



Less innovation, more conservation...

*by Cristian Heinsen**

Depletion

With the support of the EU-LAC Foundation, in February 2017, the book “Arica and Parinacota, Cultural Landscape of America” was presented in Hamburg. This book is the result of a dissemination programme that was financed by the Chilean government and executed by Fundación Altiplano which represents the regions of Arica and Parinacota. These regions consist in a territory of 16,000 km², an estimated population of 210,000 inhabitants, and contributes roughly 0.5% of the national GDP. Moreover, economic indicators show this region to be falling behind despite it being an exceptional landscape that is characterised by valuable natural and cultural treasures whose responsible conservation represents an alternative path to sustainable development for its communities.

Cultural landscapes and the heritage need

The term cultural landscape was proposed by geographer Carl Ortwin Sauer, father of Cultural Geography, and is promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), since 1992, as one of the categories for heritage of mankind. Cultural landscapes are those territories that result from “*the combined effort of man and Nature that express a long and intimate interaction between people and their environment.*”

What is the need to conserve these exceptional resources for the good of future generations? What is the need to preserve cultural landscapes as a legacy of forebearers? What links the shepherd of the highlands that is adamant about conserving its surroundings and ancestral legacy with the first world scientist that defines criteria for sustainability amid climate change and the depletion of resources? Inspired by the text, *Human Scale Development*, by Manfred Max Neef, where the nine profound needs of human beings are described (subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, identity, leisure, creation and freedom), the requirement for a “heritage” need is proposed in order to conserve, preserve, and sustain that which is valuable and critical for the development of those who are to come.

Humberto Maturana, in his biology of social phenomena, contributes a relevant vision on the profound need for conservation: “the life of a living being goes through continuous, structural changes as a result of its own internal dynamic, or triggered by interactions in its environment. A living being conserves its organisation within an environment only if their structures as well as the environmental structure are compatible and if this assimilation is preserved. If this structural congruence between the living being and its environment is not preserved, the



interactions with the environment are triggered in the living being by the structural changes which then disintegrate and die...”

In the face of an economic development model of high consumption and growth bent on the creation of value, the conservation of national and cultural treasures is proposed in order to endure the subsistence and happiness of human communities of today and tomorrow, thus providing sense, or purpose, to this economic development.

The Andean churches of Arica and Parinacota.

The strategy proposed in the book *Arica and Parinacota, Cultural Landscape of America* was formulated from the learning experience that the Regional Government and the Altiplano Foundation went through with regard to the Restoration Plan for the Andean Churches of Arica and Parinacota/Missions Route which has received support from some organisations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Monuments Fund. This conservation initiative began in 2003 stemming from a request for support from Andean-Aimaran populations for the restoration of their temples made of stone, earth and raw straw, thus constituting the core of their way of life since ancient times. The communities, who have been forced to migrate to the city since the mid-20th century, lost touch with their roots and their cultural competencies, but persist in maintaining ties to their ancient land by way of their temples and customs.

What was the key factor for a conservation programme of temples that did not represent any formal value to the State, to become a public programme for sustainable development that, today, boasts significant results for the protection of critical resources, strengthening of communities and the generation of initiatives for economic development tied to responsible tourism? The key factor has been the high value of the heritage that Andean communities give to their temples, as the heart of their communal life, sacred sanctuary of their ancestral wisdom and of the complex social process generated since the Spanish Conquest. The “success” achieved by the Andean Churches Plan reveals three key elements for the success of a conservation and sustainable development programme: Value, Need (Community) and Risk.

The Spirit of the Territories: Value as a Strategy

In Latin America, we can find relevant cases of conservation and sustainable development: The Coffee Landscape in Colombia; Humahuaca Gorge in Argentina; Colca Valley in Peru; Chiquitanía Missions in Bolivia; and Chiloé Churches in Chile. Heritage territories, cultural landscapes, with or without recognition from UNESCO, all have communities that identify with the value of its protected heritage and are integrated into the planning of endogenous development that is aimed at generating shared value and territorial management thus mainly addressing the value of the conserved heritage, spirit, or vocation of the territorial systems



which are expressed in the ancestral wisdom of its communities and the challenges that need to be defined in order to spearhead their own sustainable development.

What adaptive advantages do rural, indigenous or peasant communities in Latin America possess, which are now at a certain risk of disappearance, in order to face the challenge posed by global economic transformations on their heritage treasures? Why is the need for heritage conservation so relevant to small communities that persist in their ancestral culture, and, at the same time, in centres of advanced knowledge of the planet?

In the book "Arica and Parinacota, Cultural Landscape of America", a simple path is proposed in order to address the conservation needs of natural and cultural resources as an alternative for sustainable development in communities and territories thus aligning the cross-purposes of heritage conservation and economic growth. The model integrates five elemental considerations:

1. Territories are Cultural Landscapes, that is, the integration of natural and cultural resources handled by communities that value, manage and conserve them as heritage or inheritance.
2. Heritage conservation is a human need. The conservation needs of the available resources for future generations is closely linked to the profound needs for subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, identity, leisure, creation and freedom.
3. Sustainable economic intervention. In synch with trending innovation models, heritage interventions are conducive to delaying solutions that can, first, focus on the value that is placed on resources by communities. Then, there is a risk factor that determines the urgency of the needed intervention so that it can be minimal and reversible. From the perspective of heritage conservation, the following formula is proposed: Value + Need (community) + risk = Initiative for Sustainable Development.
4. Responsible Demand. The group, or community, that holds a patrimonial asset can strategically take advantage of the demand from industries that also value these critical resources, generating a business or contracts of real value. Here, it is relevant to the sectors characterisation of the globalised economy that are currently emerging and know how to detect value within cultural territories-landscapes: Education-Research, Responsible Tourism, Healthy Nutrition, Biomedicine, Cultural Industry or Creative Economy, Technology, Waste Management and Renewable Energy.
5. Heritage conservation as an adaptive challenge. According to the adaptive leadership model by Professor Ronald Heifetz, the challenge of heritage conservation is not a technical one, but an adaptive process. It is a long, and uncertain learning process, often with losses, opposing factions and a high risk of failure even before achieving the purpose, or transformational challenge, that supposes moving on from the current, unsustainable economy, to a sustainable one.



The Adaptive Challenge in Latin America and the Caribbean

What can Latin America and the Caribbean propose for the conservation of the planet's resources and a more responsible and happier lifestyle for future communities? The answer can be derived from American territories that conserve their valuable natural and cultural resources linked to indigenous and rural communities that are going through a critical declining phase, but are maintaining their ancestral customs of responsible habitation within their environment, keenly aware of the need to ensure availability of resources for the next generations. Faced with the persistent call to innovate the economy with the aim to generate new value at any cost, it is proposed to look back at existing values within territories that are at risk and must be urgently preserved. Here is a huge field of work in order to foster the partnership for mutual collaboration between European and Latin American nations. Who's up for it?

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This is a translation of the responsibility of the EU-LAC Foundation; to read the original version in Spanish please follow the link: <https://eulacfoundation.org/es/documentos/menos-innovaci%C3%B3n-m%C3%A1s-conservaci%C3%B3n%E2%80%A6>