

Terrestrial Leadership to Stay with the Trouble

What can we learn from theory, philosophy, and Costa Rican stories of response-ability and string figuring?



Maricela Blanco Arias

Main Field of Study: Leadership and Organization
Degree: Master of Arts (120 ECTS) with a major in Leadership and Organization
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Semester: Spring 2022
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Abstract

This master thesis is inspired by St. Pierre's post qualitative inquiry and the philosophy of immanence, which support the creation of concepts through immersion in theory, philosophy, and practice. This serves as a guide of thought for the inquirer's journey of exploration and creativity. This research departs in Latour's concept of the Terrestrial, enriched by Haraway's addition to the concept; and in Haraway's theory of string figures, which is the foundation for exploring how to enact the change that is needed to survive in a world of climate destruction and business as usual. Haraway says that not all humans observe the Terrestrial from above (as Latour suggests) and invites us to go out there and find the *people that never took off*. For this purpose, I went to Costa Rica and had non-structured conversations with six Costa Rican leaders, who have been working for and with social and environmental causes for years. This inquiry aims to get a deeper understanding of how these stories, combined with the concept of the Terrestrial and SF theory, may help us create new concepts and develop a philosophy of Terrestrial Leadership. From a *magic island* to *banana women*, these stories tell us about how these leaders have gone through constant metamorphic processes of inner development, the discovery of their response-ability, the enactment of collaborations, and the politics of staying with the trouble in a chaotic world; in the Chthulucene. Finally, with the help of storytelling, I attempt to offer a first ontological and epistemological perspective on the concept of Terrestrial leadership and how we might benefit from it.

Key Words

Terrestrial Leadership – Donna Haraway – SF Theory – String Figures – Staying with the Trouble – Post Qualitative Inquiry – The Plane of Immanence – Storytelling – Costa Rica

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Metamorphosis

I chose to use the morpho butterfly on the front page¹ of this inquiry because it has a special transformational meaning for me.

I came to Sweden three years ago after leaving Costa Rica, where I had all my life, family, and friends. I had to transform myself.

This master program has been a metamorphic journey. Like a critter on its own, it has helped me to grow, understand better, to question more, and to touch upon fields that I did not know I was passionate about. Not only have I met inspiring people, made amazing friends, and learned about many interesting topics; but I have also discovered a new version of me that truly enjoys researching, writing, and collecting stories of dedicated people that care and work for a sustainable future.

My development process has opened the doors for critical thinking, imagination, creativity, and response-ability.

Last April, I went back to Costa Rica to visit my loved ones, but also to do part of my fieldwork research. Each of the six conversations I had was touching and inspiring. Their stories made me question my role as an inquirer, as a storyteller.

One day, when I was sitting at home trying to process what these conversations meant to me, a friend sent me a message: Costa Rica had declared the morpho butterfly one of its national symbols². The same butterfly that I saw flying around during my childhood, the one that now represents Costa Ricans, the one that came back to me when I was going through one of the greatest metamorphic processes of my life.

*I am not the same person I was before starting this journey.
Thank you!*



*Maricela Blanco Arias
August 2022*

¹ (M. Blanco Arias, personal photograph, May 20th, 2022)

² See: Morpho butterfly is the new national symbol of Costa Rica:

<https://www.larepublica.net/noticia/mariposa-morpho-es-el-nuevo-simbolo-nacional-de-costa-rica>

1. Introduction

Take a second, take a little time to find something that you really care about. Something that matters. I do not care if it is big or little, but something that matters. And how, from that, one proposes building a connection for a revolutionary Terrestrial subject. How one proposes building the connectivity which can be part of transformation (ZKM | Videostudio, 2020. Donna Haraway's closing speech).

Donna Haraway's invitation to find something I care about is what brought me here, to share this journey of stories and metamorphosis with you.

1.1. Background

From the many things I care about, there is one concern that strikes me every day: climate change and the processes of creative self-destruction that our generation is witnessing (Wright & Nyberg, 2015). I wonder how to build a sustainable future, how to understand our responsibility and how to enact a positive change with a real impact before it is too late. How do we help leaders to understand the power and the responsibility that they are holding in their hands?

Wright and Nyberg (2015) explain how climate change and climate denial are among the greatest threats that humanity has ever faced. The authors argue that the climate politics of corporations and capitalism have directed us to processes of creative self-destruction, where organizations have both the power of destruction and the power of enacting positive and authentic change for a better future.

Latour (2018), explores the politics of the new climate regime and emphasizes how the elites have decided to “get rid of all the burdens of solidarity as fast as possible”, by creating deregulation, enacting the explosion of inequalities, and funding and promoting the denial of climate change (Latour, 2028, p.18-19).

Here, we are not talking only about political parties or corporations, and the politics surrounding their actions and decisions. We are also referring to the individual level, to the self, to the person sitting on that board making the decision, influencing a specific path, with the power of enacting change.

Latour (2018) looks at the Terrestrial as a political actor that could be a subject of change. For the author, “the Terrestrial is bound to the Earth and to land, but it is also a way of worlding (Latour, 2018. P54). His proposition of the Terrestrial as a political entity includes every human and non-human beings living in the critical zone³ and their multispecies relations.

Latour (2018) argues that humanity observes the Terrestrial from above, like outsiders, perhaps in different layers of altitude, but still from an external position. This idea is the foundation for Latour’s (2018) argument about the need of landing down to earth, landing in the critical zone.

For Haraway (ZKM | Videostudio, 2020), the Terrestrial deserves companions that tell stories about those critters that belong to it. But unlike Latour, Haraway argues that not everyone has taken off from the critical zone. From her perspective, some *human people*⁴, and some communities remain landed on earth, not due to ignorance or the absence of development, but because they have remained authentic, close to the Terrestrial, one with the Terrestrial. For Haraway, these people are worth talking to. Listening to their stories of string figuring and worlding practices may be a way of learning how to *become with* the Terrestrial, a way of bringing the dead to life, and a way of making a better future for our kin.

Therefore, I use the concept of the Terrestrial, from a combination of Latour’s (2018) and Haraway’s (2016) perspective: the Terrestrial as a political entity, that is, all sorts of critters inhabiting planet Earth, which were, are, or will be, part of the entangled string figuring that forms and exists in the Chthulucene⁵.

1.2. Problematization

The current climate destruction we are facing and the need of changing the ways leaders give continuation to this “business as usual” world (Wright & Nyberg, 2015), has urged researchers, academics, and private organizations to start looking at practices of inner development ⁶(like the relationships of self-discovery, recognition, and interactions with others) as mechanisms for sustainable development. These researchers and organizations are proposing models that

³ “A thin layer in which life has radically modified the earth's atmosphere and geology – as opposed either to the space beyond or to the deep biology below” (Latour, 2018, p.123).

⁴ As Haraway (2016) refers to humans.

⁵ For more information, please refer to section 2.3.

⁶ For more information, please refer to section 1.3 and 1.4

attempt to frame these practices as one of the possible answers to the “*how do we do it*” question.

One of these frameworks is the Inner Development Goals (IDGs), a set of 23 skills grouped into five categories, recently born in Sweden (Inner Development Goals, 2022a). This framework intends to provide the inner dimension that, according to its creators, is missing in the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations⁷ (SDGs) (Growth that Matters AB, 2021).

Costa Rica became the first nation to officially commit to the implementation of the IDGs in their public sector (Inner Development Goals, 2022b). The news of Costa Rica’s commitment to the framework, came to me at a very early stage of the conversations between the organization behind the IDGs and the Costa Rican government, as a result of the many entanglements that we encounter in life. As a Costa Rican living in Sweden, I became very curious about this collaboration and decided to look at it as the starting point of my research.

1.3. The Inner Development Goals Framework (IDGs)

The IDGs idea was born in 2019 in Sweden, when a group of representatives of academia, businesses, and other organizations (the IDG co-creators), decided to create a framework aimed at accelerating the achievement of the SDGs. According to their explanation, the development of inner skills is needed to better address the global challenges, which they plan to do through programs of adult education, inter-organizational alliances, and political synergies (Inner Development Goals, 2022a).

The IDG co-creators and supporters have been working on enacting collaborations around the globe, to gain validation and support for the first IDG Development Program implementation.

Table 1 presents the five categories of inner development proposed in the IDG framework, and the 23 related skills (Inner Development Goals, 2022a).

⁷ See: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> / Also called Agenda 2030

Table 1: Inner Development Goals – Skills Framework

Category	Skills
I. Being – Relation to the self	1. Inner Compass 2. Integrity and Authenticity 3. Openness and Learning Mindset 4. Self-awareness 5. Presence
II. Thinking – Cognitive Skills	6. Critical Thinking 7. Complexity Awareness 8. Perspective Skills 9. Sense-making 10. Long-term Orientation and Visioning
III. Relating – Caring for Others and the World	11. Appreciation 12. Connectedness 13. Humility 14. Empathy and Compassion
IV. Collaborating – Social Skills	15. Communication Skills 16. Co-creation Skills 17. Inclusive Mindset and Intercultural Competence 18. Trust 19. Mobilization Skills
V. Acting – Driving Change	20. Courage 21. Creativity 22. Optimism 23. Perseverance

Table 1. Inner Development Goals Framework⁸

Even though the IDG framework content is currently defined as it is presented in Table 1, it is a constantly revised proposition based on ongoing research.

1.4. Further Inner Development Research

Inner development, inner search, inner transformation, mindfulness, inner transition, interiority, inner wisdom, consciousness, intrinsic orientation, inner change, and inner dimensions of sustainability transformation, are some of the names used to refer to the conscious processes of

⁸ For an extended version go to Appendix I. *The Inner Development Goals framework- Extended version*

discovery of the self. These processes are often related to the development or construction of values, motivations, skills, or competencies that help the individual to recognize the necessity of taking actions toward social and sustainable development. It is not within the scope of this inquiry to determine which terminology is more suitable, or the potential reasons. However, I would like to highlight that most of these studies and/or frameworks define development based on an inner-outer dichotomy of a two-world ontology.

Frank (2021) analyzes the challenges of sustainable consumption based on Klöckner and Matthies (2004) normative decision-making model of attention, motivational, evaluation, and behavioral stages. As a result, Frank (2021, p.1235) proposes a list of six personal competencies for sustainable development: self-awareness, value clarity, emotional resilience, self-care, the ability to access and cultivate ethical virtues, and mindsets for sustainability. Even though Frank mentions words like sustainability-based values, gratitude, curiosity, empathy, and a proactive posture toward the world; the author keeps this framework as an internal journey of creating better relations with the self and does not deepen into relations with others.

Grenni, Soini, and Horlings, (2019) propose that sense of place is important to get a deeper understanding of how sustainable transformations are enacted. The authors suggest a tool for researching sense of place by looking at two main dimensions: 1) An outer dimension based on the forces of the environment, and 2) an inner dimension that includes two perspectives, the individual (the self) and the collective (others). In their paper, the authors argue that the “understanding of the plurality of meanings and values held by different actors in places is essential for achieving sustainable place-based transformation” (Grenni, et. al, 2019, p.418).

Hedlund-de Witt, de Boer, and Boersema (2014, p.40) performed a study in the Netherlands about how environmental attitudes and sustainable lifestyles relate to worldviews. The authors argue that these attitudes must be studied considering culture, history, and psychology. “Component analyses resulted in five worldview-factors (inner growth, contemporary spirituality, traditional god, focus on money, secular materialism) and three environmental attitudes (connectedness with nature, willingness to change, instrumentalism)” [...] “the results suggest that intrinsically oriented worldviews correlate positively with pro-environmental attitudes and lifestyles, while extrinsically oriented worldviews correlate negatively”.

