

Welcome to Turning Conscience Into Action, the Earth Charter podcast. Join Mirian Vilela, Earth Charter International Executive Director, in her fascinating conversations with great thinkers, scholars and activists from around the world who are working in the fields of sustainability, ethics, education and social transformation. Our purpose is to generate new insights on how to face current global challenges and inspire informed action.

Okay, so today we have the pleasure of welcoming Oscar Motomura, who is joining us today from Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Oscar is the CEO of Amanacay, which is a group that is working for over 30 years in the realm of strategy and professional training for leaders all around Brazil. Oscar, thank you so much for joining us today and taking the time. Thank you. Okay, Mirian, thank you. We know each other a long time, right? Yes, we have worked together for such a long time and you have been involved in the Earth Charter initiative since around 2005, I guess. Yes, before that, you remember that you came to Brazil and presented the Earth Charter.

Was right in the beginning of the year 2000. So that was the moment I got familiar with Earth Charter and saw its potential in helping leaders all over the world in making ethical decisions. So in any place we need some reference points, universal reference points to help us in our process of making ethical decisions in business, in government, specifically the fields I operate. So it was very nice and you know that we talked a lot about it and we talked about the importance of not having a document that will go to a drawer or be just there, but something that would generate action.

So that's why we launched, I remember in Amsterdam, the movement or the initiative, Earth Charter in Action in 2005. So we are completing this year 15 years of Earth Charter in Action and 20 years of the birth of the document. So it's been a very nice relationship with all these stakeholders of Earth Charter in these last 20 years. And so we are in a moment of very strong transformation in the year of 2020. And we've been thinking a lot about how the world is going to change and how a document like Earth Charter can help us.

So it's my pleasure to be with you today. Thank you so much, Oscar. And we are very grateful for your visionary leadership in the Earth Charter movement in many ways. And we have learned so much from you, especially in the focus of that the Earth Charter movement should be a decentralized movement. And we have learned quite a lot on that from you. So thank you. So you just shared a little bit, I would say, of why did you get involved in the Earth Charter movement? What sparked your interest in it?

Can you share a little bit more about what sparked your interest in engaging with the Earth Charter? I think what caught my attention was the process of building a document like that. It was not something that came from the head of some group of people, but it was the result of a very extensive consultation throughout the world. So I was very impressed with the process that lasted five years, actually, because the whole process started in 1995 with the establishment of a commission. So I was impressed and said, well, if we are going to talk about common good, everyone will define common good in a specific and very individual view.

But if we are going to have a concept that will encompass all the views of different segments of the world, different countries, then the survey, this conversation would be very important so that the document will not express the definition of common good of an individual but the whole world. So I was very impressed with the process. So I said this is a document that we have to honor and use in our process of doing things on a daily basis, specifically in organizations, corporations, business, government, whenever we are trying to do something for the common good.

So the Earth Charter for me defines what is common good. So that's why I got involved very deeply in the initiative. That's interesting. So you were attracted by the process of making it, of drafting, putting together the Earth Charter because it was participatory and it was a lot of deep thinking involved in this. But also on this focus to articulate a vision of the common good. Did the Earth Charter or did the vision that is articulated in the Earth Charter in any way expanded your own worldview?

Of course, we all have our own view of the world, the relationship with the East and the West and all the wisdom that is embedded in different civilizations, etc. So if you are studying this all the time, we necessarily have a world vision. But that's a kind of a superficial vision of different cultures, how different people think differently, different languages, different challenges. But what is embedded in the Earth Charter is a concern with all living beings and not just human. So that was the origin actually of the Earth Charter because we already had the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It was just human. But what changed my view of the world in a sense was that the world is not just human. We have to respect and honor all kinds of lives. So when we honor life in a broad sense including all living beings, it changes your view of what ecology is. And we for a long time in a partnership with Fritz Schoff-Karper, we've been dealing a lot with deep ecology. That's a work of decades. When you define ecology as a process of honoring all living beings, it changes a little bit. And it's a very nice way to put it on the table so that everyone can understand in a very simple manner.

