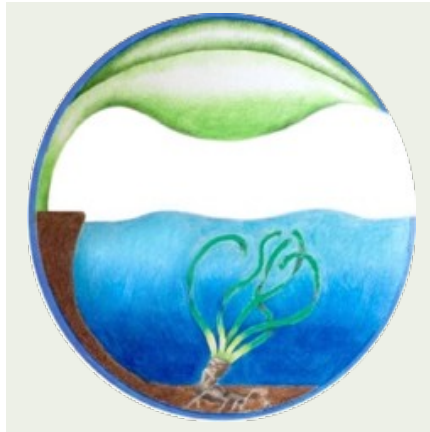


Balears Verd

A proposal of Regenerative and Responsible Innovation for the Balearic Islands



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The Mediterranean is a tired old man, like those ancient river gods reclining. Tired of waiting for men to understand that trees bring rain and its absence, drought and emigration. Ever since the Phoenicians and Greeks razed their forests to build maritime empires (has anyone ever seen the cedars of Lebanon?) Because it has character, it sometimes suffers outbursts and creates storms to return to the coast, offended, the garbage that we throw at it. He knows us, he knows that we keep burning libraries to warm ourselves.

The situation has been getting worse, first very slowly; now in free fall. All disaster movies start with a scientist no one pays attention to. And our scientists, both actively and passively, have warned us either loud and clear.

Climate change here is 20% faster than the global average. And from Valencia down, the desertification is noticeable, and how. The wet garrigues of my childhood, full of mushrooms and asparagus, are monuments to the monoculture of pine and the inevitable next fire. Green deserts, where no one could survive two days, no water or food, no rabbits, no goats or hedgehogs, no berries, no roots ... Unlike the winters of my childhood, Children can no longer play in puddles nor to break the ice that covered them. The thick and sweet blackberries of bramble and mulberry that grew on the shores of those roads cannot be eaten either. The mulberries are gone and the blackberries are now small and sour.

My memory retains and records changes. At home, after 30 years without pesticides, a clueless butterfly appears from time to time, looking for its many sisters. She won't find them: they are all, well kept, in my childhood, fluttering in the poppy field we had in front of the chicken coop. Sparkles of Yellow on red and green background

My name is Miquel, like my mediterranean grandfather, and I think we are here to do more than earn a salary doing a job without or with low emotional pay, then retire and spend the last 20 years sitting on a bench lamenting how bad everything is.

Two years ago I decided to write a book: "Regenerative Agriculture in Mediterranean Climates." I have 2600 web pages written about stonework and sustainable construction, so even I was surprised by the choice of topic. How easy it would have been to cut and paste ... I am very worried about climate change and I thought that the book would force me to sort and expand the information I had been collecting for 15 years. And so it has been ...

What I didn't expect was to end up presenting a project for the regeneration of the Balearic Islands even before the book was finished. Tic -Tac, suddenly time has accelerated.

I suspect that the culprit was Jaume, my mediterranean father, and his stories of what Mallorca was like in the 40's and 50's. At the age of 16 he dug a well and found water 4 meters deep. From the center of the village, from October to May, a trickle of water came down from an artesian well. I repeatedly dreamed of going through time and seeing and hearing, and smelling, even for a while, the simple miracle of a land abundant in water.

At the age of 16, the water in the village was 90 meters deep, and the trickle of water was an evanescent memory in the collective memory of my family and neighbors. At the age of 16 of my son, if I had, the water has dropped to 200 meters." The Red Leaf" from spanish writer Delibes refers to the warning to

smokers that there were only 5 leaves left to roll the last 5 cigarettes. What would now be on borrowed time...

Like the Mediterranean, I have lived for decades thinking that this decline was inexorable, inevitable. Until I discovered Permaculture, and then Agroecology and Regenerative Agriculture. Australian and American farmers and ranchers who, brought to the brink of bankruptcy, no longer with money even to buy seed, decide to try techniques totally against 10,000 years of farming practices,

The more I searched, the more he found: Swiss reforesting razed hills in Brazil, Austrians transforming an alpine mountain into an orchard where even orange trees grow, Chinese and Japanese peasants working the same fields for 40 centuries ... without exhausting them.

And realizing, after so much Indiana Jones and The Mummy movie, why archaeologists always end up digging in an arial: Troy, Hatussa, Babylon, Petra, Memphis or Thebes. Tiahuanaco and Puma Punku, Casas Grandes. Cities that always end up abandoned and that the wind undertakes, pious, to bury. And forgotten ecological tragedies like that of Easter Island, the Maya, the Anasazi. Or new ones, like the “Dust Bowl” of the American Midwest or the Amazon “on fire” of Bolsonaro. We still haven't learned anything ... surrounded by solutions ...

The techniques of Regenerative Agriculture allow to accelerate exponentially the recovery of the soils, and with them, the life returns. If we manage to double the amount of humus in the soil, we automatically double its ability to capture and retain water. If we double this organic matter *again*, we double the water retention capacity *again*. Suddenly we can accumulate autumn and winter water to grow spring cereals. The floods happen because the soil is unable to absorb the rain. A single storm, for example, can recharge an aquifer.