The IDG co-creators argue that the IDGs are what is needed to boost the achievement of the SDGs (Inner Development Goals, 2022a), which is also a combination of inner and outer dimensions.

Pisters et.al (2020, p.395) “suggested that connection, compassion, and creativity could be used as key analytical dimensions of transformative place-based learning”, and explored the framework empirically through the use of " using life-story interviews with people living in three different ecovillages”. Even though this study is close to the approach of my inquiry, the analysis is based on assemblage theory and a “new materialist social inquiry” of a “transcend dualism between mind and matter”, and culture and nature assemblages (Pisters et.al, 2020, p.398-399). This approach is different from the one-world ontology of the philosophy of immanence that Deleuze and Guattari (1987:2013) propose and that is the ontological foundation for my post qualitative inquiry (PQI)⁹.

When it comes to methodologies used, *Table 2* presents some examples. However, it is important to highlight that this inquiry does not focus on performing an extensive literature review, since St. Pierre (2018) argues that every PQI is unique and should not be based on any other study, it must instead, create its own style according to the research needs.

These examples share the problematization: the recognition of the current destruction path, the concern for the lack of real change, and the need of addressing the self and the inner dimension as a potential mechanism of change.

Through this inquiry and the development of the philosophy of Terrestrial leadership, I intend to initiate a discussion about how we can, based on a combination of stories, theories, and philosophy, develop a philosophy of Terrestrial leadership. The main theoretical contribution is to break with the separation and the traditional *inner-outer* and *thinking-doing* dichotomies. Instead, I propose to think as if there was no clear separation, a one-world ontology¹⁰, as PQI and the philosophy of immanence suggest.

⁹ See section 2.2.

¹⁰ For more information see section 2.2. about the plane of immanence.

Table 2. Examples of problematization and methodology used in inner development research

Study by	Title	Problematization	Methodology
Frank (2021)	A proposal of personal competencies for sustainable consumption	“Despite advances in Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) scholarship and practice, ESE has not yet contributed to mitigate the sustainability-related problems it is meant to remedy” (p.1226).	A conceptual study based on: 1) Analysis of existing research and challenges, 2) the creation of a set of personal competencies
Growth that Matters AB. (2021)	Inner Development Goals framework	The SDGs are missing the inner dimension of inner development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A quantitative approach using two questionnaires 2) Feedback from a volunteer group of experts in sustainability, the IDG co-creators, and other partners
Pisters, Vihinen, & Figueiredo (2020).	Inner change and sustainability initiatives: exploring the narratives from eco-villagers through a place-based transformative learning approach	The wicked problems of today call for “new ways of organizing human societies which allow for the continuation of human life on earth in a way that is sustainable, socially just and respectful of nonhuman forms of living” (p.394).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ethnography 2) Narrative inquiry
Grenni et.al (2019)	The inner dimension of sustainability transformation: how sense of place and values can support sustainable place-shaping	The current debate on sustainability and sustainable transformations definitions and understanding, “has started to recognize the central importance of the “inner dimension” in achieving sustainable futures. This brings to the fore individual and cultural immaterial aspects, such as values and sense of place” (p.411).	A theoretical and conceptual paper based on: 1) existing research and, 2) the creation of a new framework for the study of place-based transformations
Hedlund-de Witt et.al (2014)	Exploring inner and outer worlds: A quantitative study of worldviews, environmental attitudes, and sustainable lifestyles	A change in lifestyles and individual behaviors is needed to achieve a transition into a sustainable future. However, lifestyles are not becoming more sustainable and changes in that matter are not easy to be made.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Contextualization of the case based on cultural-historical and psychological analysis 2) A quantitative study using a questionnaire

Table 2. Examples of problematization and methodology used in inner development research

1.5. Research Questions and Aims

I became interested in the point of view of the people who will receive and implement the IDGs. Is this framework what they need? Will they embrace it? Is it possible to translate and “tropicalize” the message? Will it remain? Will it make a difference? However, it would be pure speculation to attempt to answer any of these questions, since the implementation has not yet started. What is possible, on the other hand, is to explore the stories of people with the profile of those that could be part of the implementation, leaders that have been working with environmental and social causes.

For Latour (2018, p.40) the Terrestrial is written “with capital T to emphasize that we are referring to a concept” (Latour, 2018, p.40). This conceptualization should serve as a way of reorienting thinking on how to take care of Gaia; how to assume responsibility in togetherness; how to stay with the trouble¹¹.

Haraway (2016) proposes an understanding of our epoch based on connections among critters of Earth, which are entangled in many different and unexpected ways, as when one takes part in a string figuring game (SF theory). From the author’s perspective, there is no point in trying to find final solutions to the challenges of our time, but instead, finding ways of learning how to live and die in a world of chaos, by assuming shared response-ability

Yes, Haraway (2016) replaces the word responsibility for *response-ability*, which starts by recognizing that we are part of a greater system. Inspired by tentacular beings and the string figures theory, Haraway (2016) refers to tentacular thinking, which she describes as *thinking with* and *becoming with* as a shared task of response-ability, in which at least two parties take part. One party assumes a more active role of action, nurturing a string entanglement, while the other part remains on hold, in a more (but not necessarily completely) passive role. These roles are interchangeable as time passes, creating a shared response-ability of thinking, creating, encouraging, inspiring, and *becoming with*.

¹¹ For Haraway (2016) it means that we “require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles”, which could allow us to survive in a damaged earth. Not just focused on finding final solutions, but in learning how to cooperate, how to respect each other (all the critters of the world), how-to live-in togetherness and, how to *become with* each other.

The question then, is if the concept of the Terrestrial in a combination with SF theory and the stories of Costa Rican leaders with experience in social and environmental causes, can help us to reorient politics in management; if we can create the concept of Terrestrial leadership to stay with the trouble.

I use post qualitative inquiry to guide my research. PQI supports the creation of concepts through immersion in theory, philosophy, and practice. It serves as a guide of thought for the inquirer's journey of exploration and creativity. Therefore, my research aim is *to develop a conceptual framework for Terrestrial leadership*. This can be broken down into three questions.

1. How do Costa Rican leaders perceive their development processes and the discovery/cultivation of their response-ability?
2. How does the SF theory help us to *think with* the stories of environmental and social leaders in Costa Rica?
3. How does the Terrestrial reorient our thinking concerning leadership?

1.6. Research Methods

St. Pierre's (2018) PQI is a relevant companion for exploring the stories of these Costa Rican leaders, in a combination with the plane of immanence (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2013). PQI calls for creativity, uniqueness, and experimentation based on reading extensively until theories and philosophy guide you through the creation of new "concepts that reorient thinking" (St. Pierre, 2018, p.3).

According to St. Pierre (2018, p.4), "in an ontology of immanence, one becomes less interested in *what is* and more interested in *what might be* and what is coming into being. For Spindler (2010, p.149) "it [immanence] is both the measure, the condition, and the criterion of what for Deleuze constitutes philosophy itself". This one-ontology proposition, suggests that there are no real dichotomies between *the virtual* and *the actual*, that is, between what precedes action and the materialization of the act itself (Spindler, 2010, Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2013; St. Pierre, 2018). Here, the virtual, the immanent, the *yet to be*, has a power of materialization that has no clear limits with the actual, as St. Pierre (2018, p.5) explains by citing Deleuze and Parnet: "the plane of immanence includes both the virtual and its actualization simultaneously without there being any assignable limit between the two" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007, p. 149), where PQI becomes both, the way of looking at the research and the approach itself.

This inquiry looks at the concept of the Terrestrial (Latour, 2018; ZKM | Videostudio, 2020), SF theory (Haraway, 2016), and stories of Costa Rican leaders working with social and environmental causes; to reorient thinking on how to stay with the Trouble (Haraway, 2016).

This research is based on an abductive approach, which combines the understanding of single cases, following hypothetical overarching patterns or theories that could help to better understand these single cases (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2018).

According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2018, p.5):

It is very important to keep in mind that abduction neither formally nor informally is any simple ‘mix’ of these [induction and deduction], nor can it be reduced to these; it adds new, specific elements. During the process, the empirical area of application is successively developed, and the theory (the proposed overarching pattern) is also adjusted and refined. [...] The difference is, in other words, that it includes understanding as well.

Here, I present stories and their possible connections to theory, not as a way of proving anything right or wrong, but as a way of enacting further conversations about how we can *become with* the Terrestrial, and what we can learn from appreciating these stories and these people. Theory serves as a guide for thought and critical thinking (St. Pierre, 2018).

I follow their stories of how they assume response-ability of giving voice to the alive and the dead, to the marginalized and the vulnerable; but also, about how they make decisions that affect their inner self, and several entangled familiar and unfamiliar entities within the Terrestrial, while managing limited resources. I pay special attention to the worlding practices and acknowledgment of response-ability that characterizes their transformational journey.

My only aim, as a storyteller and researcher, was to go out there, find them, have open conversations with them (as open as they allowed me to), *think with* their stories, and share them with you, as they deserve.

Haraway (2016), in her chapter “A curious practice”, quotes Hannah Arendt when referring to the use of imagination and storytelling to transport yourself, and others, in space and time: “To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one’s imagination to go visiting” (Arendt, 1984). In this inquiry, I use storytelling as a way of presenting the stories and as a method of creating spaces for further inquiry.

I had conversations with six people. However, since the beginning of this research, when I decided to venture into PQI (St. Pierre, 2018), I have been in constant dialogue with myself, a first-time post qualitative inquirer, trying to understand my response-ability and my metamorphic journey of *becoming with* the Terrestrial. In this inquiry I am immersing myself in tentacular thinking (Haraway, 2016), *thinking with* the stories, as they become partly based on the conversations and, partly the result of this tentacular thinking.

1.7. Costa Rica: A Journey of Becoming with the Terrestrial

From local Costa Rican cuisine to artisan crafts to traditional customs and celebrations, sustainability is embedded deeply in the culture and traditions of Costa Rica.

Costa Ricans are proud to live among and protect their country's rich environment, as this small nation holds five percent of the world's land-based biodiversity and 3.5 percent of its marine life. Costa Rica produces nearly 93 percent of its electricity from renewable resources and 30 percent of its territory is protected natural land. A pioneer in the area of sustainability, Costa Rica is a model for sustainable practices for many industries within the region and around the world.

Costa Rica Tourism Board, 2022.

Costa Rica has gained its green reputation, after decades of commitment, social and environmental policy development, and the execution of inter-organizational projects aimed to transition the country into a sustainable nation. According to the Earth.Org:

Costa Rica is one of the few countries to have outlined an updated climate change mitigation plan in 2019: the National Decarbonization Plan 2018-2050. It announces emission reductions in all sectors, with strategies including electrifying public transport, energy efficiency measures, better farming, and waste management practices (Mulhern, 2021).

Costa Rica has strengthened its route towards sustainability from a country perspective and it has gained international recognition. In October 2021, Costa Rica was one of the five winners of the first edition of the Earthshot Prize, organized by The Royal Foundation of The Duke and

Duchess of Cambridge; defined as “the most prestigious global environment prize in history” (The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, 2022). The prize recognized Costa Rican efforts since 1990, aimed to revert its forest devastation, resulting in a collaboration of public institutions and citizens that doubled the size of Costa Rican forests by 2021.

For me, born and raised in the rural south of Costa Rica, being a kid in the 90s was all about going to school, playing with my friends, and having fun at home. Life was simple and beautiful. I remember how much I enjoyed going with my friend Xenia to bring the warm homemade lunch to her dad, while he was working. Going with my friend was a great adventure because we would get deep into the forest. I could admire those very tall trees dancing to the wind’s rhythm.

