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“The Portuguese Environmental Movement”
in
Environmental Activism in Society:
Proceedings of a Workshop on The Role of
Environmental Activism in Society: Environmentalism in
2020
January 25 and 26, 1999
Edited by Lia Vasconcelos and Idalina Baptista
Lisbon
Luso-American Foundation
2002
pp. 85-127

THE PORTUGUESE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

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Good afternoon to you all. Allow me to thank the Foundation and Lia for the invitation to be at this meeting. It seems more correct for me to speak in English because the objective of this meeting is to allow for the exchange of experiences between people who in the US, Portugal, and Europe work in the area of the environment within civil society. We have a linguistic problem, because it is always sensitive to talk in another language here in our own country, which has the sixth most widely spoken language in the world. So, for this meeting, I have decided to present the transparencies in Portuguese and make the oral presentation of ideas to our North American colleagues in English.

Today, I have a double responsibility. First I will have to try to convey the experience of several organizations over more than two decades. Second, if I am wrong, I will have to be ready to bear the criticism of some of the key actors who are sitting in this very room.

I will divide my presentation into three main topics.

In the first part, I will present the features and the characteristics of environmentalism as a social body. I think this is very important because we use words in a very improper way. Concepts are often misused, and sometimes we take for granted that environmentalism is a social movement. I think this needs to be clarified. What is our environmental movement? What makes something a social movement? Why is the environmental movement a social movement? This first topic is probably a little theoretical, but I think it is fundamental. It is the basis we need to take the topic further.

Second, I will discuss the peculiarity of the Portuguese situation both from a social and historical viewpoint. We will see how the growth of environmentalism in

Portugal was largely affected, both positively and negatively, by the fact that our country was under a dictatorship for 48 years, in fact, a great part of the century. The beginning of serious citizen involvement in NGOs coincides with the building of a classical parliamentary democracy. So, this is a second very important aspect. While discussing topic two, I will also try to outline some of the ideological and political trends.

Since we are in a meeting with colleagues from the US, I will try to put the situation in perspective by comparing it with Europe's most important current environmental and social movement – the German movement. I will try to balance the Portuguese situation with the German situation, because I think Germany can provide a bridge across the Atlantic to Portugal. This is because Germany shares features such as federalism with the US, while possessing other features common to Portugal, namely a very state-centered system (state in the European political tradition).

When we speak about environmentalism, we are speaking about a social movement – this is what I intend to prove. But, before trying to prove it, I think that we can all agree that we are speaking about a wide range of environmental actors, all of whom have different modes of action and capacities to bring about reform. So this fact is one of the important things that confers upon environmentalism the character of a social movement. A social movement has to be something that goes beyond institutions, beyond parties, beyond a certain legal, institutional, or constitutional framework.

It must also involve everyday life, culture, the way we feel about things, and the way we want our villages, waterways, and streams to be. The fact that so many actors exist in this movement paves the way for the idea that we are witnessing a social movement and not something of a different nature. A social movement has the capacity to spread its ideas and link up with several issues in civil society before and after the crystallization of the political systems; namely the political party system and the mechanisms of state.

I think we have to take a comparative approach and look at other social movements that were already in existence. If we look into our common past, in the US and Europe, we see that for the last two hundred years, three important movements were

fought. The Nationalist movement is still going on, not only in Europe's former colonies but in Europe itself; suffice it to look at the Balkans. So, the Nationalist movement is still alive. Alive too are the Socialist and Communist movements which are not only parties but, above all, deep social movements in Europe. In the US, these last two movements are not as strong, but they still exist.

What is different about the environmental movement? And what does it have in common with those other movements? What it has in common is that the classical movements – Nationalism, different types of Communism, and Socialism – were movements that were acting forces in civil society before being ideological, institutional forces in their states. They were forces acting on the cultural trends of their respective nations. The environmental movement shares this characteristic with the classical movements. But we have to look further. We have to look at what we call the set of values that lay beyond the different social movements.

For our discussion of coming environmentalist movements I have chosen a set of four main values.

Let us begin with the classical movement. Normally we think of Nationalism as deeply opposed to both Socialism and Communism. We view these movements as being at war with each other; but if you look deeper, and from a more distant perspective, you can easily see that they share four main convictions that cut across all three social movements mentioned.

