we understand a paradigm as a worldview, a way of ordering and simplifying the perceptual world's complexity by proposing certain fundamental assumptions about the nature of the universe, of the individual, and of society. Bertrand and Valois (1980, 1992) define a sociocultural paradigm as the action exercised by a society as a result of its activity, on its social and cultural practices. It requires the combination of five elements: a concept of

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V.P. Glăveanu (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Creativity and Culture Research*, Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-46344-9_17

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knowledge; a concept of relations among persons, society, and nature; a set of values; a way of doing things; and an overarching sense of significance. Weaver and Olson's (2006: 460) definition of paradigm reveals how conceptual and practical understandings of various notions, like creativity, can be affected and guided by a certain paradigm by stating, "paradigms are patterns of beliefs and practices that regulate inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is accomplished". Additionally, for De Souza Silva (2013, 2014), a paradigm is a basic way of perceiving, thinking, valuing, and doing associated with a particular vision of reality in a given society or community. Paradigms are normative; they determine what individual's or community's views are considered important and unimportant, reasonable and unreasonable, legitimate and illegitimate, possible and impossible, what to attend to and what to ignore. Thus all theories, including theories and purposes of creativity, are, ultimately, paradigm based (Granger 1994).

First, we start our chapter by telling the story of a small rural Colombian community that struggles to resist the development of a large mining project called *La Colosa*. This case is illustrative of the many examples of South American rural communities confronting the enormous pressure of economic powers interested in exploiting their territories and resources. In those cases, rural community members need to spend an enormous amount of energy in defending themselves from different life-threatening situations caused by extractive activities rather than dedicating that same energy in pursuing creatively their dreams for a better life. We use the story of *La Colosa* as a practical example that highlights the various ways of understanding the notion of creativity (i.e., oppressive creativity, creativity of resistance, and transformative creativity) according to different actors' understanding of development, economic interests, and power. By *oppressive creativity*, we refer to the tools and interventions used by local, national, and international elites to strengthen their geopolitical and economic dominance through wealth accumulation by means of access to the inexpensive labor and natural resources of the South (Escobar 1998a, b). By *creativity of resistance*, we refer to the beliefs, strategies, and practices that different persons or groups of people have learned to use to face oppressive situations (Campbell 1988; Emery 1993). By *transformative creativity*, we refer to the efforts made by various populations in the world to reimagine their own realities by breaking unequal conditions and build community well-being (Hidalgo et al. 2014; Tapia 2008; Walsh 2015).

We present the case of *La Colosa* as an entry point to discuss the paradigmatic foundations of the various conceptual and practical ways of defining the notion of creativity. For us, sociocultural paradigmatic foundations are

essential in developing an understanding of differing conceptions and practices of creativity and their potentialities to set the stage for venturing beyond ideologies of individualism, consumerism, and commodification of human activities that are increasingly influencing creativity theories nowadays.

In the second part of the chapter, we further develop this discussion about creativity from what Santos (2012) proposes as “*the epistemology of the South*”. This means unveiling the oppression and discrimination caused by capitalism and colonialism upon different social groups. It also means the retrieval of alternatives of life, conviviality, and interaction with nature, systematically ignored by Western mass-produced models of development, with the impact of global emissions on climate change (Saussay 2015).

Third, we end the chapter by addressing the notion of creativity from the perspective of a decolonial and symbio-synergetic paradigm. As an entry point to this discussion, we give an account of an ongoing Colombian community–university engagement initiative (started in 2013) as a practical example of one of the ways of actualizing the notion of creativity as a collaborative and transformative practice within a decolonial and symbio-synergetic paradigm viewpoint.