Despite living among coffee plantations, trees and farm animals, it was truly a unique experience to go into the forest. There was a special unknown magic there. However, the closer we got to her dad and his co-workers, the less enjoyable the trip was, as the noisy saws hurried up to finish the last tree of the round, before having lunch.

It was sad to see them lying there. They were still alive but cut into pieces, bleeding out, ready to continue their massive dying process once the lunch was over. Little did I understand what was happening there.

M. Blanco Arias, Pérez Zeledón Costa Rica, 2022 (Story based in 1995)

Costa Rica has years of commitment to the enactment of a sustainable future and to reverting practices of self-destruction (as Wright & Nyberg (2015) refer to unsustainable practices). Its people, authorities, businesses, communities, and many other entities have been working in *togetherness*¹² to restore nature and build a sustainable society, as the former President of Costa Rica, Carlos Alvarado Quesada, said in his official statement about the country's commitment to the IDGs:

We have no time to waste, it is necessary to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 agenda¹³. That is why, in December, we became the first member state to commit to the implementation of the IDG framework across the public sector. We understand that building capacity for the people responsible for implementing public policy is key for the agenda (Inner Development Goals, 2022b, 0:16).

¹² As Haraway suggests in her book *Staying with the Trouble*, 2016.

¹³ The 2030 agenda is another way of referring to the SDGs.

It is not within my scope to go deep into what the country needs to improve on an institutional, collective or individual level, despite how much I would be interested in researching further.

So, what can be said is that in Costa Rica, like in many other places, you will find people willing to enact a change. People who care about the living and the dying, people willing to take a stand for those marginalized voices and that want to help others to join their journey of staying with the trouble.

You will see it in the farmer that lets chickens run around freely, and that refuses to use chemicals in his crops. In the park ranger, who spends months far away from her toddler, while she protects the Cocos Island. In the young teacher, who lives alone in a small house far away in the countryside, because his purpose is to make sure that the 20 kids of the community get the education that they deserve. In the community who gathered the money that a family needed to pay for a genetic test in the United States for their kid, who had been suffering from a degenerative disease for years, so they could finally find out what disease was, and if there was a possible treatment for it. In the indigenous leader who was murdered for defending his people's land. In the congresswomen and men fighting to get a new law approved that recognizes and punishes femicides more seriously. And, the environmentalist who died protecting the turtles and their eggs on the Caribbean coast¹⁴.

For all of them and many others, these stories of *becoming with* the Terrestrial deserve to be told and to be heard.

¹⁴ See: The Tico Times. <https://ticotimes.net/2015/05/31/anniversary-jairo-moras-murder-moin-beach-turtles-protection>

2. Companion Theories and Concepts

In this chapter, I will start by explaining the main concepts and theories guiding this inquiry. These will come back during the coming chapters when they get entangled with the stories.

The most relevant consideration here is that none of these theories and concepts intend to explain behavior or situations. This background is used only as a guide of thought to understand better the context and the stories behind conversations, as well as my own discovery process as an inquirer.

2.1. Gaia and The Terrestrial

“Oh my! We are in this together and no matter where we are positioned, we are responsible to and for each other, I think that is about being terrestrial”

Donna Haraway (ZKM | Videostudio, 2020, 12:16)

Before diving further into the concept of the Terrestrial, it is necessary to talk about Gaia.

Gaia was first introduced by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis (Lovelock, 1972; Lovelock & Margulis, 1974), cited in Lenton and Dutreuil (2020a, p.178) as “the biosphere and all those parts of the Earth with which it actively interacts”.

Latour and Weibel (2020, p.167) argue that the Earth is not one organism, but instead...

“...that on Earth you cannot distinguish what an organism is from the *habitability conditions* that allow this animal to survive. *Gaia is not in contradiction with evolutionary biology; it is simply the study of a new being. And it's inside this being that every life form has ever resided*”. [...] (And by life it refers to) ... “a singular entity: all the living organisms that have succeeded each other since the origin of life”.

Lenton and Dutreuil (2020, p.168) claim that when referring to Gaia, as an agent, one must “accept not knowing what sort of character it is, and let it be defined not by *what it is* (or rather what you wrongly believe it is) but by *what it does*”. The authors also mention the separation that sciences have made out of the concept of life and the role of this agent (let's say Gaia), between “what organisms have done, and where they live” (Lenton & Dutreuil, 2020b, p.175), assuming that the surroundings where life occurs are just a passive environment that lacks life

itself. On the contrary, for the authors, this agent must be seen as a whole, the point where all sciences merge, an agent that is alive and, that far away from being a divine or mystique entity, is instead “a fairly down-to-earth theory” (Lenton & Dutreuil, 2020b, p.175).

According to Latour and Weibel (2020, p.226) Gaia as such, does not “yet have enough political resonance”, which is why they have defined the Terrestrial as “Gaia plus the political” (Latour & Weibel, 2020, p.227).

Latour makes a wake-up call for all of us in his book *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climate Regime* (2018). He goes from the *disorientation* and the *disconnection* processes that make it necessary to land down to earth. Latour makes a distinction between the land with political and geographical boundaries, which we call countries and which we associate with the identity that land gives to people; and the land that does not belong to anyone, but to which we all belong to. This new way of understanding space and its entanglements is explored by Latour (2018) and by many other scientists¹⁵.

Latour (2018) argues that the constant struggle between those that seek modernization towards globalization, the ones that prefer to remain local, and, those that live in an alternative reality of climate denial; has caused humanity to see the Terrestrial from far above, like outsiders, perhaps in different layers of altitude, but still from an external position. This idea is the foundation for Latour’s (2018) argument about the need of landing down on earth.

Latour elaborates (quoting Haraway) on the Terrestrial as a political entity: “living forms that are building their own space and time [...] each of them building their own metrics, which you have to respect if you want to move in the Terrestrial” (2020, 11:19) because yes, we are part of the Terrestrial but we are also moving in it, within it, and I will add, we *become together with* it (as Haraway (2016) says). “A whole set of positions that we shall have to learn to recognize before the militants of the extreme Modern¹⁶ have totally devastated the stage” (Latour, 2018, p.56).

Latour (2018) argues that the Terrestrial is where we are headed and it is what we are. We are the Terrestrial and the Terrestrial is us. Not just us, human people, but us and all the other critters that exist within the Critical Zone. We owe to the Terrestrial to put it first, to validate

¹⁵ See for example the Catalog published by ZKM: *Critical Zones. The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth*. Which is a collection of essays written by 69 prestigious researchers, scientists and philosophers, edited by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel. 2020.

¹⁶ Those that move forward from localization to globalization, often without interest of negotiating with those left behind (Latour, 2018, p.14).

its agency, and to tell stories about those that are *becoming with* the Terrestrial, so we all learn from each other. *We become with* the Terrestrial and we move within it.

Following on Haraway's interpretation (ZKM | Videostudio, 2020), the concept of the Terrestrial also includes all *those that never took off*, and from whom we all must learn.

Haraway's idea of *those that never took off* and her invitation to learn from them (ZKM | Videostudio, 2020) is the basis of this inquiry.

Living in the Terrestrial is being at risk to each other in the course of living and dying with all of those who make the Earth [...] so that being Terrestrial is not so much about landing from above [...] (even though) colonial capitalism truly transformed the Earth and no one was unaffected by that. That said, very many peoples of the Earth, human and non-human never took off (Donna Haraway, ZKM | Videostudio, 2020, 9:50)

To *have never taken off* entails a connection to the Terrestrial, a string figuring process that somehow connects the critter on a sympoietic¹⁷ level, not only biologically speaking, but spiritually and/or consciously. These connections exist, sometimes intentionally, other times perhaps as the result of cultural heritage. Regardless of the origin, what Haraway's invitation means for me, is to go out there and talk to them, listen to their stories, and let them enlighten us with their string figuring processes of development, response-ability, and *becoming with* the Terrestrial.

As mentioned in the introduction, I use the concept of the Terrestrial, from a combination of Latour and Haraway's perspective:

The Terrestrial as a political entity, that is, all sorts of critters inhabiting planet Earth, which were, are, or will be, part of the entangled string figuring process that forms and exists in the Chthulucene.

For Latour, the Terrestrial opens up, which makes it necessary "to open the packaging and re-examine, piece by piece, what was [is] expected of each component" (Latour, 2018, p.50); for he continues: "to mold a politics, you need agents who bring together their interests and their capacities for action" (Latour, 2018, p.64).

These agents that Latour mentions, are the subject of this research. People that have (or are trying to) *become with* the Terrestrial and for the Terrestrial; giving voice to the voiceless,

¹⁷ For more information, please refer to section 2.3.

enacting sustainable futures, cultivating response-ability, and who, have the possibility of inspiring others from positions of leadership.

2.2. A Post Qualitative Inquiry of Immanence

St. Pierre's (2018) PQI draws its inspiration from philosophers like Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari, Lyotard, and Derrida, who constantly insist on the importance of exploring the *not-yet*, disrupting traditionally qualitative methodology and methods design, based on the uniqueness, individuality and constant transformation of reality. For St. Pierre, every inquiry should be a unique experience of discovery, that happens from the moment the inquirer gets involved in the inquiry and continues throughout the inquiry process itself. Every step taken towards the inquiry should be justified with a need for it and should support the creation of concepts.

St. Pierre (2018, p.14) argues that PQI uses an ontology of immanence, begins with a concrete encounter with the real, is creative and experimental and created anew each time. For the author there is no post qualitative methodology, the best preparation for PQI is reading theory and philosophy, which results in the creation of philosophical concepts that don't represent reality but reorient thought; and, finally, the post qualitative inquirer proceeds with an affirmative trust that something may come out.

The author rejects the idea that every inquiry should follow traditional qualitative and quantitative methodologies to be valid. According to St. Pierre (2018), researchers should be free to unlearn traditional methods and develop customized inquiries based on the uniqueness of every case. Not a single inquiry resembles another one. There cannot be guidelines that tell the researcher what to do or in what order. The main idea is that the exploration process of the inquiry in combination with a deep immersion in reading philosophy and theories should guide the inquirer on its journey of exploration and creativity, not to fit scientific and academic expectations or standards, but to approach the specific inquiry in a useful way that stimulates the creation of concepts and knowledge sharing.

St. Pierre explains immanence as follows:

Immanence, based on a one-world ontology, is opposed to the transcendent, which is based on a two-world ontology like that of Plato in which instances of beauty in the world (the copy, the appearance) refer to and are conditioned by the transcendent,

abstract Form of Beauty (the Real, the Ideal), which exists in an originary, transcendent world of first entities and pure essences uncontaminated by human desire, frailty, contingency, and finitude (St. Pierre, 2018, p.4).

Deleuze and Parnet (1997/2007, p.148) explain the plane of immanence as the multiplicity of virtual images, “an actual perception surrounds itself with a cloud of virtual images, distributed on increasingly remote, increasingly! large, moving circuits, which both make and unmake each other”, also referring to these as “circles of virtual images”, which are divided but also unified within the plane of immanence. These are also called “circles of converge” and are often referred to as plateaus by Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994, p.23): “We call a “plateau” any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome”. Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994, p.5) use the rhizome (a subterranean stem for some plants, different from roots and radicles, which is not exclusive to plants, but also animals and other critters) as a way of explaining the endless possibilities of connections between different layers of plateaus.

