

**“CHLOROPHYLL IDEOLOGY” AND PROTECTED AREAS.  
THE SOCIAL DISCOURSES ON THE RESERVE AREA  
“TANCAT DE LA PIPA” IN THE ALBUFERA NATURAL  
PARK (SPAIN)**

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**ABSTRACT**

Since the end of the last century, the empirical evidence that the natural limits to growth were being overstepped (García, 2004) supposed an increase in environmental awareness and led to a search for answers of different kinds. Most of these answers are part of the neoliberal politics that reconcile economic development with environmental sustainability. One of these solutions is the creation of protected areas. In this paper we analyse, firstly, the growth of protected areas in Europe and how we should perceive that growth. Then, we pay special attention to the theoretical implications of the concept of a “Natural Park”, one of the most common kinds of protected area in Spain. Subsequently, based on our research in the Albufera Natural Park (Spain) and one of the reserve areas, “El Tancat de la Pipa”, we present the limitations and possibilities of these spaces. The analysis of the discourses, produced through interviews and discussion groups, contextualizes the social representations of this habitat according to their connection with the different social sectors and unravels the meaning given to this area. For the traditional sectors, “El Tancat de la Pipa” is perceived as an expropriation of their land. For environmental technicians, the area represents an object of environmental, educational and scientific consumption. For the ecology movements, it is a “renaturalized” area that is in keeping with developmentalism. And finally, for modernization consumers, this zone means a place for consumption that should receive “more marketing” and be transformed into a “theme park” for family leisure.

**Key words:** consumption sociology, political ecology, qualitative research, critical discourse analysis.

**EUROPEAN GROWTH OF PROTECTED AREAS:  
IS IT AN ATTEMPT TO SAVE NATURE?**

Over the past 100 years, new areas of social analysis have proliferated, with titles such as colonialism, transnationalism and globalization. A topic that has

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attracted sustained interest among social scientists in the past few decades can loosely be called “the environment” (Carrier, 2005). Within this topic converges the recent interest of social science in interactions between the local and the global and its ancient concern with the relationships between peoples and their surroundings. The term “surroundings” takes for granted that the world is made materially and symbolically through human action, a proposition social scientists have accepted since Arturo Escobar’s (1995) merging of political ecology and post-structuralism (West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006). A consideration of how people construct their surroundings suggests that the environment is not an external thing that they either perceive or not. Rather it seems to take shape and even its existence depends on its place in people’s social positions (Carrier, 2005).

This interest in environmentalism has produced a large number of studies about the social effects of protected areas. The recent interest in protected areas as a social science subject also shows an increase in the complexity of protected areas. “Official records list over 105,000 protected areas in the world, covering 20.3–21.5 million km<sup>2</sup>, depending on how it is measured. Terrestrial protected areas cover 16.8 million km<sup>2</sup>, or 11% of the world’s land area, whereas marine protected areas cover 4.7 million km<sup>2</sup>” (West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006: 252).

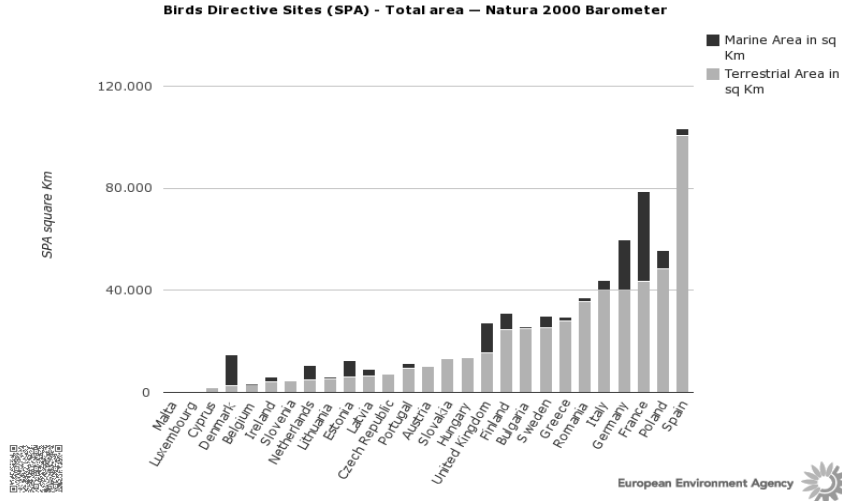
The growth and extension of European protected areas<sup>3</sup> are recorded in The Natura 2000 Barometer<sup>4</sup>. In 2005, there were 24,899 Natura sites and the total area in Natura was 964,757.576 km<sup>2</sup>. Only seven years later, in 2012, there were 31,413 Natura sites and the total area in Natura was 1,472,997.54 km<sup>2</sup>. So, as we can see there are 6,514 more sites and 508,239.964 km<sup>2</sup> are included in Natura 2000. Special Protection Areas and Sites of Community Importance – the figures for the global Natura 2000 sites – cover 18.16% of European territory. Terrestrial protected areas cover 1,138,881.99 km<sup>2</sup> and marine protected areas cover 334,115.55 km<sup>2</sup>.

