

Win-Win Money Exchanges in Dragon Dreaming Workshops

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Where it comes from

One of the most impacting learning Dragon Dreaming offered me, first through the work of Ita Gabert and later that of John Croft, were the concepts surrounding money and resources. The first part of it came from the notion Empowered Fundraising carries that we all have a deep wound around money. This wound was created by our win-lose culture that states that *there aren't enough resources in the planet*. If that's true, than *more is better*, because if we have more our capacity of survival, or of achieving a comfortable life, is surely increased. And if that is also true, then *we have no choice* but to try and grab for more and, if possible, to accumulate.

Current society took those presupposition into new complexity. Nowadays, "more is better" went beyond accumulating resources. As what is perceived as "better" changed in the last decades, to have a lot went slowly from being the most desired achievement of success to open space to another: the potential of consumption. To accumulate remains as a measure of success, well being and status, for sure. But what dictates the image of the most successful individual, at least in the western world, is the possibility this individual has of acquiring anything that is (or almost is) available.

Thus we evolved from a basic notion of "more is better" related to how much you had in your own house to "more is better" related to how much you can seemingly instantly grab from the world. This is another level of complexity that brings forward further complications. And, as it is often true, this new level of problems could also bring new levels of solutions. If from nothing else, it comes from the understandings it inspires us to come up with these new solutions.

The second part of this personal learning came from the deconstruction of Dragon Dreaming in general, and Empowered Fundraising specifically; it does with this three presuppositions: that we don't have enough, so more is better, and so we have no choice. In Dragon Dreaming we say that *we do have enough*: we have enough time, maybe we just have to organize ourselves better, and let go of those things that are taking our energy away when failing to express our deepest purposes in life. We have enough love, but maybe we need to learn new and diverse ways to express it fully. We have enough money and resources, but maybe they are badly distributed or, in the case of energy in general, poorly planned regarding the sustainability of Gaia's eco and social systems.

If we do have enough, so *more is not better than less*. It is just different. For me this is easy to grasp when I see how much rich people struggle and give from their precious time and effort to get hold of that large amount every month and year; and how increasing amounts seems not sufficient every time. It is rare to see, I think, people that can actually live as the television commercials and Hollywood movies would suggest: with that typical lightness of heart, that

flexibility and disposition of time, that presence with their families. Not to say all that traffic-free roads and streets to use the amazingly expensive car they just bought.

Changing the perspective about what's better allows us to get the deep meaning of "more is not better". If we started tacitly accepting the notion that "better" relates to having access to good stuff – and that access comes directly from the money you can make flow through your accounts –, than "better" relates to "more". But if you are looking to those things that you really *need*, than maybe your notion of better starts to change.

Of course, just the word *need* is not enough. Our win-lose society and culture is constantly creating needs that you probably don't actually need. What's the difference I am basing my proposition on, then?

It comes from the distinction Nonviolent Communication makes between *needs* and *strategies*. Strategies are the forms, the ways things gets done or gets expressed in the world. Everything that comes to have an existence does it through a strategy: a word, a thought, an expression, an arrangement, an object, a particular way of trying to achieve something, a behavior. So, if we explore this inspiration, every form, of anything, is a strategy.

But a strategy for what?

It would seem that it is a strategy for a need to get expressed, to gain a form and a materialized existence. Needs are the reason every strategy comes into being. They are the life-source, and the life-force of strategies.

NVC says that needs are formless, and that is the important distinction this field of study and practice brings to us. In the win-lose culture, we are told that a given need has often just one way of expressing itself. So these needs are attached to particular strategies as if the only way that they can come into being is through this given manner.

Probably this is one of the basis that makes the win-lose culture possible: the notion that, if something is important to me or to us (a need or needs), we maybe will be "forced" to do otherwise unacceptable things (strategies) to get it. Or if someone has other ways to try and achieve it, as I don't recognize this other manners as possible to express the same needs that I also have (and maybe I don't even recognize, at least at a conscious level, that they are actually the same needs), the ways this other person (or group of people) has can seem threatening to me.

This is no small issue. If I can't see these other behaviors as able to express genuine needs, and if I don't see the people that behave this way as recognizing my manner of acting as expressing genuine needs, than the ways of others could possibly endanger my ways of being, my cultural choices.

We have seen this happen again and again in history. We see this happening right now. Different cultures that express the same needs of connection with family, land, tradition, spirituality, meaning – but in different ways, unable to recognize the alternative ways from one another – and then perceiving this difference as threatening to their own community. A view inspired from NVC could see that this comes from not distinguishing strategy from needs, and thus perceiving other strategies as potentially threatening to my strategies. And maybe also this is false in it's potential to express the same needs I am trying to express through my preferred and customary behaviors and traditions. A lot of people go to war because of this.