The philosophy of immanence (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994; Deleuze & Parnet, 1997/2007; Spindler, 2010; St. Pierre, 2018) includes principles of constant movement, multiplicities, a one-world ontology characterized by the convergence of the actual and the virtual, without clear distinctions of one and another. “The plane of immanence, in short, is what enables meaning — the creation of meaning, against the background of the chaotic non-meaning that underlies all life” (Spindler, 2010, p.155).

“The plane of immanence is the image of thought — not a method [...] Nor is it a state of knowledge in scientific terms, nor the general opinion of what thinking means or what mission it has, but rather what pertains to thought by right, [...] and that which constitutes its internal conditions, is infinite movement. [...]an infinite and absolute horizon making possible the consistency that thought requires. It is infinite and absolute because it is not the relative horizon of a subject, [...] but the horizon of movement as such (Spindler, 2010, p.152-153).

The multiplicity of the plane of immanence and the constant movement between plateaus (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2013) aligns with Haraway’s (2016) SF theory of string figuring, which I attempt to explore through storytelling¹⁸ during this inquiry. In the same way, the creation of meaning, or the creation of concepts, is one of the foundations of PQI.

¹⁸ For more information, please refer to section 3.3.

The concepts of movement, multiplicities, plateaus, the virtual and the actual, immanence, and the concept of a concept itself, are some of the many philosophical considerations to define the plane of immanence. Despite finding these topics of great interest, I must limit this section to a superficial explanation of such, as the philosophy of immanence is not the main focus of my inquiry and a proper discussion would require an inquiry on its own. However, I have touched upon these topics here, to explain why the philosophy of immanence and the PQI are relevant for my research.

Deleuze and Parnet (1997/2007, p.150) explain that “actuals imply already constituted individuals, and are ordinarily determined, whereas the relationship of the actual and the virtual forms an acting individuation or a highly specific and remarkable singularization which needs to be determined case by case”. The “case by case” idea, is the main basis of St. Pierre’s (2018) *post-qualitative inquiry*, which suggests unlearning all traditional research methodologies and does not focus on trying to find similarities but the differences, what makes every case unique. “One would not “analyze empirical data” [...] looking for “themes and patterns” that repeat across the data because things are not alike, they don’t resemble each other, and everything is different” (St. Pierre, 2018, p.6).

As St. Pierre (2018, p.5) says “the virtual and the actual do not exist in a hierarchy, as in a two-world ontology, because they exist on the same plane, the plane of immanence. Both the virtual and the actual are real”. From this point of view, the stories of Costa Rican leaders exist within the plane of immanence, as a combination of the virtual and the real, a combination of thoughts and actions. These stories represent the possibility of enacting further action, the actions of togetherness that Haraway considers necessary to staying with the trouble.

2.3. SF Theory

Donna Haraway (2016) defines:

Staying with the trouble requires making oddkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles. We become with each other or not at all. That kind of material semiotics is always situated, someplace and not noplacement, entangled and worldly (Haraway, 2016, p.4).

For Haraway (2016), humans should focus on recognizing that we are part of a bigger system that contains all sorts of critters, where we are one species more, equal to the smallest ant and the tallest tree. All critters playing the string figuring game, nurturing and passing responsibility to each other (and receiving it back), giving voice to the voiceless, keeping the dead alive, respecting others, embracing togetherness, recognizing our companion species, and acknowledging that we need each other, and more importantly, that we must learn how to live with each other despite of our differences; all these and more are worlding practices of staying with the trouble.

Haraway explains SF theory as follows:

SF is a sign for science fiction, speculative feminism, science fantasy, speculative fabulation, science fact, and also, string figures. Playing games of string figures is about giving and receiving patterns, dropping threads and failing but sometimes finding something that works, something consequential and maybe even beautiful, that wasn't there before, of relaying connections that matter, of telling stories in hand upon hand, digit upon digit, attachment site upon attachment site, to craft conditions for finite flourishing on terra, on earth. String figures require holding still in order to receive and pass on. String figures can be played by many, on all sorts of limbs, as long as the rhythm of accepting and giving is sustained. Scholarship and politics are like that too—passing on in twists and skeins that require passion and action, holding still and moving, anchoring and launching (Haraway, 2016, p.10).

SF is storytelling and fact telling; it is the patterning of possible worlds and possible times, material-semiotic worlds, gone, here, and yet to come. I work with string figures as a theoretical trope, a way to think-with a host of companions in sympoietic threading, felting, tangling, tracking, and sorting. I work with and in SF as material-semiotic composting, as a theory in the mud, and as a muddle (Haraway, 2016, p.31).

SF theory is inclusive, it calls for the recognition of all the species sharing different collaborations. However, as Haraway argues, sometimes these patterns of sharing fail and result in a broken end. Nevertheless, her theory invites us to keep trying, to keep nurturing new and unexpected connections of all sorts, to keep up with the hope that something beautiful may result at some point.

Without any intention of diving into the debate of what is considered beautiful or not (which would also mean a dichotomic discussion that falls apart from the plane of immanence), I invite

you to replace the word *beautiful* in her statement, with *something that contributes to staying with the trouble*, something that creates stronger and/or more flexible strings, capable of reaching further and resisting longer.

The constant crafting that SF requires also comes in all shapes and colors. Haraway (2016) calls them worlding practices.

Haraway argues that the string figuring game is a muddled place, a place for “hot compost piles” (Haraway, 2016, p.4). The author constantly refers to the critters of the world as being “more of the mud than from the sky” (Haraway, 2016, p.11), not in an attempt to exclude the critters of the sky, but to establish a biological connection between us and the earth, the land, the mud, the organic nature of critters.

This organic connection in SF theory is also what Haraway argues about when she refers to the need of landing on earth that Latour presents in his book *Down to Earth* (2018). Haraway says that not all the critters of the world have taken off and observe from above the destruction that we are facing in the Anthropocene¹⁹; but that some remain landed, cultivating response-ability in the form of worlding practices; not because of ignorance or lack of technology, but because they have understood what is important to do (ZKM | Videostudio, 2020). “Pigeons, people, and apparatus have teamed up to make each other capable of something new in the world of multispecies relationships” (Haraway, 2016, p.19).

Donna Haraway (ZKM | Videostudio, 2020) agrees about the importance of the Terrestrial and its political role in the Chthulucene, which the author (Haraway, 2016, p.2) defines as “a kind of *timeplace* for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth”.

In her book, Haraway (2016, p.30) makes a strong call to *think*, quoting Stengers and Despret in their book *Women who make a fuss*: “think we must, we must think”, and to be critical of the ways the Anthropocene has become unthinkable. The author's main argument is that the transformational time needed on Earth should not circle one species, the Anthropos, since the connections between humans and everything else are not enough to stay with the trouble. “I

¹⁹ Officially, the current epoch is called the Holocene, which began 11,700 years ago after the last major ice age. However, the Anthropocene Epoch is an unofficial unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in Earth's history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems. The word Anthropocene is derived from the Greek words anthropo, for “man,” and cene for “new,” coined and made popular by biologist Eugene Storer and chemist Paul Crutzen in 2000 (National Geographic, 2022).

want to stay with the trouble, and the only way I know to do that is in generative joy, terror, and collective thinking” (Haraway, 2016, p.31).

Instead, Haraway (2016 p.31) suggests a new name for our epoch, the Chthulucene, based on the spider *Pimoides Cthulhu*, which lives in North Central California, USA. “Nobody lives everywhere; everybody lives somewhere. Nothing is connected to everything; everything is connected to something. This spider is in place, has a place, and yet is named for intriguing travels elsewhere”.

As mentioned in the introduction, The concept of the Chthulucene is defined as “a kind of timeplace for learning how to stay with the trouble (Haraway, 2016. p.2), but also refers to that tentacularity of the spider that resembles the string figuring game, the collaborations, the multispecies connectivity, our organic nature, the multiplicities of SF theory.

This sym-poietic Chthulucene is made up of systems produced in a collectivity that require each other for survival, and that has the potential for the change that we need to face the destruction of our times.

Haraway defines sym-poiesis as “collectively-producing systems that do not have self-defined spatial or temporal boundaries. Information and control are distributed among components. The systems are evolutionary and have the potential for surprising change” (Haraway, 2016. p.33).

All this tentacularity goes even beyond multispecies relationships and their biological entanglements. It moves towards the realm of thoughts too. Haraway’s (2016, p.32) invitation to enact tentacular thinking suggests thinking untraditionally, to move “from post-human to compost”, from “humanities to humusities²⁰”, to understand humanity as humus for “a *Habitable Multispecies Muddle*”.

Tentacular thinking means “thinking-with, that is becoming-with, is in itself a way of relaying . . . But knowing that what you take has been held out entails a particular thinking *between*” (Haraway, 2016. p.34). Haraway (2016) elaborates on this response-ability concept, as something that must be cultivated: a combination of togetherness, reflexivity, practices, attitude, passion, and constant thinking, action, and movement.

In passion and action, detachment and attachment, this is what I call cultivating response-ability; that is also collective knowing and doing, an ecology of practices.

²⁰ As Haraway (2016) refers to.

Whether we asked for it or not, the pattern is in our hands. The answer to the trust of the held-out hand: think we must. (Haraway, 2016. p.34).

Haraway (2016) also quotes Hannah Arendt, Isabelle Stengers, and Virginia Woolf, when referring to thinking...

...we must think and thinking as a materialist practice. It is not some kind of off-the-sky-to-do theory from above, but a kind of rich materialist inquiring with each other, who and where we are, and so what! [...] what is to be done in times of historical earthly transformation [...] so, I think that thinking together is reading and writing, and speaking and performing, and dancing and growing, and risking and working; thinking is a complex materialist practice for somehow coming together to be less stupid (ZKM | Videostudio, 2020, 4:42).

This *coming together* is also what Haraway (2016, p.78) calls *becoming with*. Both, as a biological process of symbiosis and sympoiesis, but also through tentacular thinking and *response-ability*.

This capacity enacts the power of action, of caring, of nurturing the string figuring game of passing and receiving back the response-ability of doing something. As I quoted Haraway in the opening lines of the introduction section: “find something that you care about” (ZKM | Videostudio, 2020) but find something. It does not matter if that something seems big or small to the eyes of society or to your own eyes. Haraway calls for action, for caring more, to stop crying over the destruction we are facing in the Anthropocene, and instead assume the response-ability of building and/or restoring connections and collaborations within the Chthulucene.

Finally, Haraway (2016) also mentions that passion and action are required in scholarship and politics (see quote above). This refers to our share of response-ability of thinking critically, being creative, getting hands-on the matter of care, of listening and giving voice to the voiceless, of enacting change.

2.4. Ethics and Politics

Inner development is associated with processes of relating to the self and on some occasions, to others. Foucault (1983) says at the end of his lecture at UC Berkeley that:

“Most of the time people think that what we have to do is to disclose, to liberate, to excavate the hidden *réalité*²¹ of the self. But the self, I think, has to be considered not as a *réalité*, which can be hidden. I think that the self has to be considered as the correlate of technologies built and developed through our history. The problem then, is not to liberate, is not to free the self, but to consider how it could be possible to elaborate new types [...] of relationships to ourselves”.

Following Foucault’s argument, one could argue that the relations to the self, do not depend only on that internal reality of who we are and what we desire; but also, on a combination of ethics and politics. The constant internal discussions of what one desires to do, and what the surrounding political game influences on ourselves, that is, the correlation of technologies that Foucault is talking about.

Hanna Arendt (1971, p.46) argues that:

Husserl’s basic and greatest discovery takes up in exhaustive detail the intentionality of all acts of consciousness, that is, the fact that no subjective act is ever without an object. [...] One may speak of the intentionality of appearances and their built-in subjectivity [...] That appearance always demands spectators and thus implies an at least potential recognition and acknowledgment has far-reaching consequences for what we, appearing beings in a world of appearances, understand by reality, our own as well as that of the world.