In the next two graphs we can see how many square kilometres each European country has in Special Protection Areas and Sites of Community Importance. Also, with these graphs, we can see how many square kilometres each European country has in marine protected areas and in terrestrial protected areas.

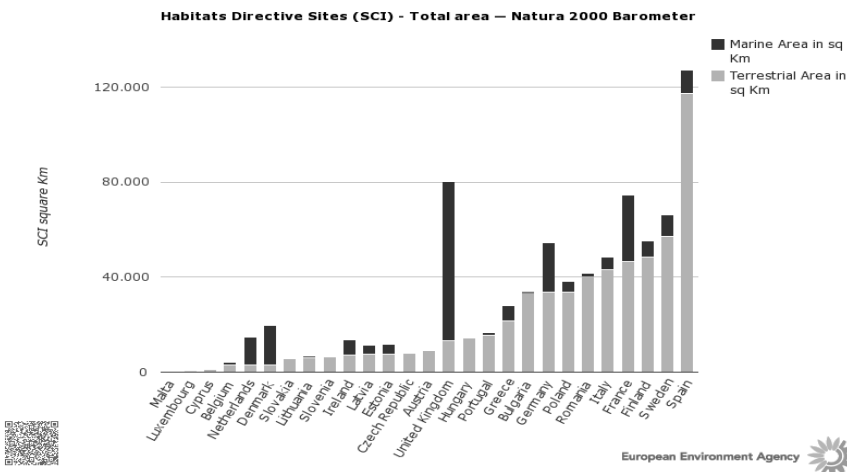
**Graph 1.** Special Protection Areas (Birds Directive) (end of 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Protected areas today cover a relatively large part of Europe, with almost 21 % of the territory of EEA member countries and collaborating countries consisting of protected areas. For more information, see: European Environment Agency (2012) *Protected areas in Europe- an overview*. European Environment Agency Report n°5 2012. Available at: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/protected-areas-in-europe-2012>

<sup>4</sup> The Natura 2000 Barometer provides an overview on the Natura 2000 network of sites under the Birds and the Habitats Directives, in terms of information on area and site numbers. The barometer is updated once per year, based on the most recent information officially transmitted by Member States. It is also regularly published at [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/natura2000nl\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/natura2000nl_en.htm). The barometer statistics have been produced by the European Environmental Agency in Copenhagen. The current Natura 2000 Barometer is based on the national data that have been officially transmitted by Member States until December 2013.



Source: Natura 2000 barometer statistics provided by the European Environment Agency (EEA).  
**Graph 2.** Sites of Community Importance (Habitats Directive) (end of 2012).



Source: Natura 2000 barometer statistics provided by the European Environment Agency (EEA).

Thus, the Natura sites and the total area in Natura are getting bigger and bigger, bearing in mind that there are more countries in the European Union. This could be a good thing for the environment. But we are protecting more and more areas while at the same time we continue to destroy the environment. Today, thanks to World Wildlife Fund's *Living Planet Report* (2006), we are aware of that. If European lifestyles were replicated worldwide, it concludes, humanity would need more than two and a half planets like Earth to renew resources as quickly as they are being consumed. Even now, it adds, global demand exceeds the regenerative capacity of the planet by about 20%.

Moreover, we have to “examine protected areas as a way of seeing, understanding and producing nature (environment) and culture (society) and as a way of attempting to manage and control relationship between the two” (West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006: 251). We need to focus on social, economic, scientific, educational and political changes in places where there are protected areas and in the urban centres that control these areas. We must also examine violence, conflict, power relations and governmentality as they are connected to the processes of protection. Finally, we need to analyse the social discourse of the local people.

The creation of protected areas alters land use rights in general. Specifically, we see examples of augmented elite control of resources, alienation from land and sea and the influx of alien land and sea uses in places surrounding protected areas, and the criminalization of native peoples because of their land use practices. The overwhelming impression protected-area creation leaves is of restricted access and use for rural peoples through legislation, enforcement and privatization (Igoe, 2003). As Karl Polanyi (1957:178) clarified, “what we call land is an element of nature inextricably interwoven with man’s institutions. To isolate it and form a market out of it was perhaps the weirdest of all undertakings of our ancestors”.

Biodiversity conservation, traditionally portrayed as a bulwark against the environmental ills of capitalist expansion, is now thoroughly implicated in its reproduction (Igoe, 2010). The real subsumption of nature to capital is also produced by separating consumption to the contexts in which they are framed. In this regard, Daniel Brockington (2008) argues that conservation and capitalism shape nature and society, and often in partnership. As Martin O’Connor (1994) explained, the environmental crisis has given new impetus to capitalist society. Now, claiming to have in its hands the salvation of the planet, capitalism has invented a new term for self-legitimizing: the rational and sustainable use of nature. This is what M. O’Connor (1994) called, in theoretical terms, the process of capitalization of nature.