We have developed an agriculture and ranching reacting creatively to the ... degradation: We sow the trees to 5 meters of each other because “there is no water nor nutrients for both”, we till the ground to unpack it but we do not see the relationship between compaction and the weight of the tractor itself, the turning of the soil or the loss of organic matter. Ten millennia of agriculture to make the farmer indistinguishable from the plowman. Synonyms, avoiding uncomfortable questions: Who plowed before the Neolithic? And why do all primitive cultures sow simply by digging a stick into the ground, throwing a seed, and covering it with the foot? Is it because the earth is naturally ... soft?

And why do Andean cultures use black to represent the earth? Our children always paint the earth brown, but the fertile earth, rich in organic matter is always ... black, soft and porous.

Islands, islands...

The Balearic Islands have always been a magnet for the traveler. Since Archduke Louis Salvador of Austria wrote his trilogy "Die Baleares", first nobles and intellectuals, then tourists, have arrived, attracted by the human landscape of mountains turned into terraces of cultivation, stone-built villages and coasts of crystal clear waters and full of life. Robert Graves put Deiá on the map and the Fomento de Mallorca organized competitions where songs came out that spoke of “the tourist 1 million 99999” and “how wonderful it would be to build a bridge from Valencia to Mallorca”. Ibiza and Formentera developed their own epic by joining the Kathmandu-Goa-California hippie circuit, while Menorca remained discreet, perhaps due to its brief English heritage.

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An invisible and pandemic bug has clamorously exposed the (sudden?) Fragility of the tourist monocrop. Suddenly the heavens open: there may be an opportunity to explain something as simple as that there is no alternative to tourism that does not go through ... regenerative agriculture. No other sector has the capacity to absorb a workforce that is poorly trained, aged and still does not understand that the industrial age is over, that the world has entered the Anthropocene. No other sector can offer us food sovereignty, the true stigma behind climate change: each degree of temperature rise translates into 20% crop losses. Plus the pollution of aquifers, the salinization and the death of the meadows of posidonia by acidification of the oceans. The sixth mass extinction of species. Add it up and go on ...

So here is the Balears Verd proposal: Plant fruit trees, shrubs, vegetables, tubers, vines, and vines, protecting each other, creating shade, and stopping the wind; cover the surface with live or dry mulch throughout the year, without tilling, and recovering the natural fertility of the soil. Edible forests, where everything is food, or animal fodder, medicinal or aromatic. Where bees have food and function, and biodiversity is balanced in a delicate and complex dance. Where we understand that we are not the owners of anything, but part of a system as efficient as it is fragile. Where we can relearn what we thought we knew. We have to stop once and for all the plow of anchors and chains that uproot years of extremely slow growth of posidonia in an instant. Learn that its leaves are true ecosystems, incubators of species, biodiversity and food, and remember that Posidonia is a miracle: a superior plant, with roots, stem, leaves, flowers and fruit ... that lives under the sea, but since he has a lot of free time, he dedicates himself to the discreet job of filtering the water. Hence the mythical transparency and expiration date of our waters ... Unless we get down to it.

... ..

Epilogue ... or a new beginning ..

Juan Cortada was not a tourist, but a traveler. He arrived in Mallorca on July. The year was 1845. His book was deliciously written in the style of the time, describing how his hosts took him from Palma to Manacor, Artá, Alcudia, Pollensa, Soller and back to the capital. But the most surprising thing is that the whole route, they did it ... always *covered and flanked* by fruit trees ... under which sheep, pigs, goats or horses were swarming. Did you say Mallorca?

Except for some clearings dedicated to cereals, during the trip they needed a guide so as not to get lost "in this delicious and continuous green labyrinth", and only the substitution of almond, olive and carob trees for peach trees, Apricot trees or orange trees warned the traveler that he was approaching a village. It was satisfactory for me to trace the survival of a Roman technique, which consisted of attaching a vine to any tree, in the middle of the 19th century. Cortada describes how the grape branches hung from olive trees, holm oaks, carob or almond trees. Vine leaves increase protection from exposure to the sun right in the summer months and fall to the ground in autumn, when the earth welcomes the warm kiss of the sun. The farm animals and birds that sleep under the trees delivered their compost, returning the services rendered; a virtuous cycle of fertility. No shoveling dung or cleaning stables. Surf the wave instead of trying to break it.

This extraordinary description of an unknown neighborhood Shangri-La, of a Mediterranean Utopia island was revealed to me only a year ago, when my neighbor Kuki gave me a pile of old books, among which I selected just one to read, after more than a year of consulting only reports on climate change and agricultural data. Coincidence? It may be, but I don't think so. Everything happens for a reason. Suddenly, everything fell into place: my 59-year long journey was not driven by the desire to implement a regenerative proposal: it was simply born of a genetic memory that jealously guarded

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what had been before. Now I understand that, in reality, I never wanted to help create a garden of Eden, I just wanted to recover the one *we already had*.

“*Viaje a la isla de Mallorca en el estio de 1845*” . Juan Cortada. (Pag 125)