NVC has two hypothesis regarding needs: that *all needs are universal*. That is to say, if you get deep enough and relate to the need that is trying to express itself in the core of any strategy that comes to you (an action, a thought, a feeling), than you will be in touch with something that each and every human being on Earth could recognize as valid – and maybe as mutual.

The specific words can and will vary, because they are in themselves strategies. But if you follow the path of the desire to buy a new car, for example, you could first encounter the feelings that come with this idea. Maybe they are feelings of anxiety, of thrilling, of wanting, of happiness, some sensation of coziness, the desire of relief. And what is animating this feelings? Is there something deeper, in the core of this feelings? Maybe to you buying a new car means stopping to worry with the old one. Maybe it means easiness of movement, of access to places, comfort, or even social recognition. In all those cases, the needs themselves could be identified as: well-being, access, efficacy, a tranquil life, social recognition and valorization, comfort and so on. All of these, if dissociated from any strategy, would probably be perceived as important by every person in the world – even if they themselves aren't affected by those specific needs at the moment. So that is NVC's hypothesis number one regarding needs: *all needs are universal*.

The second hypothesis opens to the distinction between needs and strategies: *each need has at least one other, different way to be expressed*. If you are searching to express the need of well being, for example, and you are trying to express it through buying a new car, maybe it can also be expressed by moving to a residence closer to efficient public transport, or to your work. Maybe by buying a bicycle. And maybe by sharing a car with some neighbors. It depends completely on your situation. But the hypothesis is that, if you want (and give yourself time to look and support to do it), you could express the same need, fully, with a different approach.

Usually a strategy is not serving just one, specific need. In the example of buying a new car we listed some needs that could be in place. And so, if you search for an alternative strategy, it is possible that what you find won't be able to express fully all the needs involved in the strategy that originally occurred to you. That invites us not to think so linearly, because maybe it is just a matter of creating more than one strategy – and fulfilling the same needs gradually.

What is not, and this is crucial, is a matter of not expressing needs. Of giving up, when and if that means living less fully. When you get inspired by NVC, it's not OK to sacrifice something important to get another important achievement. Perhaps you'll do it now and then, when you cannot find strategies to express all that is important to you. Then you choose – and I hope you choose based on needs, on what is struggling most fiercely in you to get expressed in life. It is, I think, a lot better to let go of something if you understand more fully the implications of it – in my experience, when you get in contact with the need level. And, in every case, that isn't exactly OK. It's something you live with, and that you'll try to take care afterwards. The measure, in every case, is yourself.

Through this NVC inspiration, I feel fully capable of understating and accepting the deconstructed notion that *more is not better*. Because "better" start to relate with needs, with expressing needs fully. And once I found some strategies that does it, I feel satisfied. Any more would be troublesome.

Also, “better” doesn’t come from the same source every time. So why to get more of the same – even if it’s money? Life offers infinite possibilities. We live in a complex enough society that often gives us close to infinite possibilities as well. What I need is to understand what is struggling to be expressed in me. Then, I need to understand what is currently and most obviously being offered as ways to express it. And then, maybe, I need to go to not-so-obvious places.

And all of this opens to the deconstruction of the third presumption: *we have choices*. We have been exploring this during the last pages: choices of where to look, in ourselves and in the world. Choices about what we try to do achieve, and how. Choices about the support we try to create to be able to remain in the difficult questions, and let the answers emerge.

The third deconstruction becomes more available each time we are successful in finding alternatives. To me, it is becoming more and more an integral part of my life as I live more experiences in which I stand by that Dragon Dreaming law: *remain in the questions and let the answers emerge*. It’s suspending cultural presupposition – not automatically going with the most available answers – and allowing myself, with the support of others, to breathe and search. So internalizing and integrating the third deconstructed presupposition – as well as the other two, I suspect – is, at least to me, a gradual learning process that sometimes require patience.

This concepts allowed me to better understand a practice that I had already seen. Dominic Barter, who works in Brazil greatly spread and developed Nonviolent Communication, came up with a process to achieve what he calls “Financial Co-responsibility”. It started when he was in a Rio de Janeiro favela, working together with the community to develop communitarian justice systems – a process later on named Restorative Circles. At one point, the kids in the favela started asking Dominic if he had money to pay the bus and get back to his home. This was Financial Co-responsibility showing itself.

When Restorative Circles matured as a process in itself, it made sense to start and tell about it to people interested. It was only created because of the interest, needs and effort of the community where it was originated. And possibly (and this is my interpretation) what allowed that to happen was the shared capacity of creating and strengthening the bonds between people, allowing them to remain in the difficult questions and let the answers emerge. In other words, being co-responsible about the work and relations being done. Including financial co-responsibility.

