# WILDERNESS AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

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The 7th World Wilderness Congress being held in Port Elisabeth (South Africa) from 2nd to 8th November 2001 concerning "Wilderness and Human Communities: the Spirit of the 21st Century" proposes an equilibrium on earth between Wilderness and Urban Centres in order to protect and maintain the survival of nature and man's spiritual resources.

Many declarations have been made on both international and European levels concerning the crucial problem of using space and natural resources. In particular, I remember

- the 1969 National Environment Policy Act, leading to the Environmental Impact Evaluation,
- the United Nations HABITAT Conference Human Settlements held in 1976, that proposed 10 pointers towards principles of human cohabitation,
- the 1979 European Council Convention held in Berne that requested the salvation of wildlife and the environment in Europe and the preservation of the original flora and fauna in residential areas,
- also the European charter for the Territorial Management (Aménagement du Territoire) which met in Torremolinos, Spain in 1983.

Furthermore, C.A. Doxiadis with Ekistic highlighted the importance and adverse pentagonal network connection between environmental components: Nature, Man, Shells, Networks and Society for the creation of economical, social, political, technical and cultural human relationships.

The movement of ideas within this field during the 1990's resulted in a number of political proposals that led to the programme "Development Scheme for Community Space" (Schema du Développement de l'Espace Communitaure") intended as lasting and balanced, approved in 1999 in Potsdam by the European Council of Ministers.

The value of Nature and urban environments that need to be preserved in order to ensure lifelong creational and cultural relationships are well known facts essential to the common destiny of the human race. Currently, between the bio-ecological state of the planet and human spiritual resources, one envisages the possibility of Nature without Man but the impossibility of Man without Nature.

In order to have a global vision of this reality, it is assumed that the condition between Nature and Man can find a solution within the quantitative research by Gerald Dix who distinguished the planet in 12 zones.

THE TWELVE ZONES FOR GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL BALANCE

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|---|---|---|
| **Naturareas** | | |
| Zone 1 | 40% | As nearly virgin as possible |
| Zone 2 | 17% | Visited by some humans but without permanent human installations |
| Zone 3 | 10% | Humans enter and stay but without machines |
| Zone 4 | 8% | Similar to Zone 3, but with human settlements |
| Zone 5 | 7% | Nature prevails but humans enter with machines and can use the zone |
| **Culivareas** | | |
| Zone 6 | 5,5% | Natural Cultivation in traditional ways |
| Zone 7 | 5% | Cultivation but with new methods allowing for higher productivity |
| **Anthopareas** | | |
| Zone 8 | 5% | Natural areas used as resorts, for sports, etc. |
| Zone 9 | 1,3% | Inhabited at the lowest reasonable density |
| Zone 10 | 0,7% | Inhabited, but at middle densities |
| Zone 11 | 0,3% | Inhabited at highest reasonable density |
| **Industrareas** | | |
| Zone 12 | 0,2% | Every possible use for achieving the goal of the best industrialisation |

From Gerard Dix, "Ekistic, Ecumenopolis and the Wilderness: Planning for a Global Ecological balance" Wilderness the Way Ahead, Ed. By Vance Martin and Mary Inglis, 1984.

But this process excludes the possible investigation of human and natural resources expressed in spiritual values, that bring the finite into contact with the infinite in the time space of locations. The fact of life, living things that are always new and continuous within Nature makes an expressive subject capable of giving a sense of place to the theme. On the other hand, by the very fact that Man takes form with the spirit he recognises Nature as a resource of the soul. This feeling between subjects has inspired musicians and artists, peasants and citizens, helping them to overcome everyday stress and depression.

This indispensable and unchangeable feeling for Man is activated internal and external to Nature on one condition only: that global or single resources and/or from the earth, sea and sky exist in order to liberate the human world from the artificial environment surrounding us.

Therefore, it would seem to me that Wilderness finds a basis within this philosophy that does not only preserve Nature as a biophysical reserve for our and future generations, but it permits an intellectual and spiritual research of the human spirit with the solitude of oneself. The culture behind this thought is formative rather than tourist, recreational or commercial in so far as it is an ethic.

I have often found myself submerged in moments where I lived and felt Nature. In particular, I remember the Parks of California with their forests of Sequoias, forefathers of Nature; the Valley of Death, in America, where, due to a prehistoric cataclysm the geoide endogenous material was uncovered in a desert; The Ghezel Biotope in Guatemala, that reveals Nature during its different ancient stages of development, maturity and degradation; the Malaysian tropical forests where shade, half-light, reflections and light give life to an exhaustive range of gigantic exotic plants.

I felt the impression of sublime spirituality, that invades a person who comes in contact with nature and makes us feel the need for an ethic to guide us on our "walk" through life, when I visited the forests in California where huge conifers grow along the shore of the Pacific. I was accompanied by a friend, excursionist and naturalist. We left the car just before entering the forest reserve. After 100m a sign told us to turn off radio – telephones before proceeding any further and to continue in silence. After a further 100m another sign told us to continue our journey in a particular direction. We did not find any more signs after that and I found myself alone with Nature, modelled by the oceanic dunes along the coast of the Pacific. Huge waves of ocean interrupted the sandy shore, the high plants were battered by the wind while the low ones were extended across the ground. The sky was full of small predatory birds swooping down on the waves to grasp the fish brought in by the tide.

It was at that moment that I thought how small Man is compared to Nature, and how great is the resource of the spirit, that makes me unconsciously understand the vision of the ideals of being.

The comparison between Nature and Man highlights, respect to the indiscriminate use of locations, these "margins of sky and earth", as meant by Wilderness, as an extraordinary reality that cannot be bought and that cannot be sold, but that can only be perceived by the human spirit.