“La Colosa”, an Example of the Creativity of Oppression and Resistance

A recent report (Pulido and CSC 2013) examining the corporate practices of the London-listed AngloGold Ashanti (AGA), active in gold mining in Colombia, describes the key features of one of their mining projects as follows:

In 2009, AngloGold’s Colombia Project Manager envisaged an open-pit mine at La Colosa with an ore production rate of 20 to 35 million tons per year. Such a production rate would deliver between 591,600 and 1,035,300 ounces (oz) of gold per year. The larger figure would rank La Colosa as the fifth highest gold producing mine (per annum) in the world and would eclipse the 2011 annual production of both of AngloGold’s current largest operations: Vaal River (South Africa, 831,000 oz/year) and West Wits (South Africa, 792,000 oz/year). (Data from AGA in Pulido and CSC 2013: 9)

La Colosa is an enormous project whose impacts on the environment have not been fully grasped by the majority of the Colombian society. Fifty hectares of the *La Colosa* project are located within a protected *páramo* zone (a unique Andean ecosystem with natural water springs). Mining activity in ecosystems

such as *páramos* poses huge risks for local populations. The 100 million tons of waste rock that would potentially be deposited in valleys near the mine have a high probability of causing acid mine drainage. According to the company's own figures, *La Colosa* will have one of the largest *tailings storage facilities* in the world for storing toxic waste. Also, the planned industrial processing plant will use a projected 140 megawatts (MW) of electricity, which is more than twice the installed capacity of the regional hydroelectric plant (Pulido and CSC 2013: 6). Furthermore, AGA needs approximately 1.0 cubic meter of water per second to process each ton of mineral, which then requires 31.5 million cubic meters of water annually (Cabrera and Fierro 2013).

There has been resistance by the local rural community to *La Colosa* mining project as soon as the leaders of the rural community learned about its social and environmental impacts. According to Velandia (2015), this local resistance originated from *Campesino* small-scale farmer organizations and gradually grew to involve regional and national organizations. Local leaders supported by environmental organizations and universities began an information campaign and judicial actions to counteract the AGA project in the region. Regional and local authorities had to respond to the manifest protests of their citizens. In 2012, villagers obtained a decision from the regional environmental authority, Cortolima, ordering AGA to halt the mining project. In January 2013, the villagers blocked the route to the AngloGold site, and homes and businesses in the area displayed banners opposing the mining activity. The company responded by asking a local judge to suspend the Mayor of Piedras, a small municipality of 5370,¹ for refusing to remove the blockades and failing to protect the freedom of movement of AGA's employees. Local people conducted a vigil at the entrance to the village while being threatened by individuals driving by in unidentified cars. Then, a successful referendum was held in Piedras. This referendum was the first of its type in Colombia and became exemplary in the country and around the world. An enormous effort was invested by community leaders in educating locals about how the gold mining project would affect their territory and landscape forever (Cante and Corredor 2013). A vote was held on July 2013 and 98 % of voters said "No" to the mining project. This event prompted several other municipal bans on mining elsewhere in Colombia. In response, however, the central government passed a Decree 934 in 2013 declaring that local referenda and municipal bans have no legal validity as mining is under the jurisdiction of the national government. The judicial dispute continues to this day (Llewellyn 2013).

¹ Perfil municipal de Piedras. Bogotá: DANE, Boletín Censo General de 2005. Available in: http://www.dane.gov.co/files/censo2005/PERFIL_PDF_CG2005/73547T7T000.PDF

The case of *La Colosa* illustrates the longstanding history of resistance of Indigenous, Afro-descendent and Mestizo *Campesino* communities, the main inhabitants of rural Colombia. They have suffered the most from the impacts of land expropriation for extensive mining, cattle, and monocultivation activities (Mondragón 2006; Machado 2011; Garay 2013). As it stands, the extractive economy driving Colombia development jeopardizes the nation's biodiversity and food security. The 2015 census on rural Colombia showed that 70 % of its food supply still comes from family agriculture (Machado 2015). On the importance of small farmers, see GRAIN 2014). However, neoliberal reforms that stimulate agro-industry for exportation, instead of supporting small-scale farming, has transformed Colombia into a net import nation of food products that were previously grown locally. Despite this, Colombian people, through very different civilian organizations, educational projects, and nonviolent social movements, are creatively developing different initiatives toward a future as a sustainable and environmental-friendly country (i.e., Colectivo Agroambiental 2013), and are avoiding the risks of losing its rich bio-cultural diversity, one of the highest in the world (Maffi 1998, 2005). For example, since 2012, the authors of this chapter have witnessed a similar process in the defense of the Dormilon River and its ecosystem by the local members of the municipality of San Luis, Antioquia, against a private energy company. In this situation, the legal process favored the local community claims (Gómez 2015).

