



## MANIFESTO 'FOR RURAL EDUCATION FOR RESETTLEMENT'

FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF RURAL EDUCATION 21ST  
CENTURY

Cortes de la Frontera (Málaga) 4-6 April, 2024



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More than 150 people from all over the country, with the participation of experiences from Honduras, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, the Philippines, Cameroon, Colombia and Guatemala, have held in Cortes de la Frontera (Malaga) the First International Congress of Rural Education with the slogan 'For rural education for resettlement'<sup>1</sup> with the aim of reflecting from a critical perspective on the situation of survival in which the rural environment finds itself delving into socio-educational, cultural and political-economic causes.

It is clear that we are facing a situation of alarm about the survival of the human species on the planet. According to all the recent scientific studies and international agreements in the field of climate change, if there is no radical correction of the productive course in human-nature relations, the threat of ecological collapse and ecocide will increase considerably to the point of becoming irreversible<sup>2</sup>. This means a clear commitment to get involved in the fight against climate change, the ecological transition and to overcome the dysfunctions caused by industrialisation and urban concentration. In accordance with this postulate, the entities and people participating in this Congress wish to state the following:

**1. We rightly see that the first Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge policies have been initiated**, with numerous programmes from the different state, European, regional and municipal public administrations, but we consider that they are not enough. UNESCO itself has been working towards 'Education of change for social transformation and sustainable development', with special attention to climate change, proposing new curricular approaches to teaching/learning from the concept of 'Green Schools', as centres of innovation for the territory.

**2. Cultivating peace among peoples.** As agents of education, we cannot feel on the sidelines of the various armed conflicts that are taking place in the form of a struggle for political, economic and cultural control of borders, with the civilian population as the unfortunate protagonist in the form of abuses, mass displacements, genocides, etc. From our field, we must work on a critical education of values that has the culture of peace at the center of its objectives.

**3. The necessary and urgent change in public policies** by introducing rural development strategies that are aimed at regenerating a new economy for the villages, especially those that affect the educational and training fields and the promotion of social initiative that can reverse the population, cultural and economic bleeding. Changes that do not come, as they have until now, arranged by a technocracy alien to the rural reality and that count on the perception and participation of the populations and their local knowledge.

Policies and public administration should be at the service of rural communities and not the other way around, as is the case. They should be aimed at improving the conditions of access to socio-productive life for the establishment of the local population, and the arrival of new settlers: incentives and taxation, access to housing, public services, alternative energies, agri-food transformation, territorial planning and new approaches to the 'cultural conservation of nature'.

In short, agroforestry and livestock management from the approach of agroecology, small-scale production and the provision of ecosystem services.

**4. A new relationship with nature and social union to slow down climate change.** The rural environment is the nourishing space of the foundations of life in general and of the city in particular: air, water, food, energy, materials, labour...; without active populations in towns or villages, their socio-economic and cultural management would be orphaned – as is happening – endangering the future of future generations. The new education must consider this fact as a source of knowledge for all that it brings us, for the immense and diverse pedagogical resource of idiosyncratic wisdom of each territory. An education that helps us to be aware of our eco-dependence on nature, and of that prevailing need for a commitment to care for and love for the earth that welcomes and nourishes us.

Agroecological science has shown in recent decades that the model of land management of the peasant-rural culture of the family order, attached to a relationship of proximity in their interactions and to technologies with low environmental impact, slows down climate change in the face of the prevailing agro-industrial and toxic model. We should move from an archaic strictly

<sup>1</sup> Organised by the Grupo de Investigación PROCIE-Universidad de Málaga, the Confederación de Centros de Desarrollo Rural (COCEDER), the Colectivos de Acción Solidaria (CAS), the Instituto Paulo Freire España, the Universidad Rural P. Freire Serranía de Ronda-CDR Montaña y Desarrollo; and the collaboration of the Ayuntamiento de Cortes de la Frontera, the Diputación Provincial de Málaga and the Revista Soberanía Alimentaria, Biodiversidad y Culturas.

<sup>2</sup> In this line is the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015-2030), the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the European Green Deal (2020) were articulated.

anthropocentric vision to a new one that leads us to feel integrated into nature, as we are living organisms, as well as those around us. A new culture that does not insist on the indiscriminate manipulation of the environment, but on conscious, sensitive and protective exchange.

**5. Recovery of rural community life: care, protection and mutual affection.** Education must contribute to building a society that puts life at the centre, that of all people, including all the living beings and spaces that determine us. For this reason, we understand that the community is the ideal framework for the development of social capacities, of the acceptance of oneself and of others. This helps to promote mutual help and the ability to give, highlighting the importance of bonds and affection. The rural community must regenerate itself from its substantial origin, as a seed of relationships, as an essential space for learning, where we can share, know, value the knowledge of all and where we can build common proposals for the future.

It is necessary to have an economy for small towns that, firstly, recovers, rehabilitates, updates and modernises in a comprehensive and integrated way their Local Agroecological System (SIAL)<sup>3</sup> and their historical, original and genuine economy linked to the sustainable use of their natural resources; secondly, it incorporates in a complementary way new options and economic activities from other sectors that diversify their socio-economic base. and they contribute to increasing demography and making the social structure of the community more complex, cohesive, varied and rich. On these two economic bases, the historical agroecological and the newly diversified and complementary one, the new economic order and the new community of well-being in the village or town should be built, regenerating rural-urban relations from this context.