But also honoring all kinds of life, all aspects of life lead us to economic and social justice naturally. So inclusion, zero exclusion, no inequalities and so on. And so this respect of all living beings lead us also, not just to ecological integrity, but also social and economic justice. And also this honoring of all living beings naturally lead us to a culture of peace, non-violence and democracy. So I like this systemic view of the process that encompasses all kinds of all dimensions of life in society.

So this is the thing that helped us a lot in expressing not just common good, but also helping the leaders in Brazil to understand what is ecological integrity, leading us to sustainability, but also economic and social justice, needed everywhere, and also peace. And this systemic view leads us to understand that if we are not very careful in ensuring social and economic justice, that will lead us to violence. So this is not quite understood. Sure, but violence is a consequence of social injustice, right?

Yes, yes. And so this is not a very common connection. And sustainability, normally people talk about environment and I'm saying that's not the idea because we all may become very correct ecologically, becoming very green, let's say, and the planet is

impossible to be sustainable with excess of violence and wars. So this is not clear to many people. So this is the kind of reference, the referential that helped us deal with all this very basic question in society in a kind of organized way. And the Earth Charter helped us in bringing those issues on a systemic way.

So this is the way Earth Charter changed the way we started to, let's say, talk about those issues with leaders everywhere in a very simple manner so that people could elaborate on these basics. So whenever we talk, we work with Earth Charter, we don't go to the entire text because too many details, but I have a very simple graph with the four, let's say, main areas, main chapters of the Earth Charter. The four pillars. Four pillars. And then it's important that everyone that is talking or discussing or participating in the dialogues would input their own references about the communities they come from.

And this is the true decentralization that's very difficult to elaborate because many people, dealing with Earth Charter, they want to be very strictly close to the letter of the Charter instead of thinking and acting through its spirit. That's why decentralization is so difficult because... Would you say, what do you mean by acting from its spirit? Would it be the essence, the core ideas or the essence of Earth Charter? Yes. Not going by the letter, but by the core ideas? Like the constitution, the law.

Many people are very bureaucratic and talking about the letter of the law instead of judging through the spirit of the law. And they make a lot of mistakes and deviate from this, the very essence, the spirit of the Earth Charter or whatever or the law. So this is the most difficult thing in the decentralization because Earth Charter is supposed to reach 220 countries. Thousands of communities because in each country you have different communities with different... Even in Brazil, I talk about several Brazilians.

We are not a homogeneous society at all. In sociology, I studied a book called Two Brazilians. And then I bring it today and say, it's not just two. We have several Brazilians here. And each one, each community is very different from each other. And so the Earth Charter must mean something very essential to each community. To each context, right? There are many facets within Brazil and many facets within the world. And therefore you're saying that it needs to be meaningful to the different contexts.

Yes, because you can imagine what is Earth Charter in Afavella. Or what is Earth Charter in a community in Africa that is involved in civil war? If you don't work with the essence of Earth Charter, the letter of the Charter will even make confusion, will bring confusion to the dialogue and doesn't mean anything. So if we stay in the spirit, people adapt its spirit, its essence to the local context and the local problems. So this is the way we operate in Brazil. And it's being very helpful to stick to its essence and not getting lost in the letter of the document.

So this is the... I'd like to highlight what I just heard from you, that you stress the importance of the systemic approach of the vision that is articulated in Earth Charter, but also this vision of deep ecology, which are both things that helped you to expand your own thinking even before you came across Earth Charter. Our current civilization has major crisis. How do we envision this crisis? Or how do we think of the root causes? The root causes are exactly the opposite of common good.

Selfishness, individualism. And this is the sickness, the origin of sickness. Instead of thinking all the time in everything we do, doing things for the common good, you are in the opposite side doing things for yourself and then the others.

And lately, talking to leaders, I'm expressing a word that sounds paradoxical, is collective egotism.

And sounds paradoxical, how can egotism become collective? And it's happening.

Now my collective, in the sense of my family is what matters, then the rest.