Creativity Within Industrial and Neoliberal Paradigms

Acknowledging the social nature of creativity, Glăveanu (2013, 2014) proposes a *five A's model* that defines creativity in relation to (at least) five elements: actors, audiences, artifacts, actions, and affordances. These elements are relational in nature: actors are defined by their interaction with audiences, action engages existing affordances and generates new ones, artifacts can become agents within creative work, and so on. We recognize the *relational* character of this creativity model; however, what we see missing in this conceptualization is how to interpret the conflicts that emerge between elites in power and the social groups resisting their oppressive practices, the ones that keep the oppressed in poverty.

The case of *La Colosa's* mining project is an example of the kind of conflicts resulting in the use of creativity by one of the actors to oppress and control rural communities. Practices of oppressive creativity are also manifestations of

ways the industrial and neoliberal sociocultural paradigms come into play in the life of community members in rural Colombia. These paradigms driven by positivist assumptions about knowledge and about the relationships among persons, society, and nature come to underline the way creativity is understood and practiced. Within these paradigms, the following constructs frame the understandings of creative actions: (1) first, the primacy of humans over non-humans and ecosystems; (2) second, the treatment of non-mainstream groups as different and inferior as a result of and through the imposition of knowledge–power relations; (3) third, separation of nature and culture; (4) fourth, the priority of the autonomous individual over community well-being and goals; (5) fifth, the belief in objective knowledge, reason, and science as the only valid modes of knowing and creating; and (6) finally, the cultural construction of the economic system as an independent and self-regulating entity outside of social relations. The individual is subordinate to society as a whole as s/he is mainly seen as a “cog” in the larger economy and competitive system (Bertrand and Valois 1980, 1992). With globalization, the industrial paradigm has been reframed within the values of neoliberalism (Paquette and Fallon 2010; Restrepo Botero 2003).

Neoliberal societies redefine all social domains (among them creativity) in terms of the economic, a domain best governed by the rational choices of entrepreneurial individuals. In this discourse, society becomes synonymous with the market, and individual advantage prevails over concern about the common good and well-being. Lying underneath all these various meanings, neoliberalism suggests an indirect form of control through economic and cultural dependence—it describes the continued control of former colonies through ruling local elites compliant with neocolonial powers—over populations that are exploited for their labor and resources (Ashcroft et al. 1998).

Basically, neoliberal societies expand economic rationality to all spheres of human actions/interactions (Escobar 2010). In the former European and Anglo-Saxon colonies, neoliberalism builds upon what Latin American scholars have called the paradigm of modernity/coloniality (Escobar 2005, 2007; Santos 2006). After revolutions leading to independence and the abolition of slavery in Latin America, the European and Anglo-Saxon elites found very creative ways of keeping their business flourishing in their former colonies by making alliances with local governments and passing laws that benefit their economic interests over the common good of local populations. Through the discourse of neoliberalism and the free trade agreements, these elites have been succeeding at promoting unsustainable export-led growth and extraction of natural resources, while maintaining exploitative labor relations and severely risking highly diverse ecosystems (Ismi 2015; Restrepo Botero 2003; Ahumada 1996).

In Colombia, like the rest of South America, it has largely been transnational agro-industrial capitalists who have been able to take advantage of, and benefit from, the new opportunities opened up by the liberalization of markets and globalization. The financial, organizational, and technological requirements for agricultural intensification and export production have been imposed largely against the will of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and *Campesino* communities and remained beyond their reach (Kay 2004; Rubio 2001), while their diverse ways of small-farming and interacting with nature are labeled as “primitive” and “undeveloped”. These communities are against extractive economies and monocultivation because of the destruction of the soil, forests, and sources of water (Aguayo 2015). In addition, the territories that feed them and allow them to re-create their culture are taken in the name of “development”.