So one day, when Dominic was stuck in a traffic jam in his way to the airport to go and share the result of his works with that community, it occurred to him to try and find a way to share this work in the same manner it was created. From that thought, Financial Co-responsibility, as a process to facilitate money exchange in a win-win manner, started to emerge. At some point, it started being called in a simpler fashion – even though the name suggests a deeper relation with the second part of the process: “Money Pile”.

I had the opportunity to participate in a couple of Money Piles with Dominic. That was before I had heard of and started to work with Dragon Dreaming. And then the Brazilian Grand John Croft Tour (as I like to think of it) happened in 2013, and the team of organizers in São Paulo invited me to serve as a translator for the workshops in that state. Translation is not something that I do professionally. Rather, it is an ability that I found I had when I helped organize

John's workshops in Porto Alegre (Brazilian's southeast capital) in 2011 – the first time I met him. São Paulo's Team invitation was a great honor, an offering that I deeply celebrate to this day, because it allowed me to get a much deeper understanding about Dragon Dreaming and the places and needs where it came from.

From that three week experience I felt that I couldn't refuse the invitation to keep travelling and going to John's last workshop of the Grand Tour: the Training of Trainers (TOT). It was designed to help those people identified as having deep bonds with Dragon Dreaming to spread this work. It was also designed to help us, the Brazilian Dragon Dreaming community, to develop and start acting as a network.

In one of the many talks at TOT intended to help both it's objectives, questions about money exchange started to originate in my system. There wasn't many examples available as how to create win-win exchanges regarding the costs of the workshops and the financial sustainability both of the events and of the trainers/facilitators. There is a rule in Dragon Dreaming that no one should be prevented to participate in any workshop due to lack of money. At the same time, there is an effort to apply this law with care to two issues: financial sustainability of the workshop's enterprise and the will to heal the wounds we carry around money.

John shared with us a calculation that he does to better observe what is the income of the average person in any city or town. That was used to help generate a monetary value related to a specific reality. The calculation presented some difficulties to my mind. It was based on the Gross National Product (GNP), a value that I don't feel reflect the actual reality of how people live and sustain themselves. It expresses an average, and is calculated based on any registered exchange of money. To me it fails to grasp the singularity of one life experience.

Through the world, Dragon Dreaming trainers have been developing different methods to abide by the rule that money shouldn't be an impediment for someone doing a workshop. Probably the most used is offering the person that doesn't have the money some training in Empowered Fundraising. This way, the person has the potentiality to help in the workshop's financial sustainability while also healing his or hers own wound around money. It surely is a well-established win-win situation.

Why didn't we simply follow those steps? I can only mention a few reasons. We have never used Empowered Fundraising ourselves, at least not the way John teaches Cathy Burke created. So we didn't feel we had the experience to help someone in their own process of raising money. We didn't want to leave all the responsibility about the shared financial situation we are in to those people. Also, we had other practices close by that offered not only a model to do it, but one that I, at least, had already tried.

This way had one advantage, from our perspective – while it probably has some disadvantages as well. It isn't based on a pre-determined value the organizers come up themselves. Although we think, if they are basing their decisions on a win-win culture, those pre-determined values surely aim for win-win situations, we also know that we can't be sure it is going to happen, or being understood as such. Our society has a history, a really heavy burden, around money exchange. It is the trauma that generates the wound around money. And it comes up even if we don't want it to, and can take over the understanding

about what we are doing. So we wanted to use some method that, from its beginning, offers a life-like fluidity. We wanted to leave for the community we are constantly creating in and around our workshops the decision about how much money we are raising with our workshops, and – why not? – where that money goes.

In the way of coming up with the method we are currently using, some notions started to come to light in me. The first was that the deconstructions of the three win-lose presuppositions weren't leaving a clear enough visualization of what to me was a crucial matter: *time is not money*. That is included in the second presupposition: there isn't enough. Because if that is true, time will equal money in terms that we are supposed to be running after money all the time. As I wanted to let this aspect clearer, I added this fourth sentence to the original three.

Second, I understood that I don't really work for money. That was firmly rooted in what I learned from a lot of people who I work with daily, and whose purpose in life speaks louder than numbers. But the greatest inspiration was, yet again, Dominic Barter's work.

I don't work for money. I work for the change I want to see in the world. And, well, I need money – some of it, at least – if I want to continue to live and be able to do the works that I do. But, if I make this distinction in a clear way, what happens? Maybe I don't need to jump upfront of the possibility of running without money. Maybe I don't need to unilaterally stipulate the price of the work that I do – because that isn't precise: I don't work for money! The price is related to what amounts I perceive I need to survive and have some well being. It is related to a lot of things, as how much I made last month, how much my rent costs, and the level of comfort I feel I'm needing. And thus, it can vary greatly.