Work by social scientists has produced ample evidence for these claims (West, & Carrier, 2004). Large areas of the world are being remade according to the fantasies of tourists. The tourist gaze is produced and consumed (Urry, 1995). Conservation enables the marketing of commodities and the production of entertainment (Igoe, 2010). Elizabeth Garland (2008) thinks that we should recognize a conservationist mode of production that lays claim to intrinsic or natural capital and adds value to it through various mediations and ultimately transforms it into a capital of a more convertible and globally ramifying kind. As M. O’Connor wrote in the 1990s, nature needs to be “capitalized” and “capital ecologized” in new ways (Sullivan, 2011). Indeed, Dan Brockington and Rosaleen Duffy (2010) trace how what they call a capitalist “conservationist mode of production” is emerging through consolidated alliances between business and environmental conservation. They emphasize the constant effort on the part of conservation organizations to employ business in the environmental cause. Partnerships between business and conservation affirm the commodification of nature through payment for ecosystem services and the mitigation of environmental harm in one context by conservation in another (Igoe, 2010). All these transformations are set amidst a strengthening

consensus that market logic and economic growth are the best, if not only, means of saving nature and protecting the future of our planet (McAfee, 1999).

### NATURAL PARKS: AN OXYMORON WELL-MATCHED

As we can see in Graphs 1 and 2, Spain is the country that has the most terrestrial area protected. In the last 15 years, according to Europarc yearbooks<sup>5</sup>, protected natural areas have grown exponentially. In 1995, there were 465 natural areas occupying 5.75% of the territory; in 2011, there were over 1,700, occupying 27% of the state territory.

One of the legal categories of terrestrial area in Spain is called a *Parque Natural* (Natural Park). The concept of a Natural Park is registered as an attempt to preserve certain areas. In its neoliberal version, such preservation doesn't involve any substantive changes to the rules imposed by capitalist economic development. Thus, this term becomes an application of the binomial "sustainable development", an oxymoron (Latouche, 2008) that juxtaposes two opposite meanings in global terms, and often in local terms: capitalist economic development and environmental sustainability. As we know, the word "park" refers to a closed space for recreational use by the public. According to Santamarina (2009), the concept of park based on its etymology refers to an enclosed field, a bounded space, which are imposed as real and symbolic boundaries. It is also marked primarily by recreational activity. Both considerations: enclosed and playful area, lead us to think about the ideology behind this concept. So the word "park", which means something culturally constructed, conflicts with the word "natural", which means the opposite thing, and the compatibility of both objectives is forgotten.

Therefore, the natural parks have both an opportunity to reflect on the ideological foundations of our cultural practice, and an invitation to call into question the "neoliberal" policies as conservationists and coated as ecological.

Protected areas have increasingly become the means by which many people see, understand, experience and use the parts of the world that are often called "nature and the environment" (West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006). In many ways, as P. West and D. Brockington (2006) argue, protected areas have come to constitute a form of "virtualism" (Carrier, 1998) as an attempt to make the world around us look like and conform to an abstract model of it. This virtualizing vision has imposed a nature/culture dichotomy. As such, protected areas have become a new cosmology of the natural – a way of seeing and being in the world that is now seen as just, moral and right. In effect, protected areas are the material and discursive means by which conservation and development discourses, practices and institutions remake the world (Watts, 1993, as cited in: West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006).

Oriol Beltrán, José J. Pascual, & Ismael Vaccaro (2008) suggest that proliferations of environmental protection figures call for the existence of a common legacy in our environment and, at the same time, explain what is necessary to preserve. This fact

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<sup>5</sup> These Yearbooks collect and analyze the basic information of protected natural areas in Spain – protected areas, Natura 2000 protected areas and areas protected by international instruments. Available at: [http://www.redeuroparc.org/anuario\\_europarc\\_espana.jsp](http://www.redeuroparc.org/anuario_europarc_espana.jsp)

needs to be analysed and understood from a double perspective. On the one hand, protected areas, as sociopolitical instances, are created in certain places, are formed on the basis of specific interests and have effects at local levels. On the other hand, the legitimacy of protected areas is supported in scientific and technical discourses. But Natural Parks establish a cultural conception of nature and the relations that humans should have with nature. The declaration of a protected area means a new organization of the space and appropriation of the resources. Sometimes, it means an expropriation of one's own space.

In fact, the first world parks were conceived as areas for disappearing human activities (hunting, fishing, gathering, etc.), which led to the expulsion of many indigenous lands (Stevens, 1997). It follows that this initial protectionism settled on a policy of conservation guided by a mix of economic, aesthetic and recreational interests, and secured through ejection mechanisms and regulation of the territory. This way, the creation of Yellowstone, the world's first national park, was encouraged by elites, but keeping it free of indigenes required the services of the U.S. Army, and convincing tourists it was safe required the services of marketing experts (Burnham, 2000). The construction of Yellowstone was based on a nature **without** humans, but to be visited, enjoyed and contemplated **by** humans (Selmi, & Hirtzel, 2007). A central assumption underlying this model is that all wilderness areas have always been pristine, untouched by human activity. Forgetting that "traditionally, land and labor are not separated; labor forms part of life, land remains part of nature, life and nature form an articulate whole" (Polanyi, 1957).