First there is the issue of vision: a positive vision of the science and of the role of human technical capacity. All these movements have been completely optimistic about the progress heralded and brought about by science and technology.

Second common value is that all three social movements believed in the centrality of the state in social life and in politics. What does a nationalist want to be? He wants to be the prime minister of a nation-state. He wants to create a state for his nation. What was the Russian Revolution? It was the conquest of the Czarist state. So the state is a crucial element in these classical movements; they believe that the state is fundamental and essential to the creation of operative societies.

The third common value is that they were all movements that tried to draw a dividing line in history. They were movements, as Fukuyama said in the book he wrote after the fall of the Berlin Wall, that sought a kind of end of history. So, the fulfillment of Communism and the creation of the nation-state, were looked upon as essential historical goals and, at the same time, as the common essential end of their visions.

Finally, they viewed politics (which is not exactly the same as policy) as being an area of struggle. In this century a German thinker wrote that the basic category of politics is the relationship between friend-friend and friend-enemy.

These are the four main values. If you look at what we call environmentalism, you can see big differences. First, in spite of being ecocentric, deep ecologist, or being a rather more contracting environmentalist acting inside the political mechanisms of society, you see that these characteristics are common to all the different schools of thought within environmentalism.

There is a critical position towards science and technology. We are the generation that lived through Chernobyl. Our generation knows that science and technology have not paved a garden path to heaven. They are riddled with pitfalls and fraught with dangers to humankind. We are not trying to stop the growth of science and technology, but we know that we have to look into it with great care.

A second, central idea, is that the state is no longer the new god of this social movement, because we also view the state very critically. The reason is that we understand that the power of the state is much less effective than other social movements thought it was. Every day we see that the state is unable to comply, to tackle problems that arise from above and below. So many international/global problems can be tackled both at the global and the regional level. The anarchists in the 19th century believed that the state was very powerful. However, environmentalists everywhere are defiant and critical toward the state because they believe that the state is not as effectual as many people think it is.

Finally, I think that what environmentalists everywhere desire and seek is the continuation of history. They look for sustainability that will give humankind the chance to go on. This means that they want coming generations to find a healthy land, a healthy planet, a healthy earth. Their idea is not to fulfill what they think history should be, but to give coming generations the chance to carry on and fulfill what those generations think history should be.

One of our North American colleagues mentioned in a presentation this morning that one of the main features to come into politics with this new movement is the need for solidarity. Politics calls for cooperation, for solidarity, not only on ethical grounds, but based on very real needs.

I have attempted to show that we are dealing with a real social movement. Let us now take a look at Portugal and see how this movement was created here.

Until the end of World War II, there was no group activity involved in the environment in Portugal. It was only in 1948 – so, a little over fifty years ago – that the *Liga para a Protecção da Natureza*¹ (LPN) was created.

These organizations were primarily, though not exclusively, aimed at nature conservation and protection. We should not forget that in 1843 the world's first organization was created in Britain in the area of what we may call today "Urban Ecology". It aimed to protect people against the pollution that was being caused by the industrial revolution. So it would be a mistake to say that in the beginning all organizations were just conservation organizations. There were different trends, but in the beginning the main trend was to create a kind of political or legal framework that would protect the ecosystem and natural values.

The fact that Portugal took so long to create these types of movements is deeply rooted in the type of society we were – and are. I will not delve into this important topic, yet I would like to say that losing a half-century's worth of opportunities to build a parliamentary democracy was a significant factor, and one that led to deep-rooted, negative impacts. We are still suffering from the profound effects of living

through 48 years without democracy. This is a very important point. The lack of democracy also deeply affected civil society's capacity to organize itself, namely its capacity to protect the environment through environmental policy.

The Portuguese road to modernity is also characterized by features that differ radically from those of other European countries. We are an old nation with a very old nation-state, if you compare us with France, Germany, or Italy. The state in Portugal was not forced into the task of building a school system in the 19th century as were France, Italy or Germany; because France and Italy already had the state, but they did not have the people. There is a famous quote by an Italian minister who, after unification, stated, "We have the Italian state, now let's create Italians". In Portugal, we already had both the state and the Portuguese people. What we sorely needed were the educational policies that those countries had, because they had to build their nation-states.