The world of appearances that Arendt refers to, is similar to Foucault’s argument about the technologies developed through history. The relationships between object and subject shifting attention and perhaps priorities are also part of the struggles between ethics and politics.

The positions of power vary, and as the SF theory argues, the response-ability (which is also a form of power) is constantly shifted between the parties that hold on to it, and that later on will give it away or pass it by to other parties. Some parties will be leading the game, others will be somehow static, perhaps resisting (another form of power (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004)).

Regardless of the specific and situated circumstances that shape the metamorphosis of inner development, the authors cited in this section seem to agree about the idea of an endless transformation that happens within the individual, and that is motivated by the constant

²¹ French word for “reality”.

movement of internal and external conditions, a continuous dialogue between the ethics within the self, and the politics of the surroundings.

3. Inquiring for the Terrestrial

As mentioned in the previous chapter, PQI does not require to follow a specific methodology, in contrast, it encourages the definition of a unique path based on the specifications of each inquiry (St. Pierre, 2017; St.Pierre, 2018).

However, in the spirit of explaining my inquiry and drawing a clear picture for the readers, I proceed to explain the three main processes I followed throughout this inquiry:

- a. An immersion in literature, theory, and philosophy during the entire inquiry
- b. Non-structured conversations
- c. Storytelling as a transversal companion during the inquiry

3.1. Literature, Theory, and Philosophy

Even though theory and concepts unfold throughout mostly all the pages of this inquiry, as they are entangled with the stories and their nature, chapter 2 presented the main theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide this research. Chapter 5 takes us back to theory, but this time as a string figuring game with the stories of chapter 4.

The theory is not intended to explain phenomena, instead it is meant to be a source of guidance for critical thinking (St. Pierre, 2017; St.Pierre, 2018).

3.2. Non-Structured Conversations

I spoke²² to one of the persons leading the initiative from the Costa Rican side and asked for further information about how they were planning to implement the IDGs within the public sector. This person told me about their early plans, and hopeful expectations, and pointed me in an initial direction. They expect to involve leaders across the governmental organizations, but also to create cross collaborations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and eventually, the private sector. They described these needed leaders as people with the power of enacting the inner development revolution that the IDGs propose (and that the Terrestrial

²² Through a zoom call, at the beginning of this inquiry.

needs); but also, people that have been creating entanglements of all sorts for many years, even before the IDG creators made the IDG framework public.

These are the profiles of the Costa Rican leaders I had conversations with (same order of the stories in chapter 4):

1. A high representative of the Costa Rican National Institute of Women (INAMU)
2. The founder of an NGO aimed at supporting the social insertion of Costa Rica's population of prison inmates
3. A Minister of the Costa Rican Government (2018-2022)
4. An advisor on human rights and indigenous affairs for the United Nations in Costa Rica
5. The coordinator of the Sustainable Tourism Management Program for one of Costa Rica's biggest national parks
6. An environmental engineer and water activist, regional coordinator of the Network of Youth for Water in Central America

The conversations happened in Spanish, as this is the local language. I have translated them into English. Names and some details have been modified to keep confidentiality.

Unfortunately, I have not included all the stories, as it would take many pages to share them all. Instead, I have chosen some of them and have brought them to you with the help of storytelling.

Concepts like the Terrestrial, SF, companion species, and the Chthulucene, were not mentioned with those names during the conversations. I tried to keep the talk clear and free of biases due to unnecessary tecnicisms.

Each of the six conversations lasted from 50 to 70 minutes. Some occurred at their workplace and others through zoom due to the still present pandemic and the busy schedules of these leaders.

I refuse to call these *interviews*; I call them *conversations* instead. According to St.Pierre (2018, p.6), collecting, coding, and analyzing empirical data is unthinkable in an ontology of immanence (and in PQI), “because things are not alike, they don’t resemble each other, everything is different”.

However, for the effects of this thesis, I am inspired by alethic hermeneutics (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2018, p.120), which does not see understanding as the ultimate goal of the research,

but as “a basic way of existing for every human being, since we must continually keep orienting ourselves in our situation simply to stay alive. It is this basic understanding that is necessary to begin to explore”. According to the authors, the researcher’s position is situated and conditioned based on a particular space, culture, history, and time; who is constantly developing pre-understandings and understandings without a clear line between the two. In this research, the conversations are a source to enrich the understanding of what could mean to become with the Terrestrial for a specific individual; but they also work as a source of pre-understanding generation for the foundations for a philosophy of Terrestrial Leadership, a concept that is constantly on the make.

Respecting the PQI idea of the uniqueness of each case and the one-ontology of the philosophy of immanence, I analyze the conversations of this research, not as a way of understanding individual behavior, but as a possible method to build upon a philosophy of Terrestrial Leadership. I do not pretend to interpret or to represent the stories, these are instead the inspiration to intensify my thinking process towards becoming with the Terrestrial.

3.3. Storytelling²³

Haraway (2016) dedicates one chapter of her book to imagination, art, storytelling, and other creative ways of performing research, something the author calls *a curious practice*. The author is inspired by Hanna Arendt and Vinciane Despret and invites the readers to *go visiting*, suggesting that stories and imagination can transport us to different spaces and times.

Hanna Arendt (1971), in her book *The Life of the Mind*, argues that imagination enlarges one's mind, by placing ourselves in the position of others, not to determine what is going on their mind, but to understand and accept that the time, space and conditions where these stories take place are unique from individual to individual, which makes critical thinking possible. “To think with an enlarged mentality—that means you train your imagination to go visiting. . .” (Arendt,1971, p.257).

²³ Even though this section contains references to theory, I have decided to place it in this chapter and not in chapter 2, since I see storytelling as theory but also a method in my inquiry. I chose only one place with the purpose of avoiding repetition for the reader.

Foucault (1983, 1:55 part 2 of 5), as Arendt, argues that the purpose should not be “to analyze what people think opposed to what they do [...] but what they think when they do what they are doing”, as a way to understand them better.

I must clarify that this work does not pretend to dig deep into anyone's mind (perhaps only on my own). It does not intend to explain or understand why these people think what they think, care about what they care, or do what they do. It only intends to *think with* the stories as part of a creative process.

In one of her lectures, Haraway refers to Arendt's ideas about the need for thinking:

We need to take seriously the acquisition of that kind of skill (emotional, intellectual, material skill) to destabilize our own stories, to re-tell them with other stories, and vice versa. A kind of serious denormalization of that which is normally held still, to do that which one thinks when is doing. It matters to destabilize worlds of thinking with other worlds of thinking (Haraway, 2014, 6:01).

Jørgensen (2020, p.1), also inspired by Arendt, explains storytelling as the “process through which actors reconstruct their experiences and appear in a collective space”. The author claims that storytelling implies the existence of a *space of appearance*, where interactions and “collective engagements, or *emplacement*”, shape the stories; and that these stories have the power of enacting change.

Jørgensen (2017, p.22) argues that “narrative and storytelling have made a significant impact in social science studies”, since they help to capture the everyday lives of people and organizations, giving voice to the voiceless, enacting movement and change.

4. Let's Go Visiting!

Each of the conversations was unique. I started with the same opening for all of them: *I would like to hear stories of your journey until the moment that you are living today. What has brought you here, to care and work for your cause. What is important for you, what have you learned along the way? You can go back in time as many years as you like, and take us to all the places and stories that you would like to share.*

Despite the fear of finding myself in an awkward situation when one of them would not be willing to open up, or would speak only a few words; I encountered people more than eager to take me to so many places and times that the entire research fieldwork with them was overwhelmingly interesting. The hour that we had scheduled for every conversation was barely enough, and I was left every time, with many questions about myself, my purpose in life, and my response-ability within this inquiry.

I see their stories like treasures that have been shared with me and that now, I bring to you. Here, you will encounter some of them. Other excerpts will appear in chapter 5.

Some details are fictional, but all of them are inspired by the stories of these Costa Rican leaders. Please keep in mind that here, I am *thinking with* the stories.

4.1. Banana women

Lucia was born in 1963. She was full of energy like her mother and adventurous like her dad. Her home was a warm place, full of love, fun, and respect. She grew up to be a decisive and strong teenager, always willing to stand up and get things done with a big smile on her face.

But wait, what was this girl doing at a cowboy arena or a billiard place surrounded by men? Simple, her dad did not care about what society would say. He would take Lucia everywhere, even to those spaces that were not traditional for women at the time. For Lucia, it meant much more than just a place or an experience; it meant that she could break barriers, she could move beyond, she could create disruption. She felt powerful and she liked that.

So much power had to be put into practice, so Lucia joined social organizations at an early stage of her life. She led her colleagues and managed to create an impact in her community. “I had this idea: if we offered free ping-pong play time for the young boys that had drug abuse issues,

in exchange for a reduction in their drug consumption, perhaps we could start a change, and it worked!

During her early twenties, she worked for labor unions and NGOs, always creating disruptions, always moving and provoking paradigm changes. It was during her time in one of these NGOs that she discovered one of the main fields that would define the rest of her life: gender equality.

Lucia would not stop. She dedicated her life to helping women in different industries and contexts. Always strong, always a leader, always disrupting the system.

“There was one time when I was collaborating with women in the banana industry, the goal was to boost women's rights within labor rights structures. These so-called *banana-women* had been improving their labor conditions thanks to their impetus, and I had been facilitating the tools they needed. I collaborated with creativity, strategy, and political advice. One day, when we were preparing for a summit that would gather *banana women* from Central America and the Caribbean region, they invited me to come along. I refused. I told them that I had never worked with bananas, that I had not suffered all the labor violations that they had suffered, that I appreciated it but that I was an outsider. But these women told me how they considered me one of theirs, a true *banana-woman*. They said I had cared enough to become one of their own. This experience meant a *before-an-after* for me. From now on, I would not only work for causes close to my heart, but I knew I could *become one with* my cause, with the stories, with the people”.

Lucia's determination and adventurous spirit, which characterized her since she was a kid, have helped her to navigate all the string figures and multiplicities of her journey. Today, she is one of the leaders of the Costa Rican National Institute of Women, and from her leadership position, she continues to create connections and invite people around her to break stereotypes and *become with* their cause.

4.2. A bridge between life in jail and the outside world

Today is one of those warm rainy days in San José, Costa Rica. I love the rain, but the humidity after the rain is suffocating in this office. As suffocating as working every day with the same purposeless repetitive tasks.

Sometimes, I wonder how it would feel to do something that creates a difference for someone else, something meaningful. It is ironic, I work in a prison, I am not an inmate, I come and go when I want, yet I do not feel free.

At 9:00 am, my boss has a meeting with the founder of an NGO whose aim is the creation of new opportunities for the inmate population. The founder is trying to get approval to run one of their programs in this prison and I am very curious to hear about it. I wonder what they are planning to do. So, I decided to attend the meeting.

I sit in silence and start writing the minute.

Founder: [...] Yes, I try to find out what activities they are interested in, what topics, and what is important for them as human beings. Then, I create safe spaces where they can enjoy these activities without being concerned about survival.

These safe spaces have been demonstrated to be more meaningful than traditional empty training about how to be a better person or how to develop certain skills. We try to help them develop further their skills while giving them some sort of hope, understanding, and freedom within the limitations they live in, and they respond positively most of the time.

Literature, sports, music, arts... They are creative. They know how to relate, negotiate, lead, and many other skills that are valued in today's society. However, society does not usually identify or understand the shapes and colors of these skills, because they are, we are, strangers to their reality.