The Yellowstone model was replicated throughout the American West and American parks in turn served as models for preservationist efforts and native dispossession all over the world (Spence, 1999). Yellowstone became a model for the creation of virtual landscapes, in the form of theme parks, malls, international hotels and other spaces designed to present consumers with generic experiences of sanitized histories and landscapes (Wilson, 1992).

All of these processes of heritage appropriation forget that heritage is a social construction (Prats, 1997) that tries to explain what we have to preserve and how we have to do it, and there are always some voices more powerful than others. So, as Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence O. Ranger (1983) describe, tradition and heritage are invented in order to play a social, political and economical role.

Moreover, these processes of heritage appropriation are created in the neoliberal globalization. In this regard, beyond the environmental aims, parks and nature reserves help to assign economic values to spaces and beat them to the market as consumer goods, in a process of increasing urbanization of the rural space. When nature is transformed into a commodity a brand is created. And then, people in wealthy nations come to configure their identity as environmentalists through NGO media representations (Weeks, 1999), ecotourism and so on.

Ecotourism enterprises are symbiotic with protected areas. If there is a protected area, some form of ecotourism likely uses it, and if ecotourism enterprises are present, some protected areas likely exist in the vicinity (West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006). Because of this connection, people living in and around protected areas interact with ecotourism as a revenue source, as a set of social relationships

that bring nature and culture, and as a conduit for visitors. It brings new ways of seeing and using people's surroundings to already existing socioecological landscapes and creates new boundaries (West, & Carrier, 2004).

Ultimately, as the Spanish sociologist Mario Gaviria (1969) said, it could be a kind of "chlorophyll ideology". M. Gavira describes "chlorophyll ideology" as "a nostalgic view of nature that enables the merchandizing of nature as a lost paradise" (Gaviria, 1969:59).

### THE ALBUFERA NATURAL PARK<sup>6</sup>: CONSERVATION AND DEGRADATION

The Natural Reserve Area "El Tancat de la Pipa" is at the heart of the Albufera Natural Park. The Albufera (from Arabic *al-buhayra* meaning "small sea") is a freshwater lagoon and estuary on the Gulf of Valencia coast of the Valencian community in eastern Spain. The lagoon is surrounded by a lot of industries and cities, the biggest of which is Valencia. As a result of the **intense human activity** (especially the transformation of many wetlands into rice fields during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century), the original lagoon surface was reduced by 90%. Furthermore, the Albufera has suffered a process of environmental degradation, accelerated by the process of capitalist development and population growth that had its beginnings in the 1960s. Before that time the lagoon was a great beauty and preserved the ecosystems of the marsh.

Thus, this wetland has historically been affected by human pressure. The forms of this interaction have evolved with social change. The first major condition was the draining of much of the lagoon area for rice cultivation. Later, at the end of the last century, agricultural development was followed by the location of a belt of industries and population, which surrounded the lagoon at a time when environmental legislation in Spain was virtually non-existent. Thus, to the pollution caused by rice agribusiness was added a number of highly polluted effluents from industries and cities. The third major impact was the development of second-home tourist resorts along the coastal strip. The controlled conditions began after 1986, the date of the declaration of the area as a Natural Park.

The Albufera was declared a Natural Park by the Valencian Regional Government in 1986. Since 1990, the Albufera Nature Reserve has been included as a Ramsar site in the list of wetlands of international importance for birds, established in the Ramsar Convention of 1971. Since 1991, the Albufera Natural Park has also been included in the Special Protection Areas by Natura 2000.

According to J.M. Rodríguez Victoriano (2002), the Albufera Natural Park involves a socioecological conflict that condenses the conflict between capitalism and environmental degradation. In this conflict all levels are represented: physical, biological, historical, social and anthropological. Three dimensions should be noted. First, the link between nature and culture: the historical processes that have occur-

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<sup>6</sup> This area of 21,120 hectares (211.2 sq kilometres) is located about 10 kilometres south of the city of Valencia. The Natural Park comprises the system formed by the lagoon itself, its humid environment, and the coastal adjacent areas to both. The Albufera of Valencia is the largest lake in the Iberian Peninsula and one of the areas of greatest ecological value. More information available at: <http://www.albufera.com/parque/content/descripci%C3%B3n-s%C3%ADntesis>

**Table 1.** Nodes of conflict and cooperation between development, traditional activities and conservation of environment.

