

Transcript of the Video

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I started working in environmental education in Montseny Biosphere Reserve right in the year it was declared as Reserve, in 1978, when we opened the first environmental education school in Spain (and Europe).

It was clear then that one of the main functions of a Biosphere Reserve was this necessity to capacitate, to build capacity to understand the environment.

Actually, the Reserve, coherently with its principles, was a proof of the compatibility of conservation with local activity: the reality of natural history on one side, and of social history on the other.

We invented a methodology, because at that time it was a new concept, and we created the instruments for the understanding of how both the ecology and sociology of the territory was working.

Actually, a Biosphere Reserve is both a monitoring and experimentation area, but above all a university, a big lecture room, where we can learn the functioning of landscapes and society, and this is a very important requirement.

To capacitate it would be needed to provide the learners - regardless of their education level: primary, secondary, higher - with instruments for landscape interpretation.

The experiences in a Biosphere Reserve relate to the capacity to comprehend these socio-ecological landscapes that are always hybrid: not an expression of nature from one side, and society on the other, but as a continuous interaction between them.

The importance in a Biosphere Reserve is to test valid and diaphanous methodologies for the interpretation of a landscape as a literary entity, as some authors say.

An oak, fir rather than beech forest expresses itself, calligraphically.

People who are in charge of communication, education, management in universities and institutions should be equipped with a toolbox - as in every other discipline where you equip with theoretical and methodological basis - that enables the understanding of this calligraphy, this grammar, this literature: this should be the first effort. And the Biosphere Reserve is the appropriate scenario.

The same functioning and management of a Biosphere Reserve should put the attention to these aspects and should not pose limits to the collaboration and partnership with academic institutions, right to build capacity and the understanding of the territory.

The collaboration agreements in the field of research - to perform Bachelor, Master, or PhD theses - is a very important component.

A Biosphere Reserve is a great scenario, a great classroom, and we should never lose sight of it.

In my professional journey in the field of environmental education - very much located in the Montseny Biosphere Reserve - I had the good fortune of meeting the mythical and great personality of Nelson Mandela in Pretoria, who told me: "do not ever forget that the main fight cause for the future of humanity is the environmental one", that the environment is not about some concerns about pandas and four little flowers, rather a dimension beyond the knowledge of the environment, one of social compromise...

... that it is necessary to work from an interdisciplinary perspective on our relationship with the planet - related to economy, energy, society - and that it is needed to subvert the imperant model.

It is one of the things that changed my perspective as a naturalist, towards going beyond conservationism.

We - academics, researchers and professionals in the field of environmental studies - are in a context that we cannot deny, a context of crisis that transcends the local and has a planetary dimension. It is a civilization crisis. We are talking about a climate emergency, in the context of a pandemic, therefore, we cannot forget about the critical situation.

Without fatalism, without alarmism: professionals, cannot forget that our goal is to transform society especially its existential dimension.

The planet is not just a world of biological curiosities, but also the vital scenario for human beings.

For its monitoring and experimental nature, the Biosphere Reserve constitutes a space for compromise

Citing the ecologist Bellamy: "we cannot play the violin when our forest is on fire".

The Biosphere Reserve is without doubts a scenario where an orthodox-strict conservation coexists with the human activity: culture and nature in symbiosis.