My organization is the essence, then the rest. My country is the essence, then the rest of the world. This is collective egotism. And so the origin of all the crisis is selfishness. So you're not thinking about common good at all.

And also I'm relating, you're going to see in this article I recently wrote about conscious leadership and reinvention of the concept of market. I talk about it because I'm saying we have to be very attentive to what common good is and what ethic is.

For me, I'm using a definition that comes from philosophy, ethics is the choice for the common good.

And so if you leave this all the time on a daily basis, you are ethical. Now, whenever you do something that is not for the common good, that act is unethical. You are not robbing or not killing people, but you are becoming egotistical. It's an unethical act. And many times people do not understand it. I'm not doing anything wrong, but I'm not working for the common good. And so this is sometimes when we put on the table, some people will expand their consciousness and for example, when we say omission, whenever you can do something for the common good and you don't do it because you are fearful of anything, then it's a non-ethical act and people do not think about it. They think that if I'm not doing the evil, I'm ethical. No, omission is unethical as well.

And that's why I honor in our programs the same by Einstein. The evil happens because good people let the evil happen.

So it's once again good people that do not act in favor of common good. So Earth Charter is a reference point to help us in that sense as well.

You have worked for so many years with leaders from the public and I would say mostly private sector in Brazil. What do you think would be the benefit or the relevance, the value of the Earth Charter specifically for business leaders? How can they make use of it? You have to have a very refined ability of abstraction to see the document and update it in your head in expressing it in your daily life, in your business, in your government, in your Brazil, in a specific community with specific problems and equations to resolve.

So and this is like the constitution and it's the same. The constitution also, although we have to renew it in time to times, but it tends to be permanent. But the interpretation of the constitution varies and that's why we have judges, we have the Supreme Court that supposedly we have the most wise, the wisest people in society that has an outstanding

ability to abstract that will interpret the constitution to the present reality. And that's the way Earth Charter should be used in by leaders in everywhere, even in Brazil.

But we have this barrier because many leaders still have to refine very much their ability to think in an abstract way to interpret correctly anything. The constitution of Brazil, the Earth Charter, the universal declaration of human rights to the reality that we are living today, year 2020 and the future. But also with all the, how we say, problems and equations that we are living today. You have talked about conscious leadership, the importance of I would say expanding the consciousness of a leader. How do we envision a leader being an ethical, responsible, unconscious leader? How does that look like? Well, the essence of everything is consciousness, in the sense that I'm conscious, the world we are living today. I'm conscious about the differences among communities.

I'm conscious about the importance of diversity. But I'm also conscious the importance of dialogue, deep dialogue of diverse people. I'm conscious about the systems we are living in. I'm conscious about the sickness that are embedded in the systems we are living today. The economic system is sick. The banking system is sick.

We have a lot of sick distorted systems in which we live and we think it's normal. When I think it's normal to live in a sick system, your consciousness is low. You cannot grasp the subtleties of the process. So since you think that it's normal, you don't act in doing something about it. So you must be very conscious of the reality, how society operating today, in which you may have in a country, the majority of the population saying, we have to limit the access of guns by society. And it is not approved by the Congress because of excessive lobbying. This is a sick democracy. But if you don't perceive it, you cannot do something to cure the system, to heal the system. So consciousness is very important. And the ultimate level of consciousness when you understand how life works.

And this is very wider than just thinking how society works. So it's very scary that we probably have many leaders that are not consciousness and certainly that do not understand how life works. Exactly. Making a lot of decisions that have a huge impact. Every day. That's why you have so many crises. That's why I say democracy is sick because we vote in people that we don't know and we have a clue of the values. And then you elect them and then you see someone that is every day doing a lot of unwise decisions in name of the in name of the people or the population, which is that's why I say democracy is sick.

But I have I'm very optimistic because this is not this is being perceived by many people.

So whenever we also talk in our programs about sick systems and what Michelle do about it, it's very interesting that we the problems we are living today are systemic in their nature, which means that we have to be systemic in their healing. Solutions that are systemic. And the outstanding thing that is very positive and very sad on the other side is that all those systemic solutions are there already. Someone thought about it groups design those systems, but they are not being implemented by societies or countries because of lack of political will.