That distinction also opens to a wonderful possibility: that I stop just expressing monetary values that I imagine I need to do the works I do, and start telling people *why* I think I need it. What are the things I'm wanting to do with that money? How is my life right now? I don't intend people to judge my choices, but I also want to give them the opportunity to see where their money might be invested. And, also, if I share the strategies I'm pursuing to get my needs met, it is possible that people offer different resolutions to that strategies (or even alternative strategies) that doesn't involve the same amounts, or even money altogether.

The third notion that came to me was that *money means different things to different people at different times*. The only one that can judge what money means to any given person at any given time is that person her or himself. Because only her or him can understand how it is to be wearing those shoes. If I'm engaged in creating a win-win culture, than I need to be able to at least leave a wide open door to understand how tight those shoes are. And – why not? – also how loose they can be. Because, if I'm setting to create win-win money exchanges, that shouldn't mean people automatically gives less. It should mean people give what is appropriate to them at that time.

After TOT, I came back to Porto Alegre with the clear purpose to try and create this type of money exchange in the Dragon Dreaming workshops – and also in other works – that I would do. I discussed it with my local colleagues – specially Daniel Fernandes, with whom I offered most of the Dragon Dreaming works I did. And, based on some Empowered Fundraising contents and what I

understand of Dominic Barter's experiences, we came up with a process to establish the exchange of money trying to create win-win relations.

Later on our understanding and communication of the Money Pile part was increased when we learned about the processes Ana Terra and her network of NVC inspired people were practicing in São Paulo. Ana is a marvelous activist, one of the people I know that most promptly takes what she learns to action. She saw the Money Pile getting spread quite quickly and was worried that only its most visible aspects would be carried on. So she and her friends came up with three principles to what they now call the "Manipai", a Portuguese hacking of the original name. "Mani", in the indigenous Tupi language, means a South America root ("mandioca" in portuguese, "cassava" or "manioc" in english – at least according to Google Translator) which comestible use is so diverse by the natives that the word also signifies "abundance" and also "food" in general. "Pai" is for the Portuguese word for "father", meaning the one that provides and protect. Calling the process "Manipai" instead of the original "Money Pile" also helps preventing some possible differences that could (and probably will) emerge from its spreading.

How we are doing it

First and foremost, we are using an internet website for organizing our workshops. There are a lot of such websites in Brazil – like [cinese.com](#) or [eventick.com](#) –, but they all originated from the one we are using, called [Nos.vc](#) – "nós" means "we" in Portuguese and "vc" is a short version of "você", which is "you". It was created by a group of close friends, inspired by the first Brazilian crowdfunding website, [Catarse.me](#), which was also created by friends. So we are also investing in our network of personal support.

At [nos.vc](#) we upload a video that serves as a teaser for the Introductory, and also a description of the workshop, contents, facilitators and, of course, the way we work financially. We are actually starting with that part, to increase the chance of people understanding what we are proposing.

[Nos.vc](#) works this way: you say when your encounter (it doesn't need to be a workshop) is going to happen, where, till when people can inscribe themselves, what are the maximum number of participants, what are the minimum, and how much it costs (is something). You can stipulate different inscription costs up to the number you want. If the encounter reaches the minimum number of participants till the date limit, the encounter is going to happen. If it doesn't, people that have already inscribed gets their money back automatically.

What we are doing is that we create two possibilities of inscription. One is visible, the other is occult. The visible one charges \$100 Reais per inscription. The occult one is free, and we sent that link to people that say they don't have the means or the willingness to pay through the internet, or they don't have the money.

What is clear in the workshop's description (we had sufficient feedback from past participants to feel secure to say that the message is getting through) is that *we are not charging for the workshop*. That R\$100 is *the cost of the inscription*. It is a decision based on the fact that we usually have a maximum

number of participants due to venue spaces and our capacity of taking care of people. So if we had just a free inscription, we think it would be possible people inscribed themselves but never bothered to go, occupying a place that could be someone else's. I had some experiences that way in the three years I participated in Gaia Education course here in Porto Alegre – first as a participant, then as an organizer. The only people that didn't get their certificates in those three years due to the lack of commitment were that people that got integral scholarship. So we feel that having an inscription cost helps people committing themselves to actually going.

Around 10 to 20% of participants asks to not pay the inscription costs due to some of the reasons already described. From those participants we ask the written commitment of going to the workshop. Right now we had done eight Dragon Dreaming Introductory workshops in Porto Alegre. We had around 160 people trained, and close to 200 inscribed. From those, I can remember just one person that didn't pay the inscription cost and also didn't go. And we had about 10 people that paid that value and, a couple days before the workshop, told us they couldn't make it. So we had time to open their places to surrogates.

Nos.vc and the payment method both keeps around 15% of that value. So, at the first day of our workshop, we give back to people that went and paid the inscription R\$85 of their R\$100. R\$15 remains as an investment to the website that helps us so much. We don't give back the money to people that paid but didn't go. We do try to get in contact with them and offer them a place in some of the future workshops.

