

Natural Resources, Sustainability and Humanity

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Editors

Natural Resources, Sustainability and Humanity

A Comprehensive View

 Springer

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to all anthropogenic climate changes casualties.

And to Prof Dr Hugh Freeman who died in May 2011. He was an internationally renowned psychiatrist whose major interest was unique and humane in concern with the effect of the environment on mental health. He presented a paper on this subject in Braga, Portugal, at the II International School Congress in May 2010. Prof Hugh Freeman was Editor of the British Journal of Psychiatry and published very many books including *Psychiatric Cultures Compared*, *A Century of Psychiatry* and *The Impact of the Environment on Mental Disorder*.

This is the abstract of the very last conference given by our dearest friend Hugh Freeman.

Mental Health Effects of the Environment

Professor Hugh Freeman

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At the same time as the recognised major changes in climate and the chemical composition of the atmosphere, there have also been upheavals in people's personal worlds. There have been large-scale movements of populations around the world. It is well known that changes in physical environments affect people's mental health and their behaviour. These might be factors such as overcrowding and facing novel interactions of different social and racial groups.

The biggest of these social changes is the drift to the cities, on a scale never known before in human history. For the first time, more people in the world now live in urban rather than rural settlements. Many cities, particularly in the Developing World, are of a far greater size than at any other time. This urbanisation has been completely unplanned and there is still not enough reliable understanding about its effects on people, notably any psychiatric changes caused by these movements. But there is some indication, for example, that the pressure of overcrowding could be a risk factor for the development of schizophrenia. It is time for concern about the effects of environmental changes on human health to include the psychiatric and wider emotional consequences.



This tree was planted in honour of Hugh Freeman at Peneda-Gêres Nacional Park, Portugal—In nature we trust.

Preface

Some books are meant to be read from the end to the beginning.

This is one of those “out of the box”, you may choose wherever to start.

There will be no “how to read or how to go through”. The chapters have been aligned as if visiting places and contemplating landscapes at ones pleasure.

That is one of the reasons this introduction is an attempt to answer Zenita Guenther’s last chapter capital question: “Who ties the knot?”

This preface is no more than the way the book ends too. It raises questions and is supposed to let you unsettled, you have the best brain in the planet—use it, please.

The 2nd International School Congress: Natural Resources, Sustainability and Humanity took place in Braga, Portugal from the 5th to the 9th of May, 2010.

We have started working three years in advance, focusing in the articulation of the axis Environment, Humanity and School needs, and adaptation to a changing world.

The first two because from them emanate the largest human concerns, the other because it is a privileged locus of generational transformation and a tool to hinder, stop or find new solutions.

We have aimed to unite the educational communities of Portugal and worldwide education communities that wanted to join us, in an environment of formation and information, driven and challenged by the words of scientists, researchers, educators, politicians, entrepreneurs, artists and writers which have demonstrated more availability, enthusiasm, hence the most motivated and qualified ones to work at our assembly of speakers.

The event had three major meetings aiming different target audiences and outcomes:

From the 5th to the 6th, we had gathered in a Small Meeting, where solutions and mitigations proposals were discussed for social, cultural, environmental and educational issues.

Then, from the 6th to the 9th, we had gathered at a Large Meeting where we worked for the (in)formation and awareness of educators and the general public. We shall be facing different and diverse points of view, experiences and backgrounds,

but we shall be focused in the holistic construction of human beings, aware and capable of making the future a better place.

Amongst this dates we launched for the first time in Portugal the 1st International Workshop on the History of the Environment: *On the History of Environment and Global Climate Change—Water, Ecology, De-forestation, Agriculture, Politics, and the Management of Nature*.

This event's philosophy had as a starting point the I International School Congress: Environment, Health and Education (I ISC) that took place from the 8th to the 10th of May, 2008 in Braga. Although we may have considered the previous event a success in several aspects, we dared to expand the achieved objectives bringing more specific themes to the public discussion. We continued to base our work in the Millennium's Development Objectives (UN), in UNEP's mission, in the orientations of the European Community for the Environment and on the reports of the Environmental Panel on Climate Change. A reference to the work of the commissioner for the Environment, Stavros Dimas, whose words, ideas and actions have constituted a source of knowledge, inspiration and motivation.

Because we are teachers, we believe in the human capacity for adaptation, compromise and problem solving. Therefore, we think that only the informed and formed human beings, in a global sense, may be the vehicle for the resolution of the environmental, political, economic and humanitarian planetary problems.

We are conscientious that the targets of education have changed. However the Curricula and informal education has not yet catch up with the historic development of societies, economies and values. The set of principles, society, economic prosperity, environmental, political paradigms, are to be reformulated.

The basis of this congress is the *modus operandi* of Basic school teachers, in other words, we understand that knowledge is not compartmented, but transdisciplinary and therefore less reductive in its approaches. It is a paradox, but, the passage to college and specialisation shortens the "window to the world" and the possibility of a global and interdependent vision. We know for a fact that this narrowing is more than needed we just want all to contribute at the same level. No subject is deified nor consider of lesser importance. The Science of Collaboration has sprouted.

