

**Reflections on the First Latin American Congress of International
Certification for Collaborative Practices, Sao Paulo,
November 6 – 9, 2013**

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I had been secretly hoping for a congress on Collaborative Practices for years. And there it finally was! And so close to home too: it was to take place in Sao Paulo. I did not know that part of Brazil, despite the fact that I live in a neighboring country (Argentina), so that was an extra reason for my wanting to attend the conference. It was not easy for me to take time off from work, especially since I had been travelling two weeks prior to the event, but I wasn't going to miss it for the world.

I arrived the day before the beginning of the event. I took advantage of this, and decided to walk around Sao Paulo a bit to get a feel of the city. I could see how this city was the ideal place for a first congress in Collaborative Practices. Situated in the center of South America, it couldn't be a more convenient for people from all over the continent to meet.

The first day started with registration for the participants arriving from international destinations. I immediately saw people I knew, some well, some not so well, and we greeted each other warmly. There were many new faces too, and I asked myself if I would get to know them all. I hoped I would; we were, after all, a community sharing similar philosophies.

I was given a program, like everyone else, and on the first page it said "nuestra casa es su casa" (our home is your home). I remembered Harlene's metaphor of being a guest and a host at the same time. I immediately felt the warmth and commitment of the hosts.

What first struck me was the sophistication of the organization. Everything was computerized; there were colorful posters everywhere, as well as projected images of different features of the congress. I was impressed by Marilene and her organizing committee's ability to put this grand event together.

I had intentionally decided not to present any of my work since I wanted to absorb as much as I could from the other presenters. My main concern was how to choose from the many activities available. I could of course not attend them all, and was forced into a difficult selection.

The days were organized in a well-ordered fashion. Early in the morning we were all able to listen to the plenary speakers from whom I continue to learn each day. Thank you, Harlene, for your compelling presence and unpretentious wisdom, and for inspiring me the way you do; Sheila, for your unparalleled commitment to ethics and responsibility; Adela, for being one of my favorite local conversational partners; Rocío, for your sagacity and powerful words; Eduardo, for continuously bringing novelty to our field; Sylvia, for your positive energy and depth with which you approach innovative topics; Marilene, for your vitality, vivacity and generosity in sharing your vast experience; and all the other speakers who have made a difference in my life. Afterwards, there were numerous workshops dealing with the application of collaborative and social constructionist ideas to diverse areas and practices, such as sexuality, mediation, education, organizations, addiction, among others, all of which were very thought-provoking.

I was glad to learn that we would be divided up into smaller groups so as to be able to share our reflections with others in a more intimate way. The resonances of the discussions held in the small groups were shared with the large group at the end of each day. The audience radiated with enthusiasm, a feeling that got stronger as the days went by.

The congress was not just talk, seminars and workshops. As a faculty member of ICCP in Argentina, I was included in a fabulous dinner event which allowed us to exchange opinions with program members from Colombia, Paraguay, Mexico, Brazil, and of course the US. In addition, the next day a luncheon session for the members of the Taos Institute featured a group discussion on Latin America's role in the Institute. And to add even more liveliness to the congress, there were a number of Brazilian shows for us to enjoy at the end of each day.

The congress was definitely the highlight of 2013 for me. I took back with me the many wonderful conversations I had with many of the participants, the new ideas I gathered at the seminars and workshops, and I know they will stay with me for a very long time. Despite the busy schedule, I came back invigorated, with new energy and a yearning to continue being inspired by collaborative practices which have made such a difference in my professional and personal life. Thank you Marilene Grandesso (and your wonderful organizing committee) and Harlene Anderson for making this all possible and for helping this large family grow all over the world.

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