Director: I honestly think that all this sounds unnecessary. I can give you 30 minutes 2 times per week to talk to them in a group. But please, teach them some skills, something that makes it easier for us to manage them. I think resilience is one of the skills that could come in handy for them. Jesus! They resist everything we say.

And to be honest, at the end of the day it is always the same, they do not even care. I doubt they even listen to you.

Founder: Actually, I disagree. I think they listen and they care. They just do not feel safe expressing it or letting it show. How could they, if there are no safe spaces to be

themselves? From the moment that you are deprived of your freedom, you lose the right and the power to decide most of the events in your life, from the time you get up, eat, what you eat, where you sleep, etc. How could I talk to them about resilience if they, by force, have become resilient people to survive? They may be more resilient than all the leaders we know. Teach about sharing, for instance? They have to share everything. I believe that many of the skills proposed by the framework are already developed by the inmates. They just use them differently, and for the rest of us, it is almost impossible to understand.

When the director kept resisting the idea with tons of excuses, the founder added:

Founder: I have learned that there is no point in trying to understand why they ended up in jail. That would not help them, most of the time not even they understand the reasons. What is more relevant, is to understand how to understand them as they are.

I realized that it was never about me and how I would feel helping. It is about them, about helping them, about being a bridge for them between life in jail and the outside world that they cannot be part of. When I arrive, they ask me about the traffic, the weather, and all those things that the rest of us take for granted.

At the end, the Director agreed on accepting the collaboration, and guess who will be leading the initiative from our side? Yes, me!

Something in the speech of the founder changed the way I see my job. I am not in the wrong place, after all, I was just on the wrong side, on the side of those that do not care.

It is 5:00 pm and I am going home. I take the bus; it is still very warm and humid. I do not care. It feels good now. Anyway, I am too busy planning how I am going to support the initiative. I know some sponsors that could contribute. I will call them tomorrow, first thing in the morning!

4.3. A Minister's Journal: Inner source of power

Day 1: After some years working within the ministry, today I became the Minister. I am excited. I have so many ideas and expectations. I know it won't be easy but I have all the energy and the commitment. I am sure that with the support of the team at the ministry and the other ministries, we will help this country during the next four years.

Day 30: I encountered a not-so-motivated team. They are resisting change in our strategy. It could be that they are not aware of the impact of their work; perhaps they had not understood yet how powerful they are. In the end, it is not just about us in our positions of power, but about the results of our actions and all the entanglements that we could enact. I will get more involved with them.

Day 370: We worked together. We dared to change our methods, our vision, and the ways we would understand the mission of our work. A year has passed and we became a team that showed innovative results, people have started to show more engagement. I am positive about this.

First, people got involved; they visited the places that their policies would impact, and they got to see and hear the stories of those entangled with their original work at the office. Second, people embraced that their daily efforts could trigger a positive change, and they started to believe in their causes; it became something important for them. And, third, people started to notice that the more you get involved, the more risks of disappointment you will face, and to overcome that, you need an inner source of power that does not burn out.

I believe that every person has an inner source of power, something very strong, very private. It is like a sun that never burns out completely, it is the source of happiness, excitement, and love. This is something you should always protect. From there comes the desire for service, of helping others.

Day 643: I feel frustrated today. Media made a storm out of the colors of a bracelet I was wearing today. I even got a call from the newspaper looking to discuss that because it was a “trendy topic”. How can that be a trendy topic? Why isn't our work more important? Why not ask me about the innovative work that our team has been working on and that already granted them an award internationally? I have always known that these things happen all the time. But it does not change the frustration. Tomorrow will be a new day.

Day 1024: Today I received a call from my friend, the National Security Minister. I have received a life threat and now I must follow strict security protocols. I must give up some things that others take for granted, like the freedom of exercising outdoors alone, my flamenco classes, and most important, the safety of my family.

But this inner treasure is mine, and I will not allow anyone or anything to damage it. It is where love and my values reside, and it helps me to go through every challenge I face; without it, I would lose my essence and would not be myself anymore. I need to remain strong.

Day 1445: In two weeks I will leave the office. As my term comes to an end, I look back and reflect upon this journey. I am so proud of my team, we have achieved great results and created structural changes that should make their work more strategic during the following term. They are so invested now, working hard and fast, so we can complete as many projects as possible before the term ends. They understood how powerful they are and that, such a power, does not belong to them.

My inner source of power and the support from family, friends, colleagues, and the many beautiful encounters with the people, helped me to remain motivated through the most difficult times. You must develop a capacity for recovering yourself from the trouble no matter what, problems become anecdotes in time and you have to move on and continue to be true to yourself and to your cause.

4.4. Masks and leadership

My *Abuelo* (grandad) taught me everything I am now.

The first memory I have of him is seeing him creating masks, the ones that are one of the main symbols of our indigenous community. He would teach me everything about masks at the same time that he would teach me how to be a leader for our people, as he was a leader himself.

He taught me about love, respect, dedication, patience, persistence, strategy, and politics.

When you are a child of an indigenous community, like me, you are not aware of being an indigenous person until you start interacting outside of your community bubble, in school and high school. But from him, I understood that we are different, but that we are the same. We all pursue our ideals and our dreams. You will have to learn how to interact with those that are defending other causes. Sometimes, these causes may not be aligned with yours, yet you still have to find a way of surviving and building meaningful connections. It is all about politics.

At the beginning of my time working as an indigenous rights advocate, I went to an event in a rural community. Because a long trip was required to reach the heart of the mountain, where they lived, the organizing team found a local family that would host me for the night.

From the moment I entered the hosting house, I felt how the man living there was looking at me in a serious way. He wanted to know who I was and what I was doing for a living, so I told him that I was working for the rights of the indigenous communities. He introduced himself as one of the local landowners that was in current conflict with the indigenous community nearby, I suppose the organization missed that detail. And just like that, a logistics mismatch would put me in a dangerous situation. I was in the house of a *finquero*²⁴, one of those that was violently fighting against some of the people I represent. It was a very tense situation.

I put myself together carefully, thinking about every word, and every gesture. He wanted to have a real conversation and I wanted to give him that, but I did not want to *piss him off*, he was a strong tall man after all.

What would my Abuelo do? How would he handle this? I closed my eyes, thought of him, and allowed myself to be clear, direct, honest, and respectful... After two hours of tense conversation, we came to a peaceful conclusion. I felt powerful. If I had been able to face a *finquero* like that and explain myself clearly and respectfully, then I could move to the next level... I was prepared.

The years that came after that helped me to understand how important it is to be persistent and to never stop moving. In my world, you can only achieve progress if you learn how to handle power relations. *Finqueros*, politicians, indigenous communities that do not interact much with each other, community leaders that risk their lives for our people and lands, heroes that already left to encounter our ancestors (but whose spirits are still among us), all of us count, have a role, move and exchange positions of power and influence. Now, from my position in the United Nations, I am trying to entangle different worlds.

When you live for a social cause, it becomes something sincere, part of your life and of who you are. You are constantly crafting, like masks, we craft collaborations.

Gracias Abuelo!

²⁴ Costa Rican spanish word for landowner

4.5. Julie and the Magic Island

Julie hugged her toddler daughter as tight as she could. There would be an entire month until they would see each other again. Julie knew that her baby would be in the best hands, her parents would take care of her and she would be safe. But still, leaving that day broke her into pieces.

During the next 36 hours, Julie would travel more than 500 kilometers into the Pacific Ocean to what would be her new home: The Cocos Island²⁵.

The park rangers welcomed her, they are the only people living on the island. During the next weeks, they would explore the place with Julie. They would teach her about life on the island. They would tell her many stories. Stories of happiness, stories of death, and stories of survival. One thing was clear for Julie from those stories, the island would either accept her or kick her out, alive or dead.

She was determined to survive and for that, she understood that she had to connect with the island. She was not there as an external critter that takes care of a thing, a person with a task. She was there and she had to *become one* with the island.

The place was alive, everything was moving, changing, breathing, transforming. She could see it in the strength of the waterfalls, the movement of the leaves, the color of the coral reef, and the eyes of the sea turtles. She could smell it in the exotic flowers and the poop of the wild pigs that she stepped on many times. She could hear it in waves, and the singing of the birds, she could feel it in the soil, the grass, the sand. Nothing there was a separate entity, everything was connected.

Months passed and she kept returning for a month after visiting her family for some weeks. Her way on the island became more natural. The distance became bearable, and the magic of the island filled her weekly phone calls with her daughter with stories of hammerhead sharks and manta rays. She had found motivation but still felt like a visitor most of the time, an outsider.

That feeling changed the night when she heard her colleague calling her out of bed. One of the park rangers had spotted three illegal fishing boats in the south part of the island. They had to run. The adrenaline kicked her strongly. A mix of anger and courage took over her. They had to be stopped. She could not allow the island to be violated. The coral reef, the turtles, the manta

²⁵ See <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/820/>

rays, she had to help them right away. Like the ant helps the tree and like the compost nurtures the soil, she was one critter more on the island, she was part of the magic too.

They risked their lives that night, but for Julie what mattered was that they were able to protect the island and that she had understood her place there. She had become one with the magic island.

4.6. Water connections for a broken planet

As an environmental engineering student, I used to read a lot of information about the environmental challenges that we are facing as a whole. Reading, discussing, working in groups, preparing for examinations... All that helped me to develop critical thinking, and to strengthen the environmental mindset that started growing within me, since I watched that Al Gore documentary²⁶ many years ago.

But nothing reinforced my mission like that visit to a rural community in the south of the country in 2013. There, I saw the serious water issues and life-threatening conditions that they had. They did not have clean drinking water. They had poor sanitation. The local river carried all sorts of garbage and contaminants. There was a high risk for diseases and yet, they had the best attitude towards finding solutions.

All that was a shocking reality for me. I was coming from a privileged position where water was available every day. I felt the desire to help them, there was so much to do and so many topics were not being discussed enough.

So, I went back some years later and started working in collaboration with the ASADAS, groups of people in communities that worked together to bring clean drinking water for all. I contributed with small ideas and it continued to grow until I found myself being a consultant, a researcher, and a social entrepreneur. The motivation of these communities was contagious. I learned a lot from them, more than they could have ever learned from me.

My main role was that of being a bridge. I boosted connections between communities and organizations that had similar interests (water for all), but that had been working separately until that moment. These connections resulted in the empowerment of the communities. Our

²⁶ See: <https://algore.com/library/an-inconvenient-truth-dvd>

joint efforts gave them tools to organize themselves better, be more independent, and not rely so much on external support to grow. They were supporting each other, and that inspired me even more.

I believe that one of the biggest issues that we face today is that despite being millions of people, only a few have chosen a cause close to their hearts and fought for it. Everyone should choose something; it does not matter what. We have so many people not caring enough, just thinking individually and not collectively.

I see water first with a spiritual meaning. It is that magical substance that connects us with mother earth. I felt such a special connection, that I decided to make it the mission of my life. I work to plant small seeds of change and improvement, by giving everything I can, understanding that I cannot save the world on my own, alone. But that everyone can do something.

5. What can we learn from these stories?

Becoming with the Terrestrial seems to be a constant process of movement. According to this inquiry, care, reflexivity, and continuous learning are some of the main processes involved in what I call Terrestrial leadership. It implies moving within the political space and taking a position from where thought is provoked and action is enacted. It means the creation of collaborations and string figuring to stay with the trouble.