During the course of the workshop, the way in which we work financially emerges regularly. It is an important part of the explanations we give about win-lose and win-win. So we have the chance of basing that concepts on something we are living in the encounter, and also using those explanations, and the conversations that always comes from it, to better create an understanding about how we are working.

We have been offering 24 hour Introductory Workshops. We usually do it Thursday and Friday from 9:30 pm to 10:30 pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 9 am to 6 pm. We give people their R\$85 back as Thursday's closing, and we talk about win-lose and win-win through all Thursday and sometimes even entering Friday. And we say early on that on Saturday afternoon we are going to have a process to help people autonomously come up with their individual values.

That we do as Saturday's closing. And we call that process finding each person's financial Point of Comfort. We used to call it, as Empowered Fundraising concept, the Point of Balance. But early on we noticed a translation problem: in Portuguese, the literal translation of Point of Balance use the same words as the way administrators and economists traditionally have been translating the concept of Break-even Point. The first times we used this methodology, we simply explained the difference. Than we decided to use different words we feel help express the meaning we are trying to achieve.

The disadvantage of using the adapted translation is one our friend Pedro Mendes, Dragon Dreaming facilitator in Rio de Janeiro, so eloquently expressed. We feel that the Point of Balance process has the potentiality to invite people to step outside their comfort zones. And maybe calling it the Point of Comfort invites them back to where they feel safe – and possibly keeps things unchanged. That is a risk we are assuming, because we also feel all the processes we have

been conducting already take people well beyond their comfort zones. So calling it Point of Comfort could offer a less dangerous covering that could actually help people get safely out of control.

Before the process starts, I explain a couple of things. First, that it is our practice to celebrate each Point of Comfort equally – even if it is zero. That is what we, as the people being financially supported by the process, commit to do to heal our own wounds around money. Second, I explain once more that, at this point, they haven't paid anything for the workshop. R\$85 from the R\$100 they paid as inscription has now been given back to them – even if we do it just symbolically, because we will receive the money from Nos.vc one week after the workshop is completed. R\$15 was invested in the website that support us and won't get to our hands.

As they have concretely paid R\$100 from their credit cards, of which R\$85 will find it's way to us, we ask them to do the following: forget about this when they try to discover their Points of Comfort. Allow them to reach a total value they want to invest in the workshop. And, if this value is less than that R\$85, we will pay them back the difference. If it is more, they pay us the difference. But the amount they will be finding in the Point of Comfort process is the total amount for the workshop.

The process itself is a simple one. I invite people to stand up, or to sit comfortably. I give one piece of paper each. Then I ask them to close their eyes and feel the force of gravity pulling them, the places where their bodies connect with the ground. I conduct them through the larger version of Pinakarri, the one where the invitation is to get in touch with the support the Earth gives us and feel it as Gaia's unconditional love for each and everyone of us. Then we find the places in our bodies where the most tension is located, breathe in that spot, relax and breathe the tension out. Sometimes I repeat this part three times.

And then, following right through Pinakarri, while they still has their eyes closed and without stating any change of pace or moment, I invite them to let a number come up in their mind's eye as a possible value to be given for the workshop. Sometimes I say them not to worry, that they don't have any obligation to give this value. Sometimes I say that before the Pinakarri, that the values they come up with can be only indicatives, and that they can always follow the left part of their brains and decide to use a value they come up with rationally. And that they can, just for the sake of the experience, test that value in the Point of Comfort process.

So all of them should have in their minds a starting value that emerged or was chosen by each. I then ask them to feel their bodies relating to those values. What messages their bodies are giving? To they feel comfortable with that value, or do they experience any kind of discomfort? If they feel any discomfort, can they find if it is happening because the value seems too high or too low?

They them start to add or subtract from that value based on whether they found the original value was too high or too low. I suggest they add or subtract one step at a time, using small amounts such as 10 Reais. With each step adding or subtracting, they turn their attention back to their bodies to see how their feelings change. Are they getting more comfortable or less? Their aim is to go where their comfort is. And they keep going, each at their own pace, till they start to experience it.

When they found this feeling of comfort, I suggest they keep going a little bit to see if the comfort gets stronger or if it starts to get weaker. This should allow them to pinpoint the value where the transition from being a token to a sacrifice or a sacrifice to a token occurs. This is the Point of Balance, that we are choosing to see as their Point of Comfort for this workshop.

I then ask them to write that value (or another one of their choosing, if their prefer to go with a value they came up in a more rationally manner), along with their name, in that small piece of paper I already gave them. I ask them to even write 0 if that is the value they found. To me it helps in the healing of that wound we carry around money, and I say that. And to put those pieces of paper in a hat or envelope that we had prepared beforehand and that usually is at the center of the room.

