

## Abstract 285

# Environmental Conflicts in the Pyrites Mining Industry in Portugal (1850-1930)



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During the second half of the 19th century, the development of the mining industry in Portugal was export oriented and led by foreign capitals. Those mining enterprises used local vital resources, changed landscapes and became a source of air and water pollution and of social conflicts. In this paper we analyze three environmental conflicts derived from the environmental disruption due to the modern development of the pyrites mining industry in Portugal during the long period of material progress and relative prosperity (Regeneração) and the New State. Considering the facts shown by local records, parliamentary papers and State archives, we have reconstructed some of those conflicts, identifying social actors, strategies and forms of resolution. The comparison between open conflicts across distinctive social and geographic contexts and time periods have shown different and recurrent behaviour and bargaining strategies by landowners, peasants, fishermen and mining companies within the unequal relationship established between them and the Liberal State in order to face the environmental damages created by the mining and metallurgical industry. We show that the different group strategies were the result of the highly unequal power distribution, and of the resources they were able to mobilize. The State action was presented- and understood- as mediator and regulator. Within this framework, the large landowners promoted the parliamentary debate as a privileged form of intervention in defense of their interests during the First Republic (1910-1926). The legal framework that resulted from this experience did not reinforce the bargaining power of landowners and farmers in such way to enable them to effectively fight against the mining and industrial interests often promoted by foreign companies.

### **Assigned speakers:**

Prof. Paulo Guimarães , University of Évora , Evora , Portugal

### **Assigned in sessions:**

12.07.2014, 11:00-12:30, Accepted panel, Environmental Conflicts in Mining, Quarrying and Metallurgical Industries in the Iberian Peninsula (19th and 20th Century): The Role of Institutions, CO-02 (CFPG)