

# **The social construction of Yucatan's Biosphere Reserves, Mexico: global contexts and local interpretations**

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**Acting for Sustainable Development: sharing  
Experience and Insights from The World Network  
Of Biosphere Reserves (UNESCO)**

**CISE, Montpellier, 2012**

Río Lagartos - México, 2009



Celestún - México, 2009



- **Biosphere Reserves: from international process to local applications in Yucatán, Mexico**
- **Transformation of socio-environmental practices in Biosphere Reserves: impositions and initiatives**
- **Evolution of the conceptions about Reserves, environment and conservation**

Río Lagartos - México, 2009



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➤ **Biosphere Reserves: from international process to local applications in Yucatán, Mexico**

➡ **Protected areas since XIX<sup>th</sup> century**

➡ **Protection of 'wilderness' without humans**

➡ **Protection against development and industrialization**

➡ **Number of protected areas increasing since the 80s**

➡ **Conservation of nature with human activities**

➡ **Establishment of Biosphere Reserves - Unesco**

➡ **Conservation of nature and human activities**

## ➡ Establishment of Biosphere Reserves - Unesco

➡ Conservation of nature and human activities



The Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB), proposes an interdisciplinary research agenda and capacity building aiming to improve the relationship of people with their environment globally.

Launched in the early 1970s, **it notably targets the ecological, social and economic dimensions of biodiversity loss and the reduction of this loss.** It uses its World Network of Biosphere Reserves as vehicles for knowledge-sharing, research and monitoring, education and training, and participatory decision-making.

Unesco website, 2010

➤ **Biosphere Reserves: from international process to local applications in Yucatán, Mexico**

➡ **End of 70s: First conservation areas in Mexico**

➡ **1994: First ministry for the environment, SEMARNAT**

➡ **Today: - 149 federal protected areas in Mexico**

**. 19 in Yucatán peninsula**

**- 31 Biosphere Reserves in Mexico**

**. 7 in Yucatán peninsula**

## Celestún and Ría Lagartos :

-1979: Zona de Refugio faunístico

-2004: Biosphere Reserve - Unesco



**Celestún and Ría Lagartos :**

**-1979: Zona de Refugio faunístico**

**-2004: Biosphere Reserve - Unesco**



**Major change**

**Part of an  
international network**



**Influences :**

**- Management plan**

**- Money sources**

**-Relations with institutions**



**Transnational vision of conservation and environment**



# Celestún and Ría Lagartos :

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➤ **Socioenvironmental Biosphere Reserves of Celestún and Rio Lagartos: impositions and initiatives**

▬➔ **Development of economic activities introduced and financed by the Reserves of Biosphere**

▬➔ **Development of other economic activities initiated by the inhabitants**

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- **PETs: Program de Empleos Temporales**

- **Proders: Programas de Desarrollo Regional Sustentables**

*“Hay buena ganancia”*

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▣ **Development of other economic activities initiated by the inhabitants**

- **Cooperatives, civil associations, local NGOs, UMA...**

**Common activities – Specific activities**

Río Lagartos - México, 2009



Celestún - México, 2009



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➤ **Evolution of the conceptions about environment and conservation**

⇒ **Environment ? Medio ambiente ?**

- **A concept they are not conversant with**
- **A place where they live**
- **An ecosystem they have to preserve**

➤ **Evolution of the conceptions about environment and conservation**

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*« El medio ambiente? ... Es el mar, la playa, los mangles. El lugar donde vivimos » (El Cuyo, 2006)*

*« El medio ambiente? ... Es lo que nos rodean » (Celestún, 2009)*

➤ **Evolution of the conceptions about environment and conservation**

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➤ **Evolution of the conceptions about environment and conservation**

⇒ **Reserve ? La Reserva ?**

- **Consciously ignore legislations**
- **Considerate that it is “a good thing for mangroves” and children can beneficiate of education**
- **No effective control on poachers**

*« Una parte nos perjudica y otra nos beneficia » (Celestún, 2009)*



➤ **Evolution of the conceptions about environment and conservation**

⇒ **Conservation ?**

- **New way to earn a living**
- **Environment is endangered because of meteorological phenomenon**
- **“we” conserve too much... and human ?**

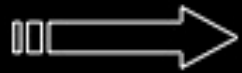
Río Lagartos - México, 2009



Celestún - México, 2009



**The instauration of biosphere reserve can produce the creation of many different activities, depending of the inhabitants**



**When protected areas are created, even if they initiate new manners to act in the environment, it seems that they don't have always the power to transform environmental subjectivities**