|                         | Development       |             |                         |                   | Traditional Activities |            |            |               | Conservation of biodiversity |            |           |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------------------------|------------|-----------|
|                         | 1. Agribusinesses | 2. Industry | 3. Urbanization-tourism | 4. Infrastructure | 5. Rice fields         | 6. Hunting | 7. Fishing | 8. Recreation | 9. Sandbar                   | 10. Lagoon | 11. Marsh |
| 1. Agribusinesses       |                   |             |                         |                   |                        |            |            |               |                              |            |           |
| 2. Industry             | *                 |             |                         |                   |                        |            |            |               |                              |            |           |
| 3. Urbanization-tourism | *                 |             |                         |                   |                        |            |            |               |                              |            |           |
| 4. Infrastructure       | #                 | #           | #                       |                   |                        |            |            |               |                              |            |           |
| 5. Rice fields          | *                 | *           |                         |                   |                        |            |            |               |                              |            |           |
| 6. Hunting              | *                 | *           | *                       |                   | #                      |            |            |               |                              |            |           |
| 7. Fishing              | *                 | *           | *                       |                   |                        |            |            |               |                              |            |           |
| 8. Recreation           |                   | *#          | *#                      |                   |                        |            |            |               |                              |            |           |
| 9. Sandbar              | *                 |             | *                       | *                 |                        |            |            | *             |                              |            |           |
| 10. Lagoon              | *                 | *           | *                       | *#                | *                      | *          | *#         |               | #                            |            |           |
| 11. Marsh               | *                 | *           | *                       | *#                | #                      | *          |            |               | #                            | #          |           |

\* indicates existence of conflict

# indicates existence of consensus or mutual reinforcing

Source: García, & Cabrejas (1996:78)



red in the Albufera make it a cultural artefact and a natural system. Secondly, the Albufera is a sign, historically and culturally deeply rooted in the collective memory of Valencian society. And third, we have to emphasize the character of the Natural Park. This intensifies the contradictions between productivism and ecology in at least two senses. On the one hand, if the protection has to become conservation, the most polluting and destructive practices must stop, which calls for a different kind of lifestyle. On the other hand, the conflict that brings the declaration of Natural Park to traditional sectors (peasants, hunters and fishers) is very high, because it limits their practical intensive exploitation of the environment.

According to Ernest García and Mara Cabrejas (1996, 1997), we can use the following table (Table 1) to describe the nodes of conflict and cooperation in the Albufera Natural Park.

Points 1 to 4 correspond to conventional development. The sector distinction corresponds to the problems of the area: modernization of industrial input-dependent agriculture, industrial expansion, urbanization and tourism services and new infrastructure. Items 5 to 8 concern traditional activities that have involved a more or less sustainable exploitation: rice fields, hunting, fishing and visits. Items 9 to 11 refer to the conservation of biodiversity in general and natural values.

The Natural Reserve Area "El Tancat de la Pipa"<sup>7</sup> is inside the Albufera Natural Park of Valencia. "El Tancat de la Pipa" was a rice field created in 1918 by the peasants, who were filling part of the lagoon with soil in order to cultivate rice. In 2007, a pilot project allowed the recovery of **98 acres** of rice fields in wetlands again. The area of operation embraced 40 acres. As a pilot experiment, the aim was to restore natural habitats, by means of the water management of a rice field. The purpose of the proceedings was the implementation of a series of works aimed at the recovery of wet environments and improving the quality of water, by installing a system of green filters that reduce the nutrient load. The research activity has been carried out with different entities. The educational activity has been developed to publicize the importance of this space in the conservation of marsh ecosystems.

## SOCIO-HERMENEUTICS OF SOCIAL DISCOURSES. SOCIAL VOICES ABOUT THE RESERVE AREA

The methodological practices for qualitative production of discourses were discussion groups and in-depth interviews. These qualitative practices enabled us to access different groups and get different discourses and social representations (Moscovici, 1979) of the Reserve Area. Between December 2009 and February 2014, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with different social actors: municipal officials, environmental technicians, environmental organizations, the academic community, industrial workers, domestic workers, self-employed entrepreneurs and representatives of the traditional sectors (peasants, hunters and fishers). The empirical material, which was used to capture the ideological positions, was completed by the analysis of two discussion groups (Ibáñez, 1979).

**Table 2.** Composition of the discussion groups.

<sup>7</sup> For further information, consult: <http://tancatdelapipa.net/>

| Group 1. Instrumental Use  | Group 2. Conservation use  |
|--|--|
| Social sectors that develop traditional or modern activities in the surroundings of El Tancat de la Pipa | Social sectors linked to conservation of the Albufera Natural Park |
| Business owners  | Scientific community   |
| Hunters, peasants and fishers  | Ecologist groups   |
| self-employed  | Environmental educators  |
| University students  | Environmental technicians  |
| Public administration workers  |  |

Source: The Author.