Therefore, we decided to unite in this congress, specialists in the areas of:

- Climate Change, or Climate Disaster as some begin to call it;
- Preservation of biodiversity;
- Changes in the Ocean's biodiversity;
- Carbon cycle and the role of Oceans;
- Use of fresh water and ocean's by mankind;
- Humanity's risk of survival;
- Mentality and behaviour changes;
- Violence in its juvenile, ethical, religious and geographical aspects;
- Extreme poverty;
- Environmental education at school, home and society;
- Ethics;
- Environmental History.

We think that by this approach we will contribute to the boosting of knowledge, skills and experience exchange platforms. The decisive change in attitudes, by means of real capture and retaining of ethical and scientific principles and of shared responsibility, seems to us a gateway towards a meaningful mind-set and well-being.

The events that triggered this book were a gathering of the greatest minds working on the subjects and themes from all over the world, and educators (teachers, parents, general public) that were willing to learn more, to share and enhance their work. We have done our very best so these meetings would allow them to pass this knowledge to a younger audience in a correct, factual way and help them design educational projects or change their everyday life behaviour in a skilled and efficient manner. It was also aimed at scholars, investigators, professionals and entrepreneurs who wished to deepen their knowledge of these subjects.

After the II ISC we maintained correspondence with many speakers who mentioned many times that we were world level pioneers in this type of actions.

Convinced that, independently of our 'smallness', our work had value, we were motivated to find simple and effective Environmental Education tools, without using scare-tactics.

For all that matters, teaching through example is action. Hence, being educators we hope to be the best example possible.

Therefore, the battle is for a secular humanistic education that can construct structured, loved and efficient citizens, armed with the ethical tools that will allow them to provide, to the coming generations they will educate, humanistic and holistic principles. Some of these principles are for them to figure out.

Our objectives were:

- Contribute to solving pressing social, cultural, environmental and educative matters;
- Inform about some realities that have planetary level impact;
- Contribute to the management of natural resources and the preservation of cultural heritage;
- Understand that there does not have to be a choice between a sustainable environment and a strong economy;
- To raise awareness of teachers in schools and universities, parents and general population to their responsibilities as active agents affecting the education of environment concerns in their communities, as well as agents of political change;
- Present, share and discuss adequate and innovative educational experiences;
- Modernising the educational intervention themes in accordance with the global reality;
- Adequate the educational practises, making them in line with the holistic education of people, emphasising high level mental operations;
- Promote humanistic values and scientific rigour when solving problems;
- Unite, in the same space, the central and local power, educators, entrepreneurs, artists, researchers and NGO's;
- Create work and cooperation platforms between schools, communities, and central and local power;

- Create work and cooperating platforms between schools and universities;
- Benefit from sharing geographical and culturally different pedagogical experiences;
- Contribute to the implementation of environmental themes in the Basic and in service training for teachers;
- Instigate creativity as a pedagogical tool;
- Promote the notion of community and community action;
- Promote self-agency and leadership strategies;
- Contribute to the development and interest of Science, Arts and new Professional options.

The II ISC aimed, therefore, to be an encounter of citizens of the world, focused in the cooperation and resolution of problems that affect us all, creatures of Nature.

This outcome, this book, its chapters were chosen in order to give an overview of what we are doing.

Educators, parents and students, are all invited to go through the chapters and let the sparkle of curiosity take them further.

All of us awake and aware that we are all needed, that LIFE depends on our common responsibility and capacity to create solutions.

We shall carry on 2012 in Beira/Gorongosa National Park, Mozambique. Our goals will be somehow different, our philosophy the same: to summon the best, to call upon all, regardless their age, their literacy level. We must see us as a learner's community, fearless to absorb all we are able to and ready to share what we "have got". This Congress should be an exploratory meeting of minds, situations, knowledge, cases and whatsoever you want to call it. "The making of...", this work in progress trade mark we have, should, as never, be our major goal as well as our tool.

Everyone is invited to replicate our work.

Tip: "Knit" for your life and for your Planet!

It does not have to be a green sweater, as in jade and trees, it may be orange, like dusk and dawn, blue, like sky and sea, grey like rocks and birds, yellow like sun and day, red like tongues and flowers, black, like oil and water snakes, purple like veins and hats, colourless like mind and pain.

P. S. This is from Michael Marzolla.

The moment Michael was arriving to Braga, he apologised.

As the first thing he saw was a huge, mega outdoor, from McDonald's.

Acknowledgements

This book was the natural follow up of the 2nd International School Congress: Natural Resources, Sustainability and Humanity, held in Braga, Portugal from 5 to 9 May 2010, and felt like a collaborative exercise.

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We also thank the directors of the three schools involved in the organization of the Congress, and appreciate the work done by their teachers and students.

Our special thanks to Stella Mendonca, soprano, accompanied by Paul Suits, piano. This gesture of solidarity has drawn attention to the children of Mozambique to our common project *Building a school, building a future*.

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