Let us now go to the core of these considerations. If you want to see how the social movement in Portugal ticks – in this case, NGO environmental movements – you have to draw closer and see what are they.

The years 1984 and 1985 were a turning point in the history of our movement because during those two years we organized a meeting of environmental NGOs in two different places in Portugal: Caldas da Rainha and Tróia. There were a number of organizations there and some are still alive and kicking. Some do not exist anymore. Some of the most active current associations did not exist in those days, such as Quercus, which is a very important NGO nowadays.

There were different types of organizations. We may call these organizations from 1984-85 a true rainbow. They included everything from nature conservation organizations to neo-anarchist organizations that had begun to be very concerned about the environmental crisis; they took in school groups, local groups, and groups that were, to a greater or lesser degree, engaged in politics.

¹ Nature Protection League – N. Ed.

Probably the best description of the environmentalist movement of those days was expressed in a report, written in September 1985, by a German friend, who was and still is a member of the European Parliament, and is presently a member of the Green Party in Germany. He was in the Tróia meeting where he wrote a report, and he was kind enough to give me a copy. In the report he used a taxonomy of six major tendencies or trends that marked Portuguese environmentalism in 1985. If we examine those trends we see that the majority of those initiatives no longer exist. So, many of the groups that were active and doing more or less important jobs in those days, do not exist anymore. Other groups underwent a kind of metamorphosis and became something different later on.

However, merely giving you the names or the ideological trends of these organizations is not sufficient. I think that we should also put some of the ideological topics of those days into perspective as well. I will do that now, very quickly.

After 1974, the post-revolution years, were those in which the social movement began to grow and demonstrate expressive numbers. One of the first major attitudes we are able to identify in some of the streams of this movement is the “sitting on the sidelines” attitude. I found a text in a magazine put out by the so-called *Movimento Ecológico Português*² at the beginning of January 1976. The topic was nuclear power; but what I wish to underline is a certain attitude that allowed one to be critical without being constructive. There was a kind of innocence in those days. We believed, or some persons believed, that you could criticize without presenting specific proposals or alternatives. The author, who is not identified here, said, “Oh well, nuclear power raises certain problems but it is not our role to find solutions.” This is an example of the “on the margin” or “sitting on the sidelines” attitude that we rarely see today.

Another important item was the opposition to nuclear power. I myself belong to the generation that was born, in political terms, in the heyday of the struggle against nuclear power. Happily for us, we do not have any major nuclear power plants in Portugal; and I must add that I take a somewhat fundamentalist attitude against nuclear power. This issue is why Germany is now experiencing a very dramatic movement. Germany’s new Social-Democratic government is again fighting a war

² The Portuguese Ecological Movement – N. Ed.

that could become very significant, aiming to step away from nuclear power – not just in Germany – but in all the other eight European countries involved. I somehow think that it is easier to end Communism in Germany than to withdraw from using nuclear power. But I think that we should express our positive feelings towards what is happening in Germany. I think it would be very stupid for Portugal and the Portuguese people to ignore these new trends in German politics.

Another topic that appeared in the 1970s was the issue of technical justice and the priority of science over the technological consequences it brings. It was also a major, and also in intellectual terms, a highly charged topic because the most constructive thing we can do about the negative impacts of science and technology is to correct the negative consequences they have brought. This conveys the idea that one of our first priorities should be to make more use of science and technology.

The major problem today is that science programs are dominated by industrial and technological agendas. If I want to be a scientist, it is not enough for me to closet myself in an office or lab doing research. I have to deal with industries, with corporations which set the agenda for science; and this is a major political problem. How can we manage a new type of policy, of politics for science? In what direction are we going to orient our goals and our money? This is not an issue to be solved by science or corporations alone; it is a political problem and a problem to be solved through the democratic process.