For the analysis of the social discourses, the proposals of Conde (2009) were extremely useful for us. As for the theoretical model, we followed the “*cuadrado de la modernización*” [square of modernization], of Alfonso Ortí (1998), called “*Cuadrado M*” [M Square]. *Cuadrado M* is divided into two axes that create four discursive positions. The horizontal axis tries to explain the process of change of the rural world to the urban world. The vertical axis, on the other hand, explains the attribution and measure of the social power in every historical society. Social power, as in the case of the Western capitalist societies, is associated with the increase in technological and institutional power.

The position of victims of modernization<sup>8</sup> is represented by traditional sectors – peasants, hunters and fishers. This position is defined by sensitive knowledge and the rural word. The victims of modernization see “El Tancat de la Pipa” as an expropriation of their own space. The new protected area was a rice field where peasants could cultivate, hunters could hunt and fishers could fish. Now, all these social activities are prohibited. The physical and symbolic elimination of the traditional sector of the Reserve Area has generated a sense of hostility that was already being generated from the declaration of the Albufera Natural Park in 1986. As we have already mentioned, protected areas have been characterized by policies designed from the top and by the imposition of scientific and technical knowledge. This kind of knowledge underestimates the learning experience that traditional sectors possess (Rodríguez Victoriano, 2002). So, the victims of modernization think that this new Reserve Area is an expropriation. In this regard one hunter said: “(...) it is fucking me as a hunter. It is fucking me because it means 200 metres where I cannot hunt, 200 metres I cannot hunt” (hunter’s interview).<sup>9</sup>

Moreover this sector highlights that the Reserve Area is now a public space but banned for them. That represents a great contradiction since before being a Reserve Area, this space was used by them.

A. (...) I know that »El Tancat de la Pipa« it is a public space...

R. It is not theirs [refers to the management of the Reserve Area]

A. They cannot forbid me to access there (...) I am a person who has lived here for a lifetime...I have gone there every day... now, why did they forbid me to go in

<sup>8</sup> In other publications (Rodríguez Victoriano, 2002; Rodríguez Victoriano, & Requena Mora, 2012) we defined this position. Also, we made an application of Square M to analyse the social discourse of the Natural Park of Albufera. In this review we followed this application.

<sup>9</sup> All extracts of discourse have been translated from Catalan.

there?" (Fishers' group interview)

The peasants emphasize that the establishment of this Reserve Area has led to an increase in birds. This increase in birds, they explain, has meant more damage to their crops.

"... The Reserve Area is fine, it is a five-star hotel, but the designer has forgotten to build the restaurant. .. they breed there [referring to birds] and eat at our fields' (Interview with agriculture and environment councillor).

'The conflict is that there are so many birds. .. this fact is causing us harm [as peasants]. .. there is a huge amount of ducks and each day, hunting is more prohibited (...) we have the problem of the »Gall de canyar« (Porphyrio porphyrio is its scientific name; it is a kind of duck)' (Peasant's interview).

Although the traditional sector discourse does not question the rules that have kept the capitalist modernization, this sector produces the most critical discourse against the official protection of the environment. As we said, the traditional sector understands this protection as an expropriation. But at the same time, they think this protection allowed industrial pollution. Nevertheless, we should not forget that the way peasants cultivate has changed a lot. Now they are using pesticides, insecticides and chemical compost. So they are polluting the lagoon and aquifers. Even the hunters are polluting the lagoon because they are using lead cartridges. So, according to Luis Enrique Alonso, José María Arribas, and Alfonso Ortí (1991), we have to say that traditional uses have changed substantially because of the subsumption of agriculture under capital<sup>10</sup>.

The traditional sector also criticizes the way that the Reserve Area was built because construction equipment was used. They find this fact very hypocritical: they cannot use this area for traditional uses for fear of disturbing the birds. But, at the same time, the government is using diggers and other construction equipment to build this Reserve Area.

However, traditional actors emphasize the usefulness of the Reserve Area for environmental education and tourist visits, especially for: "People who do not know what the Albufera is [in the sense that the Reserve Area was, before pollution, the lagoon] and they can come and see the Reserve Area, it is quite beautiful" (Hunter's interview).

But, nevertheless, they don't think that these kinds of reserve areas can contribute to solve the problems of degradation of the Albufera.

Consumers of modernization are represented by the middle and working classes of the urban world and are characterized by a particular knowledge. From this discursive position the Reserve Area is presented as a leisure area to be visited and consumed in the sense of a 'theme park'. The middle class is fed up with consuming images that reflect modernity. So, they have a thirst for consuming nature images and this Reserve Area should fulfil this consumer demand, in their view.

<sup>10</sup> "The process of social universalization of the commodity implies a shift from formal subsumption of the peasantry under capital - in which the peasant is subordinated by capital; based on the same technical, social, personal and cultural conditions that the peasant had traditionally - to real subsumption of peasantry by capital, where capital constantly recreates both working conditions and the shape of consumption toward permanent accumulation of surplus value relative to the entire global economy" (Alonso, Arribas, & Ortí, 1991:38)

“I said this to them [refers to the management of the Reserve Area]: »you have to make a major marketing effort. ..« and perhaps make a project more open than they planned, because they suggested me doing something for secondary school, something more specific (...) and I think I would like to make something for more people. I mean, for example, that families can come to the Reserve Area on Sunday” (Local Development Agent interview).