There is a correlation between extractive economies like Colombia’s and other countries in South America and low overall standards of living, income inequality, a high poverty rate for the majority of the population, and increased risks for biodiversity (Escobar 2005; Kohl 2004; Kohl & Farthing (2006); Kohl et al. 2011). Much of the current extractive industry is capital-intensive with limited linkages to other sectors, which contributes to its inability to support self-sustained economies within rural communities. Sassen (2014) questions the use of the notion “development” to designate predatory actions against the earth and the displacement of entire rural populations. When resistance movements emerge, corporations and their allied governments co-opt discourses and organize commercial campaigns to show to the public that they are providing jobs and there are no reasons for the denounced lack of social responsibility (Toca et al. 2012). In her work, Lindner (2012) refers to this process as the “art of domination”—the use of innovative, subtle, and covert approaches by the elites to gain control over entire populations. Furthermore, strategies that have economic growth as a principal objective have come to define the purpose of education and creativity in societies and development policies of the South, seeking to bring more people into the consumer capitalist economy and mechanizing production, many times at odds with environmental sustainability, local practices, and well-being needs (Gentili 2004, 2015).

Creativity from the Perspective of Decolonial and Symbio-Synergetic Paradigms

For us, the territories are for life, that is, the territories should be for the people. For the neoliberal model, instead, the territories are not for the people, they are worth if they represent an economic interest, if there are minerals in the territory. For those

*who are in this logic of accumulation the territory does not matter; they are gone after ten years of taking all the economic value out. For us, instead, the territory is life for our children and their offspring. (...) That is why we so strongly defend our territory, because for us the land is life, not only material life but also the spiritual, that kind of feelings, thoughts and relationships that go beyond the physical. (Roberto Daza, Colombian agrarian leader)*²

The case of *La Colosa* is an illustration of how the resistance against the negative social and environmental impacts of colonialism and neoliberalism can take different expressions. Some might fall prey to rage and destructive actions, while others might fight for reforms and forms of inclusion that do not always imply transforming the status quo. In this section, we take our inspiration from the learnings of many Latin American Indigenous, Afro-descendant and *Campesino* (small farmers) communities, who, while still defying oppression and expropriation of territories, keep re-creating, re-constructing, and re-inventing personal, community, and societal life, based on (re)establishing balanced relationships among humans and nature (see, e.g., Hidalgo et al. 2014; Tapia 2008; Via Campesina 2015; Walsh 2013). The case of *La Colosa* provides an example of the possibility for communities of shifting from a process of creative resistance to one of creative transformation as different academic and environmental groups are engaged in the creation and implementation of new strategies to address the necessity for small municipalities of defending and protecting the integrity and quality of their local ecosystems from uncontrolled economic development (i.e., The Water Festivals for the defense of the territory).³ These experiences reflect what we see as an expression of a different understanding of well-being and development grounded in what is called ‘*Epistemologies of the South*’.

Santos (2012) described the conceptual and practical dimensions of ‘*Epistemologies of the South*’ in these words:

By epistemology of the South I mean the retrieval of new processes of production and valorisation of valid knowledges, whether scientific or non-scientific, and of new relations among different types of knowledge on the basis of the practices of the classes

²Our translation from the original in Spanish; cited by Laura Quintana in “La desolación de La tierra y la sombra”, *Palabras al Margen*, Bogotá, 14 agosto 2015, p. 1. Available in: <http://palabrasalmargen.com/index.php/articulos/nacional/item/la-desolacion-de-la-tierra-y-la-sombra>