But the solutions are there. What is lacking? And many people say, you know, we lack a political will. And then I provoke them and say political will of whom? Yours? And you

may be a citizen, but you may have to do something about it. And I see groups that are working in restoring the very essence of democracy. So when we talk about leadership and conscious leadership is something that we must perceive all those subtleties and do something very strategic to change things. And an expression that I utilize in our programs that you must become very genius in strategy. And we use the expression, you have to be threefold strategic.

Because if you are just plain strategic in your thinking, you bring solutions that doesn't move anything because the system that we have, the six systems are very intelligent.

It's twofold intelligent. So if you're just plain strategic, nothing changes. Then you must become more strategic than the intelligence embedded in the six system. So this is a very, it's an outstanding challenge for all of us. Because if you are naive, you're not going to bring results at all. So this is something that we must think and develop the leaders of the future in that dimension. And also leaders that can elicit the high participation of enlightened citizens that we have many millions in the world. So that we have collective creativity, collective intelligence and strategies that are threefold strategic created by collective movements. So this is something that we've been discussing a lot in our programs these days.

So from what I have heard from you, we currently live or face in different parts of the world many challenges. And the kind of leadership that we need is leadership that is conscious and that has a systemic view and approach of things. Any other skill or element for a good leader for current times? I think it's something related to the political will. Because otherwise you are shy, you are not bold, you're not courageous to face the barriers, the dragons that will oppose the systemic solutions. And you may have tons of barriers around so that protecting the sick system to change. So but your consciousness must be refined enough to understand those barriers. But to face them, you have to face yourself, your fears for example. And many times you create dragons in your hand, they are not real.

But to face the real dragons, you have to be very courageous and moved by a very strong purpose and the meaning, that thing that will bring meaning to your life. Otherwise, you will tend to become comfortable in your position neutral and mostly quite comfortable. But many times to face the dragons will require a lot of courage and the consciousness that the strong opposition will happen.

And you have to be prepared to deal with the opposing forces. Now we are entering the third decade of the third millennium. Is it due to the current leaders of this time? Are they facing different challenges than leaders of many years ago? I mean, what are the extra skills of the leaders of the current time? Yeah, you know that it's a world that is in process of transformation every day. So that's a big difference because take planning. Three or four decades ago, we used to do 10-year plans or five-year plans. And then three-year plans, one-year plan. And I'm saying all the plans that you designed last year, you may throw it away because it's not going to work in 2020.

And still you have people persisting in maintaining the plans that were designed last year. And then I say from now on, changes will be daily. You are going to have surprises daily.

Then what you can do? And this is one thing that will require from the leaders full presence.

You have to be totally present to right now at this moment in alert because otherwise you're going to be distracted. You're not going to perceive the challenges that are mounting every day in different fields. So as you are able, because you're present, you notice all these changes and then you have to utilize your insights, your intuition, because it's not knowledge. Knowledge will be insufficient. You have to be many times intuitive to deal with the unknown. So knowledge is good to deal with what is known, but with unknown, it's totally different. And then you have to be very creative. And all once again is a different kind of creativity, instant creativity. You cannot spend a few months creating something.

You have to create instantly a solution for what you are noticing in transformation, in the context you're living. So this is a huge capacity to adapt fast to circumstances. And we bring a lot of reference from arts to explain it and its improvisation. Anytime we think improvisation as a negative thing, but what we need today is a leader that can improvise instantly, a solution for the problem or the opportunity that you are noticing right now and today.

So this is something very different. That's why we say it's not planning anymore. It's a different kind of game that's going to be more challenging as the time passes. 2021, it's going to be more challenging than 2020. So you can foresee something that is coming, but you don't know what is the future. And that's the challenge, to deal with the unknown. And this is not taught in schools. And it's something new that is emerging. And we have to face it very directly. Now, we could envision that there are leaders that are unethical and leaders that are ethical. Can you give me an example of how do you envision the difference between the two? Of course, once again, the reference point of common good is going to be key.