This extract expresses the difference between the consumer demand by consumers of modernization, and the supply presented by the managers of the Reserve Area, which we will mention later on.

Moreover, as we have already said, the lagoon is a sign historically and culturally rooted in the collective memory of the Valencian society. All the social discourses, regardless of the position from which they emanate, mystify the idea of the Albufera as a paradise that economic modernization has destroyed.

“I have seen the change from being a water paradise huh... [He is talking about the Albufera]. Because we went there in boats and swam in the lagoon (...) I saw the change from the year 1965... Since then it has begun to deteriorate, some factories were built (...) and began to put all the crap [into the lagoon]” (Small business entrepreneur’s interview).

This Reserve Area depicts the picture of the ancient Albufera, how it was in the past, before the degradation. In its place there is crystal-clear water and there are lots of ducks, birds, fishes and plants that remind us how the lagoon was. So, in this Reserve Area, people could revive the memories of the Albufera that they know about from the stories of their parents, grandparents or other old people, remembering their culture and roots and consuming identity. Nevertheless, the Reserve Area is perceived by local people as something unknown and so far away from them. It is a closed space that they cannot enter without permission.

The alternatives to modernization are divided into two groups. The first is represented by ecologist groups, managers of the Reserve Area and environmental technicians. The meaning and social representation of the Reserve Area, for this group, is the image of an area that has regained its idyllic condition. But as John Urry (1995) argues, someone who values a romantic tourist gaze does not see this as merely one way of regarding nature. They consider it as “authentic”, as real. And they attempt to make everyone else sacralise nature in the same sort of way. “The space that until 2006 was rice fields has been transformed into a Reserve Area, inside the Albufera Natural Park, with a variety of distinctive habitats under-represented, such as marshes and springs” (Taken from [http:// www.tan-catdelalipa.net/VenAITanecat.aspx](http://www.tan-catdelalipa.net/VenAITanecat.aspx) the 28/06/2013).

The social discourses of this group describe the Reserve Area as something destined for scientific and educational use. But in particular it is perceived as a space that makes the increase in biodiversity effective. Therefore, they want to apply the situation of this Reserve Area to all the rice fields that surround the lagoon. So, they forget the traditional uses of these spaces. As Paige West and Dan Brockington (2006) said, protected areas necessarily seek to protect nature and biodiversity by abstracting them from their complex social contexts.

“... it is very interesting. .. the Albufera is very large (...) then, the more actions

are made in most different areas (...) the more you will increase the diversity of habitats and biodiversity. And you will also increase the chances of people visiting other environments" (Manager of Reserve Area's interview).

The final words of the extract emphasize tourism uses, which this group wants to give to the Reserve Area. But visits must be prearranged and are also limited. This is what makes the difference between the consumption demanded by the middle and working class and the supply that they offer.

"Because the fragile ecology of the Reserve Area has been estimated to allow a maximum carrying capacity of 60 people, the entrance fee must be prearranged" (Taken from <http://www.tancatdelapipa.net/VenAlTancat.aspx> on 28/06/2013).

It remains to say that the Reserve Area has opening and closing hours, which emphasizes the commercial use of the place (but not for profit). At the same time, the feeling of being perceived as something that doesn't belong to the local people is increasing.

Environmental movements, which are imbricated in the Reserve Area, regain their political and critical position against the government and capitalist development once they leave this area. So they have a social discourse, a conception and representation of the area "inside doors", where they work as managers, and another one "outdoors", where they rescue their political and activist position in defence of the Albufera, which needs more than this type of reserve areas to prevent its own environmental degradation.

The second group of the alternatives to modernization is represented by ecological groups and the scientific community not linked to the Reserve Area. This group believes the Reserve Area has a developmental logic (economically speaking) that does not sacrifice the reduction of harmful practices and makes it compatible with economic development. They think that ecological conflicts in the Natural Park of Albufera can only be solved if there are changes in the social organization model, showing positions close to "degrowth" (Latuche, 2008). In the same way, they criticize the way that the Reserve Area was built. They think it is a space "re-natured".

"... It is a »re-naturalized« space if you want. ... but it is not a natural area. Actually, it does not work when the engine is not pumping water (...) it is still an experiment, and every experiment has its risks. It is too early to say, from the ecological point of view, what the future of this area will be because it is supported (...) it has a need to manage. ...it is not working like the other rice fields, it is built for the reception of birds (...) No one knows what happens if you change the basic conditions of the environment, how the other elements are going to react... it is unpredictable" (Interview with researchers of the University of Valencia and members of the New Water Culture Foundation and Xúquer Viu).