³VI Festival del Agua en defensa del territorio, San Carlos – Antioquia. [Kavilando.org](http://www.kavilando.org). October 31, 2014. Available in: <http://www.kavilando.org/index.php/2013-10-13-19-52-10/formacion-popular/3091-el-sexto-festival-del-agua-en-defensa-del-territorio-san-carlos-antioquia>. VI Marcha Carnaval en defensa de la Vida, el Agua y el Territorio, Tolima, Tejido de Comunicación ACIN. 9 de junio de 2014. Available in: <http://www.colectivodeabogados.org/?Las-comunidades-del-Tolima>

and social groups that have suffered, in a systematic way, the oppression and discrimination caused by capitalism and colonialism. (Santos 2012: 51)

How do some societies understand ‘progress’ when it means the destruction of others and the environment? Here, we need a decolonial perspective. According to Alban (2013:452, 455), decoloniality is the process through which we recognize other stories, paths, and ways of being in the world other than the rational logic and cultural expression of contemporary capitalism. It also means restoring the human dignity of those who were considered inferior or non-humans and violently oppressed by the narratives of the modern/colonial hegemonic project. It is worth remembering that, in a country like Colombia, the Indigenous and Afro-descendant people had their rights to their own language, culture, and territories legally recognized in the constitutional reform of 1991. However, these rights are still not fully enforced by the government. For Alban, creativity from a decolonial perspective should open scenarios for discussion of social exclusion, racialization, genocidal violence, reaffirmation of stereotypes, and authoritarianism. It should also reveal, problematize, and challenge the established order. Decolonial creativity should contribute to the resistance and re-existence of communities who were silenced and made invisible.

Walsh (2015) invites us to see creativity from these epistemologies of the South or decolonial pedagogies, which are not only pedagogies of resistance, but also re-existence; they are thus much more than a reactive response to and against oppression: “The struggle of Indigenous peoples is about decolonization; that is, to confront the structural problem of the ‘colonial tare’, which means to resist, but also to fight for and contribute to the building of decolonial conditions and possibilities” (3). The notion of Mother Earth is central for Indigenous, but also for Afro-descendant cosmovisions; there is no division between humans and nature; they are connected in all aspects of life: cosmic, physical, affective, spiritual, cultural, and existential (Walsh 2011). The notion of ‘*buen vivir*’ (collective well-being) does not assume a stage of under-development to be overcome. It refers to a different philosophy of life: a fruitful interdependence of humans and communities with the natural environment. This is a central point: the economy is seen as embedded in larger social and natural systems (Escobar 2010).

Bertrand and Valois (1980), in response to the negative impacts of the industrial model of development on the sustainability of ecosystems, also introduced the notion of symbio-synergy as a paradigm promoting a sustainable interdependence between human beings and nature, in which the opposition among persons, society, and nature becomes minimized in a com-

prehensive ecosystem. Culturally and educationally, this paradigm requires a corresponding inventive educational model in which learners develop their capacity to collaboratively create new alternatives. Such a paradigm promotes the value of diversity of perspectives in the co-construction and/or co-creation of knowledge. This view also brings into focus the role of collaborative learning in the creation of many options for collective decision-making and problem-solving for a given issue (Paquette and Fallon 2010). The shift from an individualistic to a collaborative paradigm implies rethinking creativity against atomistic and positivistic standpoints and acknowledges the social nature of creativity as resulting from human interaction and collaboration (Glăveanu 2009). Contrary to a dominant I/He-paradigm, a We-paradigm recognizes that “creativity takes place within, is constituted and influenced by, and has consequences for, a social context” (Westwood and Low 2003: 236, as cited by Glăveanu 2009: 5). This means adopting more holistic and systemic ways of looking at creativity, a process that emerges out of transactions between self and others, self and environment. However, we need to be aware of the illusions of a ‘*We-paradigm creativity*’ when the dominant conditions are asymmetric and oppressive, such as the ones described in this chapter as conditions of living specific for the South. Who defines the ‘*We*’? Current discourses on development, social responsibility, and sustainability manufactured by transnational corporations use a ‘*We*’ slogan to persuade local governments to allow the establishment of their industries in rural areas labeled by business interests as poor and under-developed. Their goal is to profit from cheap labor and territory expropriation (see Escobar 2007).

