

Introduction by the President of ESEH

Recent issues of *Environment and History* have featured a notepad that discusses current and future projects of the European Society for Environmental History (ESEH). Some of these notes will appear in the Newsletter that the ESEH will launch in early 2012.

Starting with this issue, members of the ESEH will use the space that the publishers have so generously provided in order to introduce different European regions and their histories to the readers of the journal. Each entry will discuss environmental history in a specific region or country, in particular its institutions, publications, and research projects.

The first regional essay deals with Portugal. This seems appropriate as Portugal has very recently become an important and very active region in environmental history and historiography. It was also chosen as the site of the Second World Congress for Environmental History in 2014.

The following essay has been authored by two leading environmental historians in Portugal: Inês Amorim of the University of Porto and Stefania Barca of the University of Coimbra. Much of Dr. Amorim's research has been on maritime welfare, trade networks, port history, and the exploitation of maritime resources. She is also the coordinator of SAL(H)INA (História do sal – natureza e Meio Ambiente), a project on the natural and environmental history of salt. Stefania Barca is a social, economic and environmental historian. Her first book discussed the electrification of Apulia; her second book *Enclosing Water: Nature and Political Economy in a Mediterranean Valley, 1796–1916*, published with White Horse Press, deals with water property and vulnerability during the industrial revolution in southern Italy. It was the recipient of the Turku Prize for the best book in environmental history in 2011. Stefania Barca is one of two Vice Presidents of ESEH, together with Julia Lajus of St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Environmental History in Portugal

Hanging over the Atlantic at the south-west fringe of the European continent, Portugal is definitely a place of great interest to environmental historians, and of undiscussed potential for enriching their research agenda. Its landscapes and climate represent a fascinating mix of Mediterranean and Atlantic, agrarian and marine environments (and the social formations growing out of them), with a

touch of ‘wild’ added by the mountain ranges running along its eastern border. Portuguese environmental historians so far have paid due attention to fisheries and marine wildlife and to the coastal wetlands lining along the country; but they have also given attention to water and forest resources, the rural commons, and the agrarian landscapes of the interior. What is also noteworthy, however, is that, since as early as the 15th century, the country has been a pioneer of European expansion overseas – which leaves environmental historians with the challenge of examining the environmental impact of Portuguese colonization (and de-colonization) in places such as Brazil, Mozambique and Angola, but also Madeira and the Azores, Cape Verde and a few other outposts scattered along the Indian Ocean. Overseas enterprises, in addition, have left us with a wealth of information about past marine environments and wildlife along the African coast, as well as on the evolution of human perceptions of nature and the geographic imagination in early modern times.

Graduate seminars and research projects in the field of environmental history, as well as resources for historical research, can be found at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, at the Transdisciplinary Research Centre ‘Culture, Space and Memory’ (CITCEM) of the University of Porto, at Lisbon’s Institute of Tropical Scientific Research, at the Centre for Overseas History and School of the Sea, and at the Institute of Contemporary History of Lisbon’s New University, and at the Institute of Geography of the University of Lisbon. An environmental database platform, the Ecoline project, has been developed at the Social Science Institute of the same University.

Several projects in the environmental history of Portugal have focused on various aspects of the coastal environment, such as salt, fisheries and whaling from medieval times to the present. Other projects deal with rural landscapes and memory, restoration and afforestation, and with the environmental impact of Salazar’s regime in both rural and urban contexts, including experimentation with genetics and nuclearism. Among recent doctoral projects on the environmental history of Portugal are dissertations in the field of forestry and water politics in the 19th century (at the European University Institute in Italy), on land use changes along the coastline in the 19th and 20th centuries (at the University of Lisbon), and on the role of energy sources during the era of industrialization (at the University of Roskilde in Denmark).

It is perhaps no surprise that environmental history is currently gaining momentum in Portugal. A first international workshop took place in May 2010 at the University of Minho, Braga campus. The workshop was titled ‘The History of Environment and Global Climate Change: Water, Ecology, De-Forestation, Agriculture, Politics, and the Management of Nature’. Organized to highlight UNESCO’s year of biodiversity, it brought speakers from half a dozen countries to Portugal, and it demonstrated that there is a strong cohort of social scientists and historians in Portugal (and neighbouring Spain) who work on political and social aspects of climate change and climate history. Upcoming events include

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three more international workshops: the first meeting, on environmental history in Portuguese speaking countries, will take place in March 2012 at the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra. A second one, on weather and climate history, is scheduled for May 2012 at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of Lisbon's New University. A third international workshop, on the environmental politics of fascist regimes in Southern Europe, is being jointly organized by the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society at LMU Munich and the Centre for Social Studies, and will take place in Coimbra in October 2012. Last but not least, the next World Environmental History Conference, scheduled for July 2014, will take place at the University of Minho, between the Braga and Guimarães campuses. This will be an excellent opportunity for meeting fellow environmental historians from Portugal, and having a closer look at the country's fascinating environmental history.

We hope to see you all at U-Minho in 2014, then!

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