

Prologue

I'm standing in circle with about 40 other people. Aida, the beautifully energetic woman guiding the workshop, asks us to close our eyes and begin with a breathing exercise. I enjoy feeling the intensity of my breath traveling through my body, down to my toes, into my fingertips. Exhaling-inhaling. Enlivening my fascias, the connective tissue-system which allows me to move and sense my body in the world. Aida asks us to open our eyes and to keep doing the same exercise. At first, I actively look across the room to the other participants, noticing how we are all swaying-shifting-sliding ever so gently. Suddenly, Aida again asks us to open our eyes! Without noticing, I had closed mine, and obviously the same had happened to other participants. Aida smiles as she is looking around the room into our perplexed faces with half-open eyes. 'That's the problem,' she laughs, 'You forget to attune to and sense the others. Breathing is not something you can do only by yourself'.

As she says this, the walls of the room shift to become tropical forest plants. I'm looking at the trees around Adjab, a small forest village in north-eastern Gabon in Central Africa. As I exhale-inhale, my lungs and fascias fill with the power and juiciness of the earth in this part of the world. My breathing deepens, and all my cells vibrate, sensing how intensely connected I am to everything else. From a small distance, I hear Lido, an egalitarian Baka woman, yodelling out a beautiful melody. Other women respond to her call, and I feel embedded and held by the network of forest with humans. This network is based on sharing, honouring, and rejoicing in the ongoing cyclicity that is life.

'No, we need modern technologies to live well', says the professor to me over coffee. I cough as my breathing gets all mixed up. How can I respond to this statement? How can I shape-shift the tension I sense into maintaining connection, in a responsive and non-violent way? How can I relate sensitively to this occasion, which for me is a complex intersection of egalitarian co-pres-

ence and ongoingness, corporate business, artificial intelligence, and planetary boundaries? How can we do a systemic song-dance, combining future-past-present human practices with the more-than-human? Is technology really the only answer? What else is possible? Which are the trees we need to open to enter into more alive worlds? What else matters in activating a larger collective intelligence towards (re)generative futures?