The Point of Comfort process is the finished! Now it's time for us, the organizers and/or facilitators, to look at each piece of paper and celebrate each one equally. It is a practice we are engaged in and one that is slowly and surely helping us heal our wounds. To celebrate each Point of Comfort equally is what gives people the secureness they probably need to express they own Points without concern with what we would think about it. So it is an important information to share with people before the process starts.

We add the values of all the pieces of paper. To that we add the values of those that paid the inscription and didn't go, if there is any. And we now have the total amount raised for the workshop.

We have been doing the following steps out of the workshop's settled time. We are considering adding it to the workshop, turning our Introductory into a 25 hours course. What we did so far was to invite those who wanted to stay to watch, and possibly participate, in the last part of the arrangements. We then take some minutes to count the payments and the costs, and then 15 to 30 minutes to depressurize all that we lived through the day. And then we start what we have been calling as "Pilha de Grana", which is the way we understand Dominic Barter's Money Pile. "Pilha" stands for "pile", and "grana" is a slang word for money, which could possibly be translated in English to something like "bucks" – I think it has the same cultural significance. So we could call it the "Pile of Bucks".

I like using a slang for money because I feel it makes the process even lighter. I also like having translated Dominic's process to Portuguese. Giving our own name to it, similar to what Ana Terra's group of partners did in São Paulo, prevent people to automatically thinking different processes of added and adding learning and experimentation are the same. They sure are alike, and due to inspire and learn from each other. But as our ability to share what we are learning is diminished compared to our disposition of practicing it, giving it different names can help give people the perception that they are, indeed, different processes of experimentation.

What we do is we take the total amount raised and subtract the costs we know we had. Usually the costs are few: some transportation, some food, some materials when the venue didn't absorb them, the certificates. We have been working with venues that sit with us around the Pile of Bucks, so we haven't been counting the venue as a cost. In our experience, the costs haven't been higher than \$100 Reais.

We then sit around the Pile of Bucks. Who sits? First the people or organizations that participated as the basis or support for the workshop. What I mean by that is: the facilitators, a representative for the venue, anyone that has worked in the production of the workshop, maybe the person or people that cooked and so on. For our workshops, we have always invited friends to cook as a parallel business, offering the weekend's meals with a set price to whoever ordered them. But even if they are proposing an independent business attached to the course, we still invite them to sit with us around the money. The thing is, participation in the Pile of Bucks doesn't automatically mean you will end with a part of the pile. And to us having someone taking care of our nutrition means we get to focus a lot more in the group process, so we can feel the difference in the quality of the work we do. We also invite the organization through which we have been emitting our certificates.

There isn't a limitation of places taken around the Pile. Also, it's possible (and frequent) to create new places during the process. It happens when someone remembers something or someone who was important to the workshop, or when the people sitting around the Pile decide to allocate a part of the money to some project.

When I say "the money", it could be real paper money, in the case that is available. This is the way Dominic usually does the Money Pile. But in our case, as the Point of Comfort of the participants were just determined, and as a part of it was paid using credit cards, we use pieces of paper as it was a game. It permits us to divide with ease: a piece of paper with no number on it stand for 100 bucks. When we want to allocate smaller amounts, we simple tear any given piece of paper and write in each piece the new amount (50/50, or 70/30, for example). If you tear an already torn piece, you just draw a line above the number it has an divide that number among the new pieces (tearing a piece with 50 could mean one piece with 30 and another with 20, for example).

And how the process works? We have been using three principles of the Manipai, as Ana Terra's crew designed them. They wrote them in an effort to cultivate the spirit they perceived in Dominic's Money Pile, when they saw that it was spreading almost in it's own through São Paulo NVC, Restorative Circle and activists networks. It the same reason I'm writing all of this pages, trying to maintain alive, as much as I can, the spirit of Financial Co-responsibility.

To us, the three principles have been of help even to describe how our Pile of Bucks works. They go like this:

- **Principle of Empathic Key Turned On:** as many empathic keys turned on, the better the process unfolds. To have an empathic key turned on means that you try to listen what people are saying searching for the needs inside their words, and not focusing in the words themselves. That means if, for example, someone says that he or she is going to take some amount of money to pay for a month of yoga classes, the empathic listening takes you to think something like: "he or she is searching for well-being, health, satisfaction with oneself etc". So at the same time you don't pay attention to the judgments you might be doing about the strategies people are seeking, but try to grasp what is vital to that person that he or she is trying to accomplish through this strategy; and that also helps you understanding how people are living, which in turn can go a

long way when we create a supporting community and have intimacy to suggest alternative strategies.