Terrestrial leadership is about recognizing that we are all part of a greater system. It is about caring and getting immersed in that care. It is about *becoming with*. It is a continuous intensive reflexivity in togetherness with the Terrestrial. It is about movement between different plateaus: private life, work life, family, friends, the self, other critters, the memories of the past, speculation of the future, negotiations, doing, spare time; it is about moving with excitement, fear, concern, care, creativity and hope.

One of the interesting outcomes is that, regardless of the plateau, there is a constant practice of care associated with learning and reflection. But this reflection does not occur as a separate process, it is not that you can separate thinking and reflecting from doing, it all happens without differentiation of what is, and what can be. Here we can go back to Deleuze and Guattari's (1991/1994) plane of immanence, and the one ontology where there is no clear division between the virtual and the actual because they are both real. For these Costa Rican leaders, there is no real difference between what has been done (the actual) and what is yet to be (the virtual). They perceive their day-to-day lives as a continuation of one action that is divided into smaller moments, or days. They perceive their work as continuous movement, where their thoughts and feelings are entangled with their actions, there is no clear distinction between the virtual and the actual, as they are both real.

The stories of Costa Rican leaders have contributed in two main ways: as an inspiration for intensifying my reflection on the togetherness of what it means to understand better the concept of Terrestrial leadership, and as a learning tool that could contribute to further discussions on how we learn about Terrestrial leadership.

In this section, I attempt to answer the questions presented in section 1.5. Every time I quote something said during a conversation, I will use C1, [...], and C6 (following the order of the stories in chapter 4). I treat the conversation as a critter on its own. Sometimes, I will quote a phrase you have not read in chapter 4. The reason is that the stories in that chapter do not

represent all the content of the conversations we had, but some extracts that I decided to present to you.

5.1. Response-ability: Metamorphosis to Stay with the Trouble

1. How do Costa Rican leaders perceive their development processes and the discovery/cultivation of their response-ability?

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 2022) metamorphosis is defined as “the action or process of changing in form, shape, or substance; esp. transformation by supernatural means”, and “a complete change in the appearance, circumstances, condition, or character of a person, a state of affairs”. By metamorphosis, I am not only referring to change processes that are extreme and/or radical. I am also talking about metamorphic processes that transform one into something different, regardless of space and time, if you planned it or not, if you understand it or not. When you start caring and thinking about a social or environmental cause, looking within yourself for ways of learning more, getting closer to it, and, doing something for it; then you have, like the Blue Morpho butterfly²⁷, transformed into something new.

According to the conversations, there are three main outcomes: Caring, intense reflexivity, and the need for constant learning (by studying and doing).

5.1.1. Care and intense reflexivity

All the conversations started with a journey of memories to the origins of how each of them ended up on the environmental or social path they are on now. They all referred to having undergone processes of self-discovery. They all pointed out to care, as an activity in common: caring for a cause close to their hearts, something to fight for, something worth sacrifice, time, effort, dedication, something beyond themselves.

²⁷ “Blue morphos live in the tropical forests of Latin America from Mexico to Colombia and are among the largest butterflies in the world” (Rainforest Alliance, 2022). The Blue Morpho Helenor Butterfly (frontpage) was declared as the latest national symbol of Costa Rica on the 28th of April, 2022 (Fernández, 2022) while I was in the middle of my research for this thesis

Haraway (ZKM | Videostudio, 2020) refers to the importance of finding *something to care about*, which was mentioned in all the conversations. This “*something to care about*”, has become part of their agencies, part of what they believe they are, a lifestyle. Not like a suit that you put in and off, but like the skin, embodied to them. In the same way, C5 said: “Everyone should choose something, it does not matter what. We have so many people not caring enough, just thinking individually and not collectively”.

C4 considered that “when you live for a social cause, it becomes something sincere, part of your life and of who you are”. C1 said that “if you want to work for a social cause, you must *be* it, must *feel* it”, as Haraway (2016) says, you must *become with* it.

Another relevant topic during the conversations was the need of understanding themselves as part of a greater system. C2 argued: “I realized that it never was about me and how I would feel helping others. It is about them, about helping them”. For C3, “this reconciliation with yourself should help you to serve others in a better way while recognizing and embracing yourself as part of the bigger ecosystem, your society”. C4 added: “I wake up every day thinking of how I can solve things, how I can do better for them”.

Appreciating the existence of something beyond the self, in these cases represented by people, water, an island, a cultural legacy, and human rights, among others; could be interpreted as awareness of the Terrestrial (Latour, 2018) as a whole. At the same time, SF theory (Haraway, 2016) argues that acknowledging that one takes part in the string figuring game, is a step towards understanding and assuming response-ability.

These people are aware of their emplacement (Jørgensen, 2020) and their roles as change enactors in the environments they move in. Despite being in those positions or conditions due to personal choice, cultural heritage, career path development, or, for any other reasons, these people have encountered meaning in their activism and the work they do. “We work for the people, and we have the power of using our skills and knowledge within the system” (C3).

They are also aware of the political impact of their actions, as C4 said: “If we want to have the attention of politicians that do not care about our cause and that won't listen, we create noise and controversy. Then, they will have to look at this and do something, even if the reason is social pressure”.

This is important, since one of the aspects of getting to know the self, seems to be the recognition of the power they hold as change makers. “We need to understand change,

understand ourselves, and understand how we can relate and collaborate with others. It is an urgent matter; we should not spend so much time thinking but we need to move to action fast” (C3). This power of change is also associated with movement, as C3 mentioned.

This constant movement within the self (meaning the power of thinking, relating, taking action, or as Haraway (2016) says, *response-ability*) is exemplified in their stories, every time they refer to the resilience they have built, based on the multiplicities of their every day.

The external factors of their physical and political environments require from them the capacity for constant transformation of the self and adaptation to the conditions they face. For instance, they refer to the situations when they have faced challenges related to resources availability: “Even though we might not be able to do everything we would like to do, we try to do whatever is closer to our goal, what is possible, as something will always be better than nothing” (C2); “If I want to do *A* but it seems that it is only possible to do *C*, I try to find something in the middle like *B*, whatever is closer to *A*” (C1).

The conversations also concluded that it is important to get to know your values, and what are you willing to give up for the cause, from time to privacy, from safety to family time. They agreed on the risk of living a lonely life, as a consequence of the detachment that some of them experienced during their journeys.

Once again, reflexivity, thinking, and caring are not separated processes that occur before or after the action, in a one-world ontology, they are constantly happening, constantly on the make.

Finally, the conversations mentioned the value of taking care of the self, by nurturing the foundations of their commitments, working on their understanding of their own conditions, constantly rebuilding their vision of the future, protecting their *inner source of power* (C3), working on detachment, remembering the dead and their legacies (as the SF theory has suggested), finding and valuing support, as well as taking time to regain energy and recover themselves before moving forward, every time they face tough challenges or exhaustion.

5.1.2. Constant Learning (by studying and doing)

The need for constant learning was also mentioned during the conversations. Once you have found a cause that you care about, it is important to study it and develop critical perspectives.

They understand knowledge as a useful tool for their battles: “we need knowledge as a tool for fighting inequalities and gaining visibility” (C1).

However, they also emphasized the importance of combining studies with action or learning by doing: “I had the privilege of doing activism but also having a job in the same field. I have been able to complement those two paths and it has given me more expertise when arguing the water challenges, because I know about them and I have seen them” (C6); “they must leave their desks and get involved” (C1), “besides getting to know your people, it is also important to spend time with them, to work with them. At least here, respect is only earned through hard work” (C3).

Once again, taking action and getting involved refers to movement.

5.2. String Figuring for the Terrestrial

2. How does the SF theory help us to think with the stories of environmental and social leaders in Costa Rica?

While developing response-ability involves constant internal ethical reflections about values, care, willingness to give away, detachment, and commitment, among others; string figuring processes have to do with politics, power, and resistance, according to the outcomes of the conversations of this inquiry and the theory.

During the conversations, these leaders said to have experienced a multiplicity of stages or plateaus (Deleuze and Guattari (1987/2013) and constant movement within the Terrestrial. They told me about how they must balance the demands and expectations coming from many directions, from the communities they help, their sponsors, the government, the politicians, the media, and even themselves.

Their stories of collaboration and response-ability could be seen as real-life examples of what Haraway’s (2016, p.4) SF theory proposes “Terrestrial Leadership requires each other in unexpected collaborations *in hot compost piles*, it is about *becoming with each other or not at all*”. Their collaborations are about giving and receiving response-ability, creating connections that matter, string figures that intensify thought and action, and that have the power to enact change and inspire others.

The stories in chapter 4 are full of string figures between communities, institutions, politicians, individuals, opponents and nature; not with the purpose of achieving individual goals, but with the vision of a better good for other critters that exist as part of a greater system. In other words, Terrestrial leadership is about string figuring to stay with the trouble.

5.2.1. Moving within the Political Space

The conversations pointed out that it is important to get to know the political space where you are moving. Observe how the systems work, who are the allies, who supports your cause, who can create further connections, which is your position, and what can you influence. “Costa Rica needs champions that assume the responsibility of cultivating and defending the IDGs, especially people on the top of the political structures, and in positions of power to support and make it happen” (C3). “It is vital to start with other ministries that have a similar vision of sustainable development and that share the same values [...]. Once many ministries and institutions have implemented a change, it should be easier to convince others” (C3). “Water activism has taken me to lead a network of young people fighting for water in Central America. We have proposed new public policies and concrete actions for our local communities” (C6). “Also, make connections. Connections between people, events, and things. You do not get this easily, but you can learn by always listening” (C1).

“Sometimes you will have politicians like those that do not care and do not want to listen. But you will still have the indigenous communities expecting something from you. So, what do you do? You create connections, entanglement of actions between NGOs, private sector and the politicians than listen” (C4).

C4 refers to the need of trusting your knowledge when moving in the political space: “I understood that nobody knows everything. It is easy to be afraid of fierce politicians, one might believe that they know everything, but they don’t. This realization unlocked another level for me”.

5.2.2. Surviving Resistance

As change agents, these leaders often feel that they are perceived by other political actors as disruptions in the system, which generates resistance.

For C2 resistance is a constant struggle, it comes from the private organizations that resist supporting their cause; from the jail administration system, which resists recognizing the inmates as fellow humans; and from the inmates themselves, who see their organization as a threat to the protective shield that they have built up to hide their humanity.

C3 spoke about the resistance faced within certain Costa Rican Ministries, which lacked interest in sustainable development and did not want to support the IDG implementation, arguing that it was a foreign and unnecessary framework.

When talking about resistance, all of them agreed on the importance of surviving difficult times and the challenges that they constantly face. As C4 said when I asked how to manage tough situations, when the leader's expectations did not meet the reality of the results: "Mari, I am telling you, this could represent 90% of my experience here". But as mentioned in the prior section, they also agreed that having a good relationship with themselves and their values helped them to overcome the resistance, by focusing on what they achieve and not so much on what is not possible at the moment.

5.2.3. Enacting Collaborations

One of the most interesting outcomes of the conversations was to listen to these leaders talking about the idea of staying with the trouble, even though they had never read Haraway's book, or theory before. Their experience has taught them that it is not about solving problems on their own, but about learning how to live and die with the resources and opportunities they have around. For C2, what makes a difference is not to try to understand why the inmates are in jail and how to "fix" their lives. Instead, focusing on how to recognize the activities that matter to them, and the creation of safe spaces that can provide some hope within their reality, so they can stay with the trouble; for that purpose, C2 and his/her team string figure with many other actors. They practice SF to stay with the trouble as Haraway (2016) suggests and it is working successfully for them.