**6. A new vision of the educational curriculum: educational programs that take into account knowledge of the territory.** A new 'rural perspective' must be opened in the development of content and methodologies within the education system, as well as in non-formal education strategies. We are educating communities, we are where life is generated and regenerated; we have a lot to contribute to build other relationships with people as equals, and thus recover the value of the common and contact with nature. Something so necessary and healing, the slow relationships, the active listening of the elderly and the irreplaceable intergenerational relationships that teach us learning adapted to the territories. A basic curriculum built on democratic values, which includes the reality of the different geographies and specificities of rural areas; and open, which allows, taking into account the above, the concrete definition of the lines of work and methodology for each educational community.

The optimal would be the reprogramming of a curriculum for the entire education system, and in particular for the rural environment, in which the 'rural perspective' is incorporated as a transversal element of content. Until now, the vision that appears in it is designed from urban-centric budgets, where this social context occupies a marginal place. In addition, it would introduce learning processes linked to services to the rural community both aimed at students, teaching teams and student's families associations, with the aim of focusing proposals for social change in reality. These dynamics allow us to work on local identity with the problematization of real needs. Paulo Freire said that 'education was an act of love and, therefore, an act of courage'.

**7. The educational organization and teacher training from a rural and environmental ethic.** Schools are closed because there are no children, wouldn't it be better to open schools so that there are? This premise is essential. Bearing in mind that the criterion of monetary profitability of educational services in this area should never be an obstacle, as is the case in the urban world. This new political and economic vision implies that educational strategies do not depend on an accounting calculation of the population/vote ratio at the polls. This implies a regeneration and reorientation of policy financing, taking into account educational research of a qualitative and participatory nature, on the praxis that is already in the territories, opening new fields of experimentation.

The teachers assigned to this context are mostly passing through, they are unaware of the territorial reality and, for this reason, it is complex to be able to implement educational projects with their own identity and adapted. Teacher training must include a specific professional profile that includes knowledge and training to address the reality of rural schools (multigrade classrooms, diversity, methodologies and educational tools). A training that transmits the essential importance of knowing the students in their individuality and also as part of the family, the community and the peasant-rural context from which they come and to which they belong. Promoting the necessary intermediation between scientific knowledge and popular knowledge. Learning must bring pleasure, enthusiasm, joy and love, education in values, 'knowledge, know-how (skills) and knowing how to be (attitude); we all educate and we are educated'.

**8. Non-formal education, educommunication and continuing education.** Education is not limited to the school or academic environment, it goes beyond this system and is linked and integrated with life, in what we know as lifelong education (permanent-expanded education). It is necessary to review, locate and learn about other experiences of rural education, which are developed in this context via other professional and social entities in the territory, which are full of wealth of learning. To regenerate training offers with a critical perspective for the dynamism of the rural world, exploring outside and in interaction with academic frameworks

<sup>3</sup> In our case, we understand Local Agroecological System (SIAL) as the regular, orderly, cyclical and interdependent use of all local natural resources, both domestic and wild, through the maintenance of ecological and agroecological processes derived from agricultural, livestock, forestry and hunting uses and management of the territory.

and linking with rural development policies. On the other hand, digital and audiovisual literacy is a prevailing need in the so-called 'information and knowledge society'. The emergence of new technologies, values and the emergence of processes of cultural change means that, in general terms, we can consider that we are in the transition of the order brought about by industrialization towards new models of economic generation and ways of life.

Telematic tools open up new possibilities for the deconcentration of workers from large companies and public administrations condensed in cities; in addition to the technologies available to produce renewable energy locally, new companies linked to the use of resources or recycling, innovation and corporate social and environmental responsibility, local food... They constitute a set of opportunities and values that are made available to small towns so that they can reorganize their own model of local development. Social creativity and the culture of social and entrepreneurial initiative are thus multiplied. Living is a permanent doing and undertaking from the mechanisms of adaptation to the environment and reinvention.

**9. The socio-cultural dimension.** Education must sustain socioeconomic processes from the perspective of endogenous and community development, as the identity of a people capable of thinking, deciding and acting. A culture created from everyday life, from the recognition of what is our own, of our knowledge that our ancestors have bequeathed to us; as well as the recognition of other cultures, wisdoms and creations of the rest of the peoples of the world. Specifically attending to the rescue of the ecological rationality of peasant knowledge (biocultural memory), which agroecological science has shown to be valid for efficient and sustainable management in the fight against climate change (family farming). Having as its horizon the praxis of the Food Sovereignty of the peoples, where the value of food art as a human-health right with agronomic practices that slow down climate change prevails; and not as an agro-industrial business on a global scale, where food control and high toxicity in carbon emissions into the atmosphere prevail, as well as the exercise of equality and justice in all its contexts (peace, ethnicities, gender, labour rights, immigration...).

Towns and villages have a long time to live, the bleeding of depopulation is a symptom of organic disease. If there is not an emerging process of transition from a hegemonic urban-centric culture to a cultural and political model aware of the essential factor of life and the rural environment for the sustenance of the human population – the food art (agri-Culture), the community values of the nurturing peasant-rural society and the drafting of new rural-urban relations from the value of the land and ecological ethics, At stake, not only is the survival of the rural context, but that of society in general.

**10. From island to archipelago: the human force of the social network.** In recent days we have heard voices that express demographic and sociocultural degradation and the need for a network from different particularities. In different parts of the world, we have similar challenges and needs. If something has become clear to us, it is the enormous pedagogical potential of rural environments, and it is necessary to believe in them: the people who live in the villages, the teaching teams and the public administrations, which must make an effort to be ahead of the times. We have to be aware of the strength and knowledge to fight for a new educational model that is more open and connected to the community, freer, as Maria Montessori said: 'we must shake up life and leave it free to develop'.

Only from the creation of human links between the rural communities themselves and between the territories from an international (local-global) vision, will we be able to continue pushing for a personal and collective awareness to face another model of development that is less aggressive and more in line with ecological needs, justice and social equity.

Cortes de la Frontera, April 6, 2024