For example, there are, of course, many organizations and individuals and politicians all over that are taking personal advantages of the situation that the pandemic created this year.

Taking advantage means seeing all these changes and looking at the opportunities of harvesting resources, profits, higher profits, etc., etc. from the situation. And some other people are looking at this pandemic and say, how can I help? Now, I am a great admirer of the work you do. You have been doing, you have been such a reference in my life in many ways. And particularly the work you have developed at the Manaquê. So, Manaquê is certainly a reference place in Brazil for leadership training, professional development. And you have been doing that for over 30 or 40 years.

So, from the point of view of the angle of process learning, some could say pedagogy, what are your lessons learned? What has worked? What has not really worked that well when you are entering the realm of professional development? So, you know that we work with different groups, groups that are very diversified in one group that we take here in our program. We can have people from enterprises, corporations, private sector and public sector as well. But we tend to focus on universal issues, not operational. And the work we feel that the work to adapt those essential concepts into their own reality is not our

work. It's their work. And we tell them in the beginning, we are going to bring stimuli and insights are yours. Take good notes about it and make it happen when you return.

That's why we talk about Project Monday. Project Monday morning.

After the program, as you return to the organization, you have something to do now. And so, the only thing that is, we don't work knowledge. We work beliefs that we're embedded in your software since you were born. By your parents, by your brothers, by your teachers, by school, by the organization we start working for. So, there are many, many, many different beliefs. Mental models, mindsets. And I use, of course, the word in your software. It's there. And then, all the beliefs embedded in your software will define your behavior every day.

Evolution means evolution of the software. So, you have to unlearn, unlearn beliefs that were taught to you wrongly, even by your parents, by your teachers, etc., etc., etc. And you have to now develop the ability to, through your consciousness again, detect, say, this is something that is in my software that I have to make a tremendous effort to unlearn. Because otherwise, I'm not going to evolve. Evolution means evolution of what is in the software. So, this is the most difficult part and we work it very deeply right in the beginning.

And even showing things that will help people understand. Kind of giving visibility to different mental models. And questioning. Giving time for people to question. To question. And once again, it's not for me to question their beliefs. I can give them references. For example, I tell a personal story of mine that I always had this struggle within myself, in my software, this conflict between cooperation and competition. Because I started to work in an American company. And so, 12 years of American culture, competition, competition, but not to say, really it's good. And other beliefs like that.

And so, competition, cooperation, I was very confused when I was very young. And then it was in a poem, a poem is something that is not logic, rational, it's not linear.

So, it gets to you entirely. Not just your mind, but your spirit is touched by the poem. And it was in a poem of Tao Te-king, in which you have 81 poems that express the principles of Taoism.

That it was resolved in myself. And I tell people. I was just researching and even comparing translations. And then I saw this poem. And then I tell them, which was the poem. And the poem is something like, the best athlete wants his opponent in the best, I would say, state.

The best general, he gets into the mind of the enemy and then lead to peace.

The best governor or the best public person follows the will of the people. And the best entrepreneur searches for the common good. And so, this is the way that we talk and we tell a lot of stories. But also, I bring art, as you know. And everything is something that they have to build from inside. Not that I'm telling them. That's why our program, we don't have any recipe, zero recipe. And the most important thing is from them to develop

their creativity to create recipes for the daily equations they find in daily life. Not using the recipe created by someone that is living in a totally different reality, which is very common in our program, in every program. No recipe because people have different contexts. The insights come from the person, the use of stories and art.

And I have seen you use those elements as a master. And a lot of what I do, of course, I have to acknowledge that I learned from you and you have inspired a lot of the work that I'm doing over the years. So, let me say here thank you for joining us today, for sharing your knowledge, your wisdom with this audience that I'm sure will be very inspired to learn more from you.

Thank you, Oscar.

Thank you, Mirian, for the questions. And I hope this will contribute to the evolution of whatever you're doing at Earth Charter and also in your other endeavors.

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