In creating alternative proposals from the perspective of epistemologies of the South, Santos (2012: 51–58) suggests the following steps: (1) making visible what has been invisible (the sociology of absences), (2) creating alternatives to present realities (the sociology of emergencies), (3) recognizing the existence alternative ways of knowing and working (the ecology of knowledge), and (4) promoting a dialogue between various transformative experiences of the world (intercultural translation). Similarly, Fals (1987); Fals & Mora-Osejo (2004) called for a North–South convergence for meaningful research for social justice to support the poor peoples (which are the majorities of the world) to exercise their human and social rights. As formulated elsewhere Glăveanu and Sierra (2015), the epistemologies of the South decolonize our knowledge of creativity by uncovering its sociocultural and ideological foundations and, simultaneously, conceive alternative spaces for thinking and acting outside mainstream systems of thought that validate oppression and exploitation.

Today, we are seeing the emergence of many initiatives around the world that provide a counter-narrative to the industrial and neoliberal model of development and well-being. Just to give a few examples, *agroecology* and *family agriculture* are emerging as a new culture in food production that promotes creative ways of enhancing the sustainability of agricultural systems by mimicking natural processes and strengthening the cultural value of *Campesino* life. It is receiving increased attention considering the massive soil deterioration caused by monoculture practices (Peterson 2011; Via Campesina 2015). Concerning the relation between nature and humans beings, *eco-feminism* calls our attention to the ideological connection between the exploitation of nature and the exploitation of women; how the negative impacts of environmental degradation and the logic of accumulation and growth affect mainly the women and impoverished communities of Third World countries (Herrero 2015). Initiatives toward strengthening local communities from an *endogenous development* perspective based on a dialogue between knowledge systems and the co-creation of educational, health, and economic initiatives are also offering promising answers in this regard (Haverkort and Reijntjes 2007; Haverkort and Rist 2007; Haverkort et al. 2012).

We are located in the midst of all of those transformative alternative ways of looking at reality while belonging to and working within institutions, as universities, that are not always spaces conducive to such transformations. We are trying to actualize a research process that is collaborative and transformative, leading to the co-creation of knowledge with rural communities. Such a research process is addressed in the following section.

Co-Creating a Community-Based Research Project with Diverse Colombian Rural Communities

In this last section of the chapter, we give an account of an ongoing Colombian community–university engagement initiative (started in 2013) as a practical example of one of the ways of actualizing the notion of creativity as a collaborative and transformative practice (Sierra et al. 2015).

This community–university engagement initiative focuses on the collaboration between institutions and communities, considering all participants as equal experts in the co-creation of knowledge and innovation. Innovation processes develop from the sharing and creation of knowledge across socially and culturally diverse participants in terms of age, gender, leadership position, schooling, and practical experience. In these situations, knowledge has to be

continuously negotiated through interactive and collaborative processes. Our project involves different partners from national and international universities, international NGOs, a Colombian government office, and leaders from rural community-based organizations (Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and *Campesino*) from the Andean, Pacific, and Amazonia regions.⁴ This partnership is oriented at building up capacity in the case of rural communities by developing sustainability policies and practices from an endogenous perspective. The latter is understood as a community process of defining and working toward plans about sustainability of bio-cultural diversity, taking into account local values, priorities, knowledge systems, and forms of organization and practices. Territorial governance, human rights, sustainability, economic challenges, health and well-being issues, ancestral cosmovisions, and creative pedagogies, among others, are some of the primary issues being addressed in this research and educational partnership. Members needed to come to an agreement on the primary research topics, methodology, and diverse activities to be implemented throughout the course of the project.

