Chapter 16
Leave No Trace Urban Program

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ABSTRACT

Outdoor activities have been installed as a massive phenomenon. In them, people declare behaving—and generally comply—in a respectful way with the natural spaces they visit. However, when time is everyday in a city where the life of today's humanity mostly happens, the ecological ethics tends to be relativized under a myriad of justifications. Caring for wild areas while we are in them and then damaging them from our urban life is something that does not make sense, because cause-effect relationships in nature do not recognize political borders, nor between countries, nor less between urban and non-urban areas; they only recognize geographic borders, which are permeable to the circulation of energy, gases, liquids, matter, information, life, and death. This proposal is aimed at reversing this paradox, sustaining ethics and actions of planetary care present in wilderness areas in urban daily life.

INTRODUCTION

This is a proposal dedicated to professionally trained teachers or ones with vocation and action, to environmental educators, to outdoors educators and to teachers and instructors of the Leave no Trace (LNT) educative program of techniques and ethics for outdoor life. It first expresses focus on what is traditionally understood as natural areas, then, the point of view is amplified to urban areas so as to end with concerns or global ideas about the world we live in and will be living. Hopefully, most of what is mentioned here is known but here is said through an original frame that turns out interesting.

The activities in contact with nature have been settled down in the last decades as a mass phenomenon in search of recreation, rest and tourism or sport challenge, among others. A great amount of people who builds up this phenomenon declares behave – and generally they meet- with respect towards the natural areas they visit. Nevertheless, when coming back to the urban home, a paradoxical phenomenon occurs, it is like if human beings had the assimilated computing skill to change the ethic software depending on time and place where they are. This is to say, when time is dedicated to leisure or adventure and place is a natural area, people tend to assume an ethic principle of not to harm which they respect while they are in that time-place and activity. But when time is the ordinary and place is some city where the

greater amount of life of humanity happens currently, the ecological ethic is relativized against endless excuses and pressures that derive in expressions such as: *I can't separate waste because my city doesn't count with the necessary support,* or, *yes, I know that using the car daily I am contributing to climate change but I don't have another alternative due to this or that reason, you see? We don't have to be so fundamentalists!*

The origin of this critical reflection is on the behavior observed among colleagues, professors and students of the author who teach, learn and respect the educative program LNT of Outdoor Life with minimum impact while they are in a wildlife area, but this learning does not permeate their urban lives. This program (available on the website on text and video) was designed in 1990 and driven by NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School), US, has had a broad spread in Chile from 1992 and after a quarter of century of application, it is possible to affirm that it has been successful minimizing the impact of visitors in natural areas.

Though the world is a mega unit, (or mega being if Gaia theory by James lovelock is considered) so the relationships cause-effect in nature do not recognize political borders among countries, provinces neither between the urban and non-urban areas; they only recognize geographic borders which are permeable to the circulation of energy, gasses, liquids, matter, information, life and death. For the which is not satisfactory that ethics and techniques of outdoor life are learned and applied through experiences in the woods, mountains or rivers, but when coming back to the city they are kept and forgotten in a pocket of the bag pack, in the watertight of a kayak or in a cyclotrip pannier until the next exit. Taking care of the wildlife areas while being there and then harm them when being in the urban lives does not find admissible meaning or any excuse by ignorance with the access to knowledge existing today.

For the mentioned above is that at this time, the formative ambition for those who educate for outdoor life should include to impact habits and attitudes in urban lives, taking in mind this type of experience is more than an objective itself but a powerful tool for integral transformation. More pertinent is this ambition taking into account the antique and current trend to migrate from countryside to city. Dennis and Urry (2011, p. 35) express that in the cities three quarters of the energy are consumed and three quarters or global contamination is generated, due to this is the strength of the nonconformity exposed.

Using the bicycle as daily urban mobility appears for the author of this proposal, a way to live LNT in the city and it was the seed to project the LNT program. Before presenting it, one remark: outdoor activities in their multiple denominations, such as activities in nature, outdoor, ecotourism, etc., conventionally answer to a spatial definition related to the places where they happen, normally non-urban places, little or not intervened by human beings. Instead for this proposal, these activities are defined meaningfully towards the achievement of an amorous relationship among human beings and our environment, being in the city like out of it, even in daily or routinely actions. Augé (2009, p. 18) seems to agree with this point of view expressing that "cycling gives back to the city its adventure land character or, at least of journey". So, standard activities of this professional area are considered as main tools to enhance and broaden the conscious levels of this relationship.

It was the bicycle which taught this to the author, up in the hill, in the cyclotrip route and using the bicycle as daily mean of transport; enhancing then this learning with experiences in the mountain, kayak and specially the author's arrival to Valdivia ten years ago. City where people are still standing up against the property development pressure. City of rivers, wetlands, original native woods in urban delimitations and a citizenship who are on alert and active to uphold these places, by the which, the idea of "city = no nature" is torn down.

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