Here we must pay homage to one of the movement's founding fathers, Gonçalo Ribeiro Telles, who attempted to marry the concept of “sustainability” with the roots of Portuguese tradition. He not only anticipated what was going to happen, but he highlighted the need to incorporate our own history and traditions. It is a pity that his book is out of print. Since there were several mistakes in the original edition, Gonçalo Ribeiro Telles had it recalled, which is a pity, because it is a very well done book and one that gives an interesting and informative account of the major trends in our environmentalist movement.

Finally, there is the last trend that I mentioned: eco-socialism. Many Green Party activists throughout Europe started off in this European movement which also shares

common features with the political agenda of our colleagues in the US. Some of these are gender relations, the role of women, and the struggle against racism. Although this last issue takes on a different expression than in the US, we still deal with the topics of xenophobia, and chauvinism and the need to integrate emigrants into our communities and into national political life.

I would now like to put things into more perspective by recalling the German experience. As I said before, I think it conceptually acts as a kind of bridge between the US and European environmentalism. It is also useful to compare the Portuguese experience with the German.

One of the major points I am trying to convey is that the strength of the Greens in Germany is determined by the fact that it is supported by a social movement. The political success of the Green Party in Germany cannot be separated from the social basis that supports it. The Party is just a small part, the tip of the iceberg. More than two million people organized into citizens' initiatives after the end of the 1970s, when the Green Party was created. Still today, 1980 and 1990, there are four million people in Germany who belong to several types of NGOs. Yet, only forty thousand people belong to the Green Party, which only has a group of forty representatives in the Parliament.

However, if you examine the set of values and the history of German environmentalism, you can see that many of the values that the social movement espouses and promotes transcend that social movement. They are values that are held by large sectors of German society and prevail in every corner of German life. It is expressed in the daily life of the citizens who carefully separate their domestic waste for recycling and reutilization. It is also expressed in their capacity to link environmental politics with economics. The fact that they are the most assiduous champions of their own values is very important. The experience of the Green Party in Germany is also very positive because its members truly live by the standards they publicly espouse. They live by the principles they defend. I have a German friend who is member of the Parliament. One day he wrote me saying that even though he was doing a good job, it was time for him to be replaced because there had to be more

women in the Parliament. This shows how seriously they take the need for there to be a greater gender balance in policy-making and politics.

To conclude, I think that in Portugal there is a kind of non-symmetry. I cannot find a better word. By this I mean a lack of symmetry between the political influence of the NGOs and their reality in terms of social support. We are still very far behind when it comes to the support of civil society. In terms of numbers, only two people in a thousand in Portugal are in some way affiliated with environmental NGOs. In the Netherlands, for instance, for each thousand citizens there are 190 who belong to a regional, national, or international NGO. So the public support that our NGOs have is weak in comparison with the capacity they have to influence the political agenda, both at the municipal level and the national level. This is not a sustainable situation.

Therefore, I would like to conclude my presentation with some remarks about the future. I think that good things have been done and achieved in the last two years, even the last decade, by NGOs in Portugal in terms of environmental policy. We have joined forces with people coming from different areas, which is the coalition building capacity Denny spoke about this morning. Admittedly, there has been a kind of natural selection within the social environmental movement, so the number of groups has been dramatically reduced. But that meant that personal resources have been released to work toward intervention that is more organized.

In addition, universities, researchers, and members of the scientific community came forward and joined the fight. Many of the current leaders of these organizations come from universities. We are speaking about university people who were able to assume their rights and duties as citizens without fear of reprisals. This is why I would like to stress that the biggest danger in the future for the Portuguese social environmental movement will come if we do not start getting stronger social support. I think every effort must be made to increase membership in these associations and organizations.

We also have to strengthen the capacity of these organizations to provide good services. I mean being able not only to criticize, but also to propose a different course; not only to say what is wrong, but also to say how we can do it better. This probably

means there has to be a selection process – in the metaphoric sense –, if we want to move ahead.

In Portugal we have strengthened our capacity for intervention at the national and international level. Now, if we are able to build a cohesive center with enough attracting force, we will be able to give our input to local organizations. Hopefully then, those organizations that are good will not remain as fragmented atoms, but part of a stronger, more effective network of organizations.

