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## THE INTRICACIES OF CONSERVATION

One of the attitudes that define more markedly the current times is the conscience and fight for conservation. Man has become conscientious of the fact that if what we have in terms of biodiversity, landscape and natural products is not cared for, we or our descendents, by the way in a not too distant future, shall end up in an impoverished wasteland, without any possibilities of survival for mankind.

Those who fight for conservation, true heroes of modernity, face many adverse factors, among which are worth mentioning, for for being the most relevant, human ignorance and greed. The cases in which performed scientific studies have permitted to successfully counterbalance powerful economic interests and to achieve the preservation of natural resources of high local, national and/or worldwide value are relatively few.

Forty years ago, the UNESCO established the international conservation program denominated Man and the Biosphere, within which the *World Network of Biosphere Reserves started to operate in 1976. The reserves, presently numbering 610, located in 117 countries, constitute a multinational effort to achieve a harmonic integration of people and nature on behalf of a sustainable development. The respect for resident communities is noteworthy, as is the orientation of the project to aid in the social and economic consolidation of their members.*

In the countries of the Americas 180 reserves have already been established, out of which 115 are located in Latin America and 63 in North America. Another reserve, in an English speaking Caribbean country, has served to agree, recently, on a commitment to establish new Reserves of the Biosphere in several of the island countries.

The actions that take place in order to establish reserves, however, do not take place without tensions, sometimes of great magnitude and where supranational factors intervene, being determinant of the end results. One case of particular interest, as it involves the academic sector as well as powerful enterprises dedicated to the development of high value touristic projects took place somewhat more than two decades ago. The insightful essay by Carlos Tello Díaz in the present issue of *Interciencia* presents in a detailed manner the evolution and results of the battles that took place in connection to the fate of what is today the Chamela-Cuixmala Reserve of the Biosphere in Mexico.

The aforementioned paper presents the region with its extraordinary natural richness, the history of the efforts and negotiations that took place in order to establish the Reserve, and its private character. The latter makes this one different to typical reserves that are under control of official entities. The author gives a detailed account of the economic interests of the different actors in the conflict, of the role of the national government and of the influence of international economic factors in its establishment.

In the essay being commented it stands out that this Reserve under study is not managed by the national or local authorities, but by a board of directors that is relatively autonomous, and within its boundaries it has been possible to achieve the necessary congruence between nature conservation and the touristic and economic development. Despite the intricate and conflictive process that led to the establishment of the Reserve, it becomes evident that the possibility exists to make compatible both of these aspects while protecting at the same time the natural richness of the environment and the wellbeing of the local population.

MIGUEL LAUFER  
Editor