This ongoing research partnership aims at: (1) analyzing existing sustainability policies and practices in culturally diverse rural groups in Colombia; (2) strengthening the capacity of Indigenous, Afro-descendants, and *Campesino* communities in the provinces of Antioquia, Chocó, and Putumayo to resolve sustainability challenges linked to their cultures and the biodiversity of their natural environment; (3) identifying and understanding different conceptions and practices of sustainability in academic and non-academic communities in Colombia; (4) developing a model for community–university engagement practices that allows for the integration of the needs and perspectives of rural people in the development process of sustainability policy; and (5) raising awareness by government decision-makers about the importance of integrating rural community perspectives and priorities when developing policies related to sustainability.

We see this community–university engagement as a creative collective transformation aimed at interweaving a complex synergy greater than the sum of its parts. For us, the purpose of experiencing creativity as a transformative and collective social practice has been to increase and strengthen rural communities' capacity to reflect on and respond creatively to changing circumstances that affect their overall well-being and development in their own territories. Also, to transform university practices which have not acknowledged the existence of the realities of rural communities. Such collective creativity has been practiced within a rich sociocultural context with diverse vantage points,

⁴ See the names of participant organizations and institutions in the acknowledgments at the end.

interests, perspectives, values, power positions, inequities, beliefs, and needs among diverse rural Colombian communities.

We came to recognize that sites of co-inquiry, co-learning, and co-creation of knowledge involving partners from institutions and communities are contested terrains that require a more nuanced and open-ended conceptualization, grounded in the everyday world and lives of rural communities. Community engagement processes cannot simply be explained in traditional rational terms (i.e., that the dialogue among partners smoothly generates the most rational solutions to conservation challenges faced by biodiverse contexts). We came to see any community–university engagement process and the collective practice of creativity in a society like Colombia as complex, messy, and contested, involving negotiations, power plays among partners over control of limited resources, divergent understandings of development, biodiversity and conservation challenges, and conflicts over potential power inequities.

Our experience of co-creating a research project focusing on rural Colombia led us to view the transformative practice of creativity (as opposed to the creativity of oppression) as a learning and knowledge process that integrates diverse interests, perspectives, constructions of reality, values, and actors while changing inequalities and inequities affecting marginalized communities. Through this partnership experience, we are learning the multi-staged, developmental, and iterative nature of community–university engagement processes. Such a collective practice of transformative creativity takes place within highly interactive environments which might shift in unpredictable ways and require from participants or partners a commitment to remain open to ongoing dialogue, flexibility, and creative problem-solving. For example, members of our collective engaged in *co-creating ideas* in addressing the need for new post-secondary community-based programs aiming at enhancing the capacity of local rural communities to address issues of conservation of biodiversity from an endogenous development perspective. We all agreed to begin with the development of outreach community-based programs by: (1) training a team of collaborators from partners in a seminar about diverse paradigms of development and sustainability, and (2) involving a group of leaders from each participating rural community in discussions leading to the creation of alternative educational programs. We agreed on specific topics as frameworks to guide the development of these initial programs. These topics were: (1) land management and economy, (2) governance and rights, (3) pedagogy and culture, and (4) health and well-being. Following this phase of co-creating ideas for curriculum development, we translated the latter into collaborative actions, and testing them in an attempt to meet the policy challenges of bio-

diversity conservation and people's well-being in participating rural communities. One of the results of this experimentation phase was the creation and implementation of a diploma focused on the capacity development of participating rural communities to diagnose, design, and implement alternative and innovative solutions to their own sustainability challenges.

Concluding Comments: Trends and Challenges Ahead

Through this chapter, we wanted to further develop what Glăveanu (2014) calls the *five A's model* that defines creativity in relation to actors, audiences, artifacts, actions, and affordances. Based on examples of community struggles against inequities and inequalities in rural Colombia (as illustrated in the case of *La Colosa*), we expanded the relational model of creativity by addressing the paradigmatic foundations of the various forms that creativity might manifest within itself in situations of conflict. That led us to look at processes of creativity from a perspective of oppression, resistance, and transformation. We have defined the notion of creativity of oppression as practices used by local, regional, national, and international political and business elites to access to cheap labor and natural resources of the South (Escobar 1998a). By creativity of resistance, we referred to strategies and practices used by individuals or groups to oppose imposed models of development and well-being upon their communities by the political and business elites. Finally, we addressed the notion of transformative creativity as a process of challenging and transforming top-down political, economic, social, and cultural approaches by individuals acting collectively and to reimagine local realities away from oppressive and impoverishing living conditions. We also discussed transformative creativity as a learning process driven by values of complementarity and unity in diversity, self-determination, solidarity, and of interdependence between society and nature (Walsh 2015).