I think there is a major difference between the situation in Portugal and the US. We are a country in which the regional level of politics is very near the national level, due the size of our country and to the size of the population. Therefore, you may understand that indeed we are a country not prone to federalism. It is not a negative feature it is just a consequence of how we are. We are not against federalism in the European political arena, but we are not Belgians, we are not Italians. We do not need federalism, we need more democracy. I think we can learn from the way federalism – namely in America and Germany – has been wonderfully instrumental in maintaining unity in these two countries. Next, we have to provide for better democracy, and listen to the general arena where the public voices are heard and the voices in the new arena of environmental citizen intervention. Thank you very much for your attention.

Debate

Audience Participant 1

You said that the organized environmentalist movement was initiated in Portugal very late, in 1948. My idea is that it was also initiated very late in the other countries of Southern Europe. Is this true? And if it is, do you have any idea why? Because I think that understanding why it began late and why the movement is still weak today, will help us to strengthen the movement.

Audience Participant 2

I would like to comment on the fact that we do not have a tradition of having common property. I would like to say that I disagree. I want to know if that was a result of political evolution, because I still remember that in the north of the country property was communally held and there was common management of pastures, forests and the commons; but that all ended because the political system destroyed it. I would also like you to comment on the discoveries and the fact that we destroyed all the scientific capacity of the Renaissance and the influence that it had on the way we face life, and the way we teach, which is overly scholastic and far-removed from the practical realities of life. This influences everything because we talk a lot but accomplish nothing. That is why all the NGOs have the problems we all know about. We talk a lot, but accomplishments such as the one we saw here today, cleaning and improving town streams, is something that we have no examples of in Portugal. There are examples of activities, of ideas, but there are few real accomplishments. Why is it so hard for populations to get involved? I would like you to comment on this, because it appears to be the same in Italy, Spain, and Greece.

Audience Participant 3

You said there was no chance of there being nuclear energy in Portugal. But during the mandate of Marcelo Caetano, specialists from several universities (such as *Instituto Superior Técnico*) started dealing with nuclear issues. Some went to Sacavém, to *Instituto Tecnológico e Nuclear*³, others went into immunology in the hospitals. So, there are a number of specialists who participated in association

³ Nuclear and Technologic Institute – N. Ed.

movements who, right after the 25th of April, got together. It is funny, but some of these specialists joined anti-nuclear movements. They were part of several universities. Some had a background in Medicine, some studied engineering, others studied mechanics, etc. Contrary to what the Professor Viriato said, I think there were alternatives. There were even different positions, even from the economic point of view. With regard to Medicine, already at that time, there were some biologists, who we contracted outside the country, who demonstrated the carcinogenic aspects of pollution and made it clear to the movement that there were impacts on human health. What is interesting is that, after all this time, with these movements centered around co-incineration, the elites do not show up. I mean the scientific elites. They are divided. I think this has to do with something that was said this morning. It is because of problems that society has posed, interdisciplinary problems that require coordination among several fields, because one field by itself cannot answer any of today's major problems. So, I would like to ask you how to confront this issue. All of this has repercussions on NGOs, professionals, and society. As an example, I am surprised that the scientific commission on co-incineration has just appeared. If it does not reflect inter-disciplinarity, how can it respond to problems that arise? And how do you view the fact that in universities there are no interdisciplinary institutes?

Viriato Soromenho-Marques

The last two questions are related. Allow me to give you more information. I could not do so before because I was short on time. In the case of Portugal, we have a very straightforward chronology, which begins in 1948 with the LPN. However, we cannot say that environmental concerns started in that year, happily no. LPN, I think in the 1950s, published a talk by Professor Bonifácio da Silva, an intellectual figure in Portugal and Brazil. It was a conference he had given at the Royal Academy of Sciences in 1815, part of which I published in a recent book. In the speech, he clearly presented the issues of sustainability in terms of territorial land use. That was in 1815! It is a great text, of the stature of some of the texts by John Muir, and other American and European authors of later years. The text aims to point out the importance that economic development of the territory has in creating sustainability.