- **Principle of the Suspension of Presuppositions:** for the occurrence of a Pile of Bucks, it is necessary to suspend the social presuppositions, or assumptions. That allows you and the other participants to be focused on the care of the people at a need level, without interpretation leading the events to one place or another - and worse, this leading going unnoticed. Some assumptions to serve as examples (I always list this as they are the ones that I notice the most): who is more educated deserves more, who worked more deserves more, money is a form of recognition for a particular job, more is better etc.
- **Principle of the Set of Procedures:** this is how the Pile of Bucks works, the game rules. People sit around the money that has been raised. Any move is possible: you can take any amount from the Pile and place in front of you, you can take any amount from the Pile and place in front of anyone else. You can also take from you and place in front of anyone else or in the Pile. And you can take from anyone else and place in front of you, anyone else or back in the Pile. Any move is reversible by anyone. Any move can be accompanied by an explanation or story or not. Any generative, open question can be made, and any question can be answered or not. New amounts can be added to the center (the Pile), and new places (destinations) can also be added to the circle around the Pile. It only ends when everyone is satisfied, and it only ends when there is no amount in the center (the Pile).

And that is how we divide the money that was raised by each workshop we do. After the process is complete, we write down the results to present them at the end of the course, Sunday afternoon.

As we invite people to stay and watch the Pile of Bucks, we also invite them to participate if they want. We have been using the method Dominic sometimes uses, which is called Aquarium: we invite people watching to sit in a second, broader circle. And we leave one place at the inner circle around the Pile for one person of the broader circle to sit at a time. That allows the watchers to participate in the division of the Pile without flooding the process with a lot of movements at the same time.

After the Pile is completed, things still can change. To this moment, it hasn't happened with us. But it is possible that people watching the process feel, as they live the experience, that their Point of Comfort are changing up or down. If it's up, they can add to the Pile. If it's down, they can place themselves as receivers of some part of the Pile. Also, someone can notice they have the will to give some extra amount to someone else specifically, or to some project. And, when we present the results of the Pile of Bucks at Sunday afternoon, people can feel they have given too much or too little, or that some of the receivers from the Pile of Bucks have received too much or too little. We remain open to hear and talk about whatever issues might emerge, and to make appropriate changes.

What I have learned so far

The Pile of Bucks offers some of the deepest learning I've been having as a Dragon Dreaming facilitator. Some of it I can already describe. Some I still can't. As I see the eyes gleaming when we are engaged in the process, I can feel healing occurring in myself and in others. It opens to the possibility of creating a supporting community far beyond the people with which I am regularly in contact. It seems like instant community, or the awareness that we are actually a community, and that if we don't support each other, we are already opening to win-lose dynamics.

It can seem that we, as the organizers of the workshops, are taking all of the risk of the process. I do think we actually are. There isn't much defending us of a tide of win-lose culture, which could mean people not offering enough in terms of money for us to be financially supported by the connections we make at the work we do. After all, what we are proposing as a Financial Co-responsibility method means that people get to decide how much they are going to pay for the workshop they are participating in, and we haven't much to say about it. And while the Point of Comfort + Pile of Bucks process opens to the possibility of people giving not only less than the equally divided amount that would support us, but also giving more than this pre-generated number (and that is strategic in a win-win financial relation), it's true that much more people we have encountered tend to swing to the "less" side.

What I recall at this moment is one of the Empowered Fundraising key principles: whenever you are making a money exchange relation with someone, what you are doing is making a human relation. What we are seeing is the power of connection, of creating meaningful relations among people. And that offers a deep value in itself.

It's hard, if not impossible, to quantify how deep those connections go. But keeping true to the principles of *we have enough, more is not better* and *we have choices* has been allowing us to connect with more and more people outside our known networks and beyond the marketing efforts surrounding our workshops. More and more people have been looking for us asking to participate in a workshop or to if we could offer a course specifically for their groups. I give a lot of credit of why this is happening to the fact that we work with Financial Co-responsibility.

Personally, the difference it is causing is enormous. I notice some concrete aspects: the way I deal with money seems to be oscillating much more to the right side of my brain. I have been checking *how I feel* much deeper than I have been making calculations (but I still make calculations, and don't intend to abandon it). I have been allowing myself to trust. Trust life, trust people and the networks I am part of. It is permitting me to live with less, and also to make some choices that could seem risky. I've been watching things unfold, and that absurdly larger part of the Universe that I don't know I don't know taking action. All is fine and flourishing. My life is much lighter as a result, and the world seems broader. It seems easier to make wild steps, assume outrageous projects. The only thing to keep in mind is *purpose*: if it expresses some higher purpose, one that answers the three ethical principles of Dragon Dreaming (developing of oneself, strengthening of community and care of Gaia) and the ethical rule (radically win-win), so it should and could be done.

I'm also seeing myself as a part of the whole in ways that weren't there, or weren't concrete. The best way to explain this, I think, is to tell a little story.