"(...) When I went to see it [refers to the Reserve Area] I was clearly disappointed because there was a big transformation and I thought: »they could have already used the rice field« (...) I had made small plots, something experimental (...) But then machines passed through and razed everything (...). ..usually there is a kind of tree here... the tamarix, which could have been left (...) but they razed everything" (Professor of biology's interview).

The discourses about this position also emphasize positive aspects. In the first

place, they think that the project demonstrates the facility that the aquatic ecosystems have to regenerate after eliminating anthropogenic pressures.

“At the moment there is a quick recovery [in the Reserve Area]. .. that could be a positive thing for the bird diversity element. This could lead us to think that, well, the lagoon is in a bad environmental condition, but by removing the anthropogenic pressures it would be quickly recovered” (Interview with researchers and members of the New Water Culture Foundation and Xuquer Viu).

Secondly, they believe that projects like that are positive for environmental education and for scientific research.

“Making these kinds of experiments (...) can have a return in educational or scientific terms in the bird banding station and things like this, but with a very limited scope” (Interview with researchers and members of the New Water Culture Foundation and Xuquer Viu).

The fact that experiences like this Reserve Area do not help to solve the environmental problems of the lagoon and the thought that this area empowers environmental education are two points that merge the opinions of consumers of modernization, victims of modernization and this group of the alternative to modernization.

However, applying the term “environmental education” in the Reserve Area is questionable. On the one hand, visiting the Reserve Area does not generate any awareness of the degradation of the Albufera. Moreover, this project does not produce relevant solutions to environmental problems. Besides, the fact that this space is artificially maintained limits the pedagogical function that it could have for environmental education. So, the project cannot teach how the natural ecosystem works. And that is one of the basic precepts of environmental education. The only thing the project shows is the artificial recreation of the natural ecosystem functioning. In sum, the project is far from the objectives of environmental education and does not help us to understand the environment or to form a conservation culture.

As we have already mentioned, the legislation of protected areas relies heavily on the western division between nature and culture, “and frequently presents nature as a static object, separate from human beings. By extension, the ecological effects of human activities – as part of culture – are presented as unnatural” (West, Igoe, & Brockington, 2006: 256).

From this standpoint, any environmental education project makes no sense. The dichotomy between nature and culture decouples environmental degradation from any human action. The pedagogy that is derived from the project, therefore, focuses on conveying an idyllic image that had nothing to do with the context – the Albufera Natural Park. The project is idyllic in so far as that subtracts the economic and social contexts that cause the degradation of the natural park and, at the same time, the project subtracts the economic and social aspects that would enable the recovery of the park.

As previously mentioned, these spaces are museums *in situ*. While we continue to destroy the Albufera, this Reserve Area emerges as a memory of what the Albufera was, so many years ago. Images of nature and identity were consumed far from

the work of rice cultivation and far from making explicit any conflict. According to P. West and J. Igoe (2006), the histories of particular protected areas are often simplified by omitting the role people have played in forging these landscapes.

Therefore, as Mario Gaviria defined, the project would be framed in a “chlorophyll ideology”, as he said, a sale “of nature, nostalgia about a lost paradise, a bucolic and vegetable combination” (Gaviria, 1969: 59).

## CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, having reviewed the social discourse, we have to think how a social scientist might think more carefully about the material effects of protected areas. As David Harvey (1989) argues, space is produced through social practices, science, planning and technology, and space is lived and understood through symbols, language and images.

Thus, on the one hand, social scientists should think about the material and social effects produced by protected areas. This is only achievable if the declarations about protected areas are made democratically, listening to all the stakeholders involved in the process. In the Albufera Natural Park, in particular, apart from the stakeholders, the problems peasants have with the financialization of the rice market should have been solved.<sup>11</sup> This is the only way that agriculture practices can become organic agriculture practices.

On the other hand, it is clear that wealthy countries cannot protect some areas while destroying the rest of the environment. Returning to the case of the Albufera Natural Park, we cannot create reserve areas that recreate the old condition of the lagoon and, at the same time, degrade the Park.

Following the previous point, it is clear that protected areas are framed within neoliberal policies that instead of opposing economic growth to sustainability make them compatible (Beltrán, Pascual & Vacaro, 2008). The isolation and elimination of human pressure on the protected areas is not the way to mitigate the ecological crisis that approaches us. According to Garcia (2004), in order to moderate the effects of the ecological crisis we need to change the models of social, economical and political organization and go into “degrowth”. The conservation of the environment is not possible without reducing economic production and consumption, which are responsible for the reduction of natural resources.

Although it is a small research we are following a series of authors from Spain, the United States and the United Kingdom who are researching the social effects of protected areas over the world. Nevertheless, the limitation of our research is determined by the comparison with similar reserve areas inside Natural Parks. We are currently studying this kind of reserve areas in Catalonia (Spain).

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<sup>11</sup> It is not possible to put restrictions on the ways peasants grow while freeing up the global market and creating monopolies that stifle the peasants.

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