I began by saying that there is only a social environmental movement if there is an echo, a social porosity of the environmental ideas in our culture, in our literature. Yet

our environmental concerns go back to before 1948, and they do not coincide with its reappearance after the 25th of April. Two examples: the book “*Guia de Portugal*”⁴ by Raul Brandão in 1924 is full of environmental policy suggestions. For example, he recommends that motor trawlers should be up to 3 kms from the coast, otherwise they are apt to disturb the balance of the shoals, meaning that ultimately the shoals would be decimated. Or, for example, in 1958, 40 years had already passed, when Aquilino Ribeiro wrote the book “*Quando os Lobos Uivam*”⁵, in which he talks about the shifting of the commons from the mountain vegetation to a forestry monoculture, which I think was a problem. It might have been my English but, as far as commons go, I never said that we did not have them here.

We still have commons, evidently, but they are coming to an end. Let me remind you of a European country where the end of the commons was more dramatic and costly in terms of human resources, and that was England. The end of the commons in England and the advent of what was known as the enclosure system ended the commons. It took 150 years and it made the industrial revolution possible. It was a process of authentic genocide. Millions of people who lived in the fields and who lived on the common land of the town were driven away, assuring the human basis for the industrial period of the 18th and 19th centuries. But the enclosure system began 100 years before industrialization. And over those 100 years, the figure of the beggar emerged in England. Suddenly England, a country where for centuries there had been no desperate poverty, found itself confronted with beggars, poor people who had been peasants driven from the commons where they worked and lived without bothering anyone.

What are the characteristics or aspects of southern countries that can explain why they are less inclined to organize within civil society in terms of the environment? I think that there are two main features. Yet I always try to resist generalizations when they are too broad or overwhelming. Maybe the first feature, which is more positive and easier to understand, is the fact that the modern environmental crisis is linked to industrialization. Even if we consider that there were already serious environmental

⁴ “*Guidebook of Portugal*” – N. Ed.

⁵ “*When the Wolves Howl*” – N. Ed.

problems in 1815 when Bonifácio Silva made his point about agriculture. Agriculture is another way to damage the ecosystem; it can be rather serious, even without the pesticides. It was necessary to wait for the modern industrial revolution, which was also an agricultural revolution, as we know. It was also a green revolution, since industry is not exclusively associated with factories on the outskirts of towns. It also has to do with the way we occupy land for agriculture, the way we harvest, the way we provoke the earth from an industrial point of view.

Yet it was necessary to wait, for an answer to emerge. For example, why did the first association to combat pollution appear in Great Britain in 1843? Because it was in England where there was an industrial activity generating pollution. Why did the first associations to create protected areas of great importance and size appear in the US? Because it was in 1891 that the Congress gave enough powers to the President to the design and implementation of the National Forestry Act. I do not think that the US Congress will ever give powers to the President similar to those again. It was because the Americans had lived through the experience of how you can destroy an ecosystem in twenty years, beginning in the plains, which were completely occupied by the settlers, up to the destruction of the Redwood and Sequoia forests in California. We scratch where it itches. So, Portugal is a country that was industrialized in the 20th century; we really began industrializing in the 1950s. We also started our unregulated industrialization process very recently. So we are looking at new answers to fairly new problems. This is one of the aspects.

Yet there is another deeper aspect, a structural aspect that comes from a historical model. It is the issue of Roman law. Portugal is a culture of Roman law, as are Italy and France. The importance of Roman law is fundamental. In fact, Roman law is a notable law. The Romans built a civilization that we are now very far away from, but one that was highly centralized. It was a law that put the citizen in a relationship of expectation with regard to the central state. The Roman Empire was sustained by the enormous prestige of its central power. What people wanted to be in the year 200 or 300 BC were citizens of the Roman Empire. We have the idea that the Empire was held together because there were many legions. It is a lie! The Empire was held together because it was the sun on earth at that time. And what a person in Lusitania or Gallia wanted was to live and die with the status of citizen of Rome. It was not

because of the military powers embodied in the legions. All this puts communities in a position of expectation with regard to the central state.

The US is a society that was built from the inside. The colonization of the US by Great Britain was a half-hearted colonization. While the Portuguese and Spanish colonization was done by the state, the settlers who went to America did so at their own expense and risk. They had a letter from the king allowing them to settle there, but essentially they went at their own expense and risk. They arrived, they organized themselves, they wrote their own constitution; and as long as they presented the accounting work, and as long as they were not an expense for London, they were given as much independence as possible. Things only began changing after the Seven Years War. Until then America lived with a great deal of autonomy. It is a bit of the same thing with German tradition, the tradition of Central Europe, where there were people who were not influenced by the Roman Empire, places where there was a certain need for self-organization. I think that this has a lot to do with why our societies are less inclined to self-organize. It has to do with these deep-rooted historical reasons. But I do not think that this is our fate forever. We have all the psychological, political, and economic means to increase our capacity for self-organization. Now what we need to do is choose priorities.

Evidently, the debate on regionalization that took place a few months ago was the totally wrong type of debate. It was a debate to reinforce the mechanisms of centralism, creating one more level above the municipality. It would have made the decision-making process even more difficult. What we specifically need in Portugal is political measures, namely a reform in our electoral system, which would allow for, and compensate, citizen self-organization. An electoral system that would allow citizens to appeal to local powers more often, a system that would allow for the participation of groups of citizens in the life and elections of the municipalities. This would make a significant difference, but the political parties do not want to lose the space they have carved out and occupy with such a lack of generosity.

In relation to the issue of the nuclear energy, I can only make one comment. I agree totally with you when you say that there is a certain lack of political courage among the intellectual elites. It is true. Suffice it to say that the only university person who

stood up against nuclear energy (and there is historical proof of this) was Professor Delgado Domingues; maybe because he was already a full professor at the time. He had just arrived from the US, he was 29, and a full professor; he probably did not have anything to lose, and he is a fearless man, as everyone knows – and he had courage. Although I was very young, I remember the flyers from the *Movimento Ecológico Português*⁶ that showed a list of organizations, and at the end of the list there was Professor Delgado Domingues' name. He himself was an institution. He was the poster person. He had enough scientific credibility to show that it was not only long-haired, disheveled ecologists who were against nuclear energy. In terms of historical evidence for posterity, in terms of public expression, there was no one else from the universities to come forward individually. We can count on the fingers of one hand the members of the scientific community who made their feelings known.

I am going to give you an example. There were two meetings on energy policy in November of 1975. There was another one in 1976. In those meetings, once more Delgado Domingues, standing apart from the scientific community, stated the slogan “*Nuclear: Não Obrigado!*”⁷. There was an ongoing debate on whether nuclear power plants built in France, the US, or the Soviet Union were better; it was a huge debate within the nuclear sector. However, the big nuclear protest was generated by an interview given by Professor Torres Campos in the *Diário de Notícias* newspaper on November 13, 1974. He gave an interview stating clearly that Portugal was going to be turned into a nuclear country; he said it had to be that way. Oil was too expensive, the Middle East was not to be trusted, the Arabs were using crude oil as a political weapon against Israel, and Portugal had supported Israel in the Yom Kippur War, making the base in Lages (Azores Islands) available to the Americans. Therefore it was fate. And this was the situation!

I still remember, as a leader of *Setúbal Verde*, talking twice with Veiga Simão, who at the time was minister of industry and who, in 1984, still was in favor of nuclear power! In 1984 mind you! The 1982 version of the National Energy Plan, which was implemented in 1984, still leaves the door open. The *Setúbal Verde* met with him

⁶ The Portuguese Ecological Movement – N. Ed.

⁷ “*Nuclear Energy: No Thanks!*” – N. Ed.

twice at that time and he still maintained the same position, though with less vigor, because he is very intelligent and he knew that the situation was almost lost. And probably, if there had not been a natural gas project, we would have started talking about nuclear energy all over again. Therefore, I can only effectively agree with you and add the aspects that I have mentioned, just to let you know that there are people at the universities who have started to promote interdisciplinary action.

Audience Participant 4

Multidisciplinary issues are usually developed in relation to research. Research connected to the environment is long-range multidisciplinary research, with a holistic view, and this is impossible with the research system we have in Portugal, or in Europe. We have a system based on a project of three years, with funding for three years, usually connected with a Ph.D. The only place where this type of research existed was in the state institutes, under the ministries, which responded to specific questions. These state institutes are now closing. These state institutes had a complementary function and some university projects were kept up as long-range, multidisciplinary projects. This made it possible to do extensive research for the universities when the universities and institutions began competing for the same funding, for the same type of career. Since the competition was perfectly matched, the university institutions did not die. So, what is happening then? If the research system is maintained as it is, the state institutes, such as INIA⁸ (where I worked for 38 years), LNEC⁹, INETI¹⁰, and many others, will die, and there will be no long-term multidisciplinary research, because at this time, universities are not able to carry out this kind of research. It is not the fault of the university, but of Europe's scientific policy, which is even more serious.

Audience Participant 5

I would like to make a comment, which is at the same time a question. Our scientific context and our universities need to be challenged. We need to require our universities to wean away from the state. Because as long as they depend on the

⁸ National Institute of Agrarian Research – N. Ed.

⁹ National Laboratory of Civil Engineering – N. Ed.

¹⁰ National Laboratory of Industrial Engineering and Technology – N. Ed.

economic and political powers, they are not worth more than the politicians and the political powers involved in the universities. It requires making them independent and responsible for the work they do. At this level I will make a parallel to the case of the NGOs, which is particularly felt by me in the Azores where institutional powers lump the NGOs into two classes: the “educational” NGOs and the “demanding” NGOs. The demanding NGOs exist because we have a democracy. The educational ones are those that do what the government should do. Therefore, they act as substitutes of the government in providing environmental education. They substitute for the municipalities when they deal with and socialize with the Scouts when they clean up the roadside or a stream.

Audience Participant 6

I would like very much like to hear Viriato’s opinion on the independence of universities and faculty members. Also as faculty, I do not think that generally, in Portugal, faculty members lack independence. The problem is not the lack of independence. There are other reasons why faculty members have such limited participation. First, is the fact that today, faculty are working in an extremely competitive professional system that requires them to become more involved in their research work in a very selfish way. Secondly, it goes along with the Portuguese tradition of non-participation in society. Now, I definitely think that it is the role of society to require universities to participate, and the faculty to make themselves heard in areas in which they are specialists; because the universities are kept up by society. They are kept up to guarantee that a great number of specialists are independently specialized and can be called on to help society when it needs them. Yet the universities are not doing so today.

Viriato Soromenho-Marques

I think that I am going to answer the three questions as items. They are all pertinent, extremely exciting issues, and I have learned a lot from all of them.

Let us start with the issue of responsibility in the universities, which is actually the central topic. I think it is very important to clarify the idea that we sometimes have that if we have a fragmented vision of the world, it is only because of our public, political vision, which divides reality into ministries and national directorates. We, the scientific community, also divide reality into sciences, into scientific subsystems, and

into scientific departments, into heads of projects who apply for the same scarce resources. We know what we are talking about. That is why nobody in the academic world should throw stones at the political world saying, “That minister is incapable of creating an interministerial policy.” Because often the minister, who is also a university professor, can turn back to you and say, “Can you have an epistemological and holistic vision of the reality you are studying?” We cannot have that, either. This is my first point.

With this, I am not at all disagreeing with what was said. I think there is something our universities can still be proud of. It is somewhat in the line of what was said more than sixty years ago: despite everything, the faculty still have the notion that their profession is a calling. It is not only a way to earn money. The Americans and English use the word “*calling*” and the Germans say “*beruf*”, which does not only mean a profession, but more of a choice. I think that the academic world is probably one of the areas in the whole world where there is less corruption. It is one of the places where it is easiest to find people with a heightened notion of what professional ethics is. I am not saying it is everybody. I am saying that ethical potential is strong; and it is something we should be proud of and build on.

However, the issue is that, as professionals, we evidently have to respond to the demands of our careers. We have a career in front of us, which is organized according to our capacity for production. And everything from departments down to funding are structured so that everyone has to choose a tiny niche he or she can fit into. In a country like ours, there are very few big economic groups and the ones that do exist do not have a long-range strategic view. Since internationalization is very widespread, state scientific research institutes should still be able to promote interdisciplinary projects and policies.

I am going to give you an example. Our scientific community has come out with some seminal works. And I am thinking specifically about someone I have a great deal of admiration for, a person I talk to about water policy, and that is Professor Veiga da Cunha. Professor Veiga da Cunha (and Professor Mário