I am part of a network of people that inhabit a place in Porto Alegre called Casa Liberdade (Freedom House). It is a place of work and of connectivity that is based on radical collaboration. It has been there for four years now, experiencing different models of organization. In the passage of 2013 to 2014, the system has opened itself almost completely: it stopped having pre-defined values as payment for the use of the space. Now it works freely. Anyone can make a copy of the keys, and anyone can donate any amount. The costs are public and also the money that has been raised each month. We use a public calendar to manage the use of the spaces: people book a space for some time at any given date and that's it, it's taken.

As the Freedom House, as a system, wasn't able to generate community through the year, the effort to raise the monthly costs started to demand more and more energy. That started being felt around the middle of 2014, but wasn't noticed till later. Soon people in the network perceived Freedom House as a place that demanded more money than generated value. The perceived value (and maybe also the concrete value, as less people were inhabiting the house) were diminishing. So, as the end of the year got close by, some of the new (and not-so-new) inhabitants of the house started to meet and invite people to re-organize the system. A lot has been done and the project started to feel once again as something with purpose.

But the perceived value didn't change so quickly for those who weren't close by. Still the Freedom House was seen as a system that asked for more than it gave. At least that is how I notice things occurred, for raising the monthly costs was still getting harder and harder. Till December, when, for the first time since the House has opened it's functionality, the amount wasn't met.

At that time I had spared some money. I was raising it to get a new photographic camera, one that would offer me a broader horizon of possibilities. I am a photographer and photography educator, and a lot of what I do uses the resources I have from photo and video making. So I don't see this dream merely as an individual one, since it has a concrete impact in what I do, but it surely is one that is deeply personal.

But what emerged in me about the situation of the Freedom House? That I needed to use a part of this money (half of it, to be precise) to meet December's costs. It just came to me. And as my mind struggled with the idea, my heart had already decided. And that I did.

I also sent an email to around 20 close friends telling about my decision. The core purpose of it was to give the new inhabitants a chance to make the run. I still perceived Freedom House as having an important role to local (and not-so-local) community as a place where collaborative processes could emerge, in the form of it's own system, and in the form of the many projects that develop there each week. I also felt that we, the old inhabitants, had the role of preparing our replacement. One that I felt wasn't been taken care of with the care I perceived was needed.

That email generated a lot of incredible answers. Some of it were in the form of money. I received back more or less half of what I had donated. Others were in form of support, questions, worries. All of them generated good conversations and a strengthening of the bonds that helps me feel alive.

The rest of the money was easy to deal with. In the following meetings around the Freedom House situation, I negotiated the remaining part as an investment. It was as if I was giving in advance the donation relating some projects I have in the House. One of them is a Photo Studio. The other is a Dragon Dreaming workshop. So it turned out to be win-win all the way.

But that gave me a deep understanding about what it means to be part of a community, and what it means to have money in a safe vault – if you consider a bank a safe vault, that is. I started to think: am I being too foolish giving all these hard-kept money to a system that is struggling to withstand? Maybe. But I also felt that I needed to do it, not to feel like a hero, but because the system needed the energy injection that money symbolized. I simply had it, and I was – maybe by chance – in a place where I could feel the need for it. And where that money came from, in the end? It came from that community, that network of people. Most of the Dragon Dreaming workshops I offer happens at the Freedom House. The system remains open to receiving any amount we together see as fit for any giving workshop. And it's because that community of people trust the work that I do that each person that gave me money did it, to support the possibility of me keeping doing that same work.

So that money *isn't mine*. It's the community money. Maybe not a specific community. Surely the people that float around the Freedom House are a concrete part of it, at least because of the importance the place has as a venue for the workshops I did. But more to the point, it is *money that was freely given to me (not charged), by people that trusted the difference the work that I help doing have for themselves, for other people and for the world*. It's the community money being given for me to take care of it and to take this changes further on, either directly or by helping my personal well-being (having it the form it might have at each moment).

So that money is a resource for creating this difference. The planting and spreading of win-win culture. The development of individuals, the strengthening of community bonds, the care of the Earth. It is not my money. It is just in my care. How can I deny it when I feel it has another use than the one I, as an individual, had imagined it had?

I am part of this system. Not the one that circulates Freedom House, but this planetary system. My financial choices are part of this system. And practicing Financial Co-responsibility is opening more and more awareness about it.

I don't feel fear. I feel joy. Being a part of this system is something joyful. The old fetters that has kept my imagination locked are starting to go. The world is my limit, because it seems that any work that needs to be done has the resources to do it. Maybe they just aren't well distributed. And this is one way to try and get that distribution *done*. Win-win all the way.

Magical things happen. My photographic camera is in it's way to get bought. My grandfather, without knowing any choice that I made, decided to buy it for me using a small part of the money he got from a gigantic engineering project he is involved. One that even though has to do with getting people fed, probably isn't win-win. Because it has a large impact on the Earth. So that opens to another responsibility: what will I use my camera for to help heal that wound?

Win-win all the way. Want to try it? You know how. You can create how. Just step in!

December 2014 – January 2015