"For the implementation to be successful [of the IDGs], you have to read the genetic information of every community and transform the message, so they can feel the framework as theirs. For that, you need the support of local leaders who understand the local conditions, the culture, the economics, the political environment, the unique set of values and the religion, among other topics" (C3).

The suggestion of string figuring with local leaders is an interesting proposition. Despite which framework is to be implemented, C3 considers that local leaders might make a significant difference in the translation of the message.

“For the IDG framework to work, it will be necessary that the organizations that created it, release the framework free and allow it to grow, spread, evolve, and become one with the peoples of different places and times, the IDGs will have to become an institution on their own” (C3).

With the potential materialization of the framework, it could enter the string figuring game as an entity, a critter itself.

For these leaders, the awareness of their political spaces, the recognition of their opportunities and limitations, and the constant movement, are pillars in the string figuring game that allows them to stay with the trouble.

5.2.4. Practices of Becoming with the Terrestrial

Based on the analysis presented in prior sections, I am summarizing here the suggestions shared by the leaders during our conversations, about how they do (and advise to) *become with the Terrestrial*.

1. Get to know yourself, what is important to you, and what you have to offer
2. Recognize yourself as part of a greater system
3. Nurture constant learning by studying and doing
4. Be aware of the political space and navigate within it
5. Build and nurture connections between critters, events, and things. Start by listening to them (listen more and listen better)
6. Be empathic, especially when you do not understand other critter's realities
7. Relate and translate your message to your action target. Find support in local leaders who understand the local conditions
8. Get to know your people. Which are their skills and motivations. Acknowledge their efforts and treat them with respect for their agencies
9. Learn how to recognize skills even when they are developed in non-traditional scenarios.

10. Do not focus on trying to understand why people do what they do. Focus on learning how to understand their needs, their interests and contribute to the creation of safe spaces
11. Remember that it is not just about you, it is about all these critters and about how you can be a string more, a bridge
12. Identify allies with common interests and create collaborations
13. Build, restore or maintain trust and transparency as a source of validity and collaboration
14. Keep in mind that respect is earned through hard work

5.3. Terrestrial Leadership

3. How does the Terrestrial reorient our thinking concerning leadership?

So, how can we develop a philosophy of Terrestrial leadership based on the stories of leaders working for the Terrestrial, theory and philosophy?

Haraway's (2016) SF theory is all about "hot compost piles", which was mentioned in all the conversations of this inquiry. These leaders understand that they belong to something greater than their individual existence. They have found something they care about, and are working for those cases through a constant movement within the plateaus they encounter every day. They stay with the trouble of surviving in a world in chaos while taking action to help others. Animals, the forest or people, there is no difference: they care, they learn, they move, they do. Thinking, reflecting, and doing are not seen as separate acts, but as an entanglement of activities that occur because these leaders are always in constant movement and because they are working for something beyond themselves.

The concept of the Terrestrial is about that movement. Being a political agent that enacts change for Gaia. The conversations of this inquiry were full of stories of how these leaders work for Gaia, take care of Gaia, connect with Gaia, and also receive from Gaia. But they also learn how to move between ethics and politics. They learn how to recognize the political spaces where they move, and they situate themselves in their own positions of power and influence. They engage in political action. They do it for Gaia, they *become with* the Terrestrial through politics, string figures and care.

While it is important to work on the academic and theoretical parts of what needs to be done, it is also necessary to combine that knowledge with experiences. Storytelling gave that to me.

In every conversation I had, the person in front of me opened up with a big smile sometimes, other times, with tears in their eyes. They told stories about what has meant for them to be in the situated places and social circumstances that they live. Without them saying explicitly “I am resilient” or “I relate to others”, their stories told me about some of the skills that they have developed and how they have learned through movement and involvement with their causes and the critters around them.

So, how do we conceptualize Terrestrial Leadership? I propose the following initial definition, but please, do more research about it and enrich it further:

Terrestrial leadership is a continuous process of movement and becoming with the Terrestrial; it means giving voice to the voiceless, cultivating response-ability, enacting collaborations and change to stay with the trouble; it enhances the power of inspiring others through string figuring, politics, care and storytelling (Own elaboration, 2022).

This inquiry focused on stories of Costa Rican leaders, as a primary source of inspiration for me. However, this research is an open invitation to perform similar studies in other parts of the world. I cannot wait to see what other conversations and stories could be told from all these leaders that remain landed on the critical zone.

The theory presented in this inquiry suggests that, perhaps if every person in a position of leadership could *become with* the Terrestrial, many of the decisions that are taken every day could be different, with response-ability and awareness, considering much more than empty economic growth and consumerism, which leads to so much destruction.

The string figuring in this inquiry, between stories and theory can be explained through the philosophy of immanence and the one-world ontology with two main outcomes:

1. Perhaps we should not talk about inner development as if it was separated from the outer, but instead call it just development, or the cultivation of response-ability
2. Any framework that aims at cultivating response-ability, developing skills and provoking tentacular thinking, must consider that the theoretical and the hands-on parts of the development itself should not be seen as a separated process of thinking and doing, but as a continuous process of movement between plateaus, intensive reflexivity and politics.

Without the intention of repeating the ideas presented in this chapter, I would only add the importance of using storytelling as a method for learning about Terrestrial leadership.

Get close to the communities and critters that are moving and existing in the same plateaus that you are planning to get involved with, listen to them and use storytelling as a development program.

Listen to the stories, visit the places, dare to go visiting with your imagination, enact conversations about matters that these critters and communities care about, and allow yourself and others to get inspired by these stories through tentacular thinking (Haraway, 2016) and storytelling.

Be a bridge: create collaborations and/or open the stage for these collaborations to emerge and document your stories, if possible. Writing stories also helped me to get a deeper understanding of what it means to *become with* the Terrestrial.

Conclusion

Climate destruction and climate change are real threats, not only for humanity but for Gaia and everything that exists within it. Latour's (2018) concept of the Terrestrial, with the contributions of Haraway's understanding of the concept, has opened the door of hope.

The main question of this inquiry has been how might the combination of the concept of the Terrestrial, SF theory, the philosophy of immanence, and the stories of Costa Rican leaders, help us to reframe our thinking and reorient the politics of *becoming with* the Terrestrial, and, as Haraway (2016) suggests, of staying with the trouble, through the development of the philosophy of Terrestrial Leadership.

The stories presented in this inquiry, tell us about how Costa Rican leaders *become with* the Terrestrial on a daily basis. They perceive their development as a continuous movement process of discovery of the self, and of getting involved in causes that they care about. Thinking, movement, creativity, resilience, and care, are at the core of their development. They perceive themselves as part of a greater system that is made of all sorts of interactions, connections, and collaborations, just as Haraway's (2016) SF theory suggests.

Even though their development processes have been unique to each of them, it has been a long journey of constant discovery, a combination of learning and doing. Their experiences have taught them where to channel their efforts, how to enact collaborations, how to move within their political spaces, how to face resistance, and how to put themselves together after tough times.

String figuring is at the center of their mission. All the conversations pointed to the importance of creating alliances, and collaborations, and making sure that the strings are strong and sustainable through time. They are aware of the fact that some collaborations will flourish and others will eventually fail, but they keep a can-do attitude of movement. Assuming and passing by the response-ability, as the SF theory suggests.

They are constantly learning how to stay with the trouble while creating and string figuring connections that move within a multiplicity of plateaus. The actuality of their actions and the virtuality of their thoughts, as well as the inner and outer dimensions of development and the cultivation of response-ability, do not have clear boundaries. These two outcomes can be interpreted as the one-world ontology that exists in the plane of immanence.

In this inquiry, I propose the concept of Terrestrial leadership as the constant process of *becoming with* the Terrestrial, through the acknowledgment of belonging to something greater than the individual. The conversations told us about the importance of establishing better relationships with the self, caring, learning, and reflecting, not as separate activities but as components of the real, that intensify each other in unique ways.

Storytelling and PQI have been useful and challenging companions during this inquiry. I believe that both might be useful for learning how to get a deeper understanding of Terrestrial leadership in future studies.

I hope that this inquiry might inspire others to continue the conversations about the Terrestrial and Terrestrial leadership and to explore the many more stories of those that, as Haraway says, *never took off*, so we can all learn from them how to stay with the trouble.

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Part 3 of 5: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSUtObyJz10> |

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Part 5 of 5: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaayDi2dNI4>

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Appendix I. The Inner Development Goals framework- Extended version

The following is an extract from The Inner Development Goals Organization website, which can be found at <https://www.innerdevelopmentgoals.org/framework>

1. Being — Relationship to Self

Cultivating our inner life and developing and deepening our relationship to our thoughts, feelings and body help us be present, intentional and non-reactive when we face complexity.

Inner compass

Having a deeply felt sense of responsibility and commitment to values and purposes relating to the good of the whole.

Integrity and Authenticity

A commitment and ability to act with sincerity, honesty and integrity.

Openness and Learning mindset

Having a basic mindset of curiosity and a willingness to be vulnerable and embrace change and grow.

Self-awareness

Ability to be in reflective contact with own thoughts, feelings and desires; having a realistic self-image and ability to regulate oneself.

Presence

Ability to be in the here and now, without judgment and in a state of open-ended presence.

2. Thinking — Cognitive Skills

Developing our cognitive skills by taking different perspectives, evaluating information and making sense of the world as an interconnected whole is essential for wise decision-making.

Critical thinking

Skills in critically reviewing the validity of views, evidence and plans.

Complexity awareness

Understanding of and skills in working with complex and systemic conditions and causalities.

Perspective skills

Skills in seeking, understanding and actively making use of insights from contrasting perspectives.

Sense-making

Skills in seeing patterns, structuring the unknown and being able to consciously create stories.

Long-term orientation and Visioning

Long-term orientation and ability to formulate and sustain commitment to visions relating to the larger context.

3. Relating — Caring for Others and the World

Appreciating, caring for and feeling connected to others, such as neighbors, future generations or the biosphere, helps us create more just and sustainable systems and societies for everyone.

Appreciation

Relating to others and to the world with a basic sense of appreciation, gratitude and joy.

Connectedness

Having a keen sense of being connected with and/or being a part of a larger whole, such as a community, humanity or global ecosystem.

Humility

Being able to act in accordance with the needs of the situation without concern for one's own importance.

Empathy and Compassion

Ability to relate to others, oneself and nature with kindness, empathy and compassion and address related suffering

4. Collaborating — Social Skills

To make progress on shared concerns, we need to develop our abilities to include, hold space and communicate with stakeholders with different values, skills and competencies.

Communication skills

Ability to really listen to others, to foster genuine dialogue, to advocate own views skillfully, to manage conflicts constructively and to adapt communication to diverse groups.

Co-creation skills

Skills and motivation to build, develop and facilitate collaborative relationships with diverse stakeholders, characterized by psychological safety and genuine co-creation.

Inclusive mindset and intercultural competence

Willingness and competence to embrace diversity and include people and collectives with different views and backgrounds.

Trust

Ability to show trust and to create and maintain trusting relationships.

Mobilization skills

Skills in inspiring and mobilizing others to engage in shared purposes.

5. Acting — Driving change

Qualities such as courage and optimism help us acquire true agency, break old patterns, generate original ideas and act with persistence in uncertain times.

Courage

Ability to stand up for values, make decisions, take decisive action and, if need be, challenge and disrupt existing structures and views.

Creativity

Ability to generate and develop original ideas, innovate and being willing to disrupt conventional patterns.

Optimism

Ability to sustain and communicate a sense of hope, positive attitude and confidence in the possibility of meaningful change.

Perseverance

Ability to sustain engagement and remain determined and patient even when efforts take a long time to bear fruit.