As echoed in the work of Santos (2006) and Escobar (2005), we also argue that the purpose of collective transformative creative actions within rural communities of the South is to construct spaces for actions that go beyond the industrial/neoliberal paradigm of modernity, and this in two ways: epistemologically and sociopolitically. Epistemologically, learning critically from a plural landscape of knowledge forms and experiences around the world to break unequal conditions and build community well-being. Socially and politically, transcending the hyper-marketization of all aspects of life and

strengthening alternative forms of livelihoods, more sustainable and respectful of the environment.

The Colombian response to new and deepening sustainability challenges, as illustrated in the case of *La Colosa*, will continue to require innovation and adaptation throughout every social sector, and especially in education. This means considering the views and participation of Indigenous, Afro, and *Campesino* communities who are central in this equation and have been historically ignored in decision-making. To remedy this situation, we will still need to continue to transform the community and university relationship in a way that is conducive to an ongoing cross-cultural and trans-disciplinary dialogue we deemed essential in developing an in-depth understanding of complex socio-ecological, cultural, political, and economic environments. We think that the ongoing research project on community–university engagement that we presented at the end of this chapter is making a contribution in opening up spaces within academic and non-academic communities for a more equitable discussion, dialogue, and action on sustainability and community development by making visible and possible the prospects for action of those located outside current neoliberal dominant views.

However, we believe that there are still questions to be addressed in furthering our discussion about forms and purposes of creativity: What kind of pedagogical and research challenges are being posed to the educational system by those voices traditionally silenced within academia and educational institutions? How could we enhance creativity in diverse learning settings (schools, families, and their communities) in light of the current global environmental crisis and the worldwide economic imbalances between the haves and the have-nots? We believe that the protection of culture and biodiversity in Colombia still requires the creation of alliances against all forms of oppressive actions through transformative creative practices. Therefore, all of us, whether we belong to a minority group or not, are called to support the efforts of vulnerable groups against colonialism. In return, we will be able to take part in more equal intercultural and creative exchanges, full of meaning and mutual enrichment.

Acknowledgments Both authors are founder members of the Research Group in *Educación y Diversidad Internacional* (EDI), a collaborative effort from different latitudes based at the Universidad de Antioquia. This chapter is a result of the authors’ dialogue during the design and implementation of the project “*Diálogo universidades – comunidades hacia el fortalecimiento de capacidades de liderazgo y creatividad hacia la sostenibilidad en contextos rurales diversos de Colombia*” (2013–2016), supported by Banco Universitario de Programas y Proyectos de Extensión–BUPPE,

Universidad de Antioquia. Also, the success of this project results from an active and ongoing engagement of the following individuals and institutions: Francisco Asprilla and Nemecio Palacios, Consejo Comunitario Mayor de la Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato (COCOMACIA); Manuel Moya, pueblo Embera, Chocó; Rodolfo Sierra, Liliana Aristizábal and Consuelo Montoya, Corporación de Estudios Educativos, Investigativos y Ambientales (CEAM); Hernán Porras, Gobernación de Antioquia y CEAM; Carmen Candelo Reina and Renata Moreno, WWF Colombia; Sixta Tulia Palacios, OXFAM – Colombia; Gerald Fallon, U of British Columbia, Canada; Vlad Glăveanu, Aalborg U, Denmark; Luanda Sito, U Federal de Campinas, Brasil; Hader Calderón, Luz Elena Velázquez, and Manuela Penagos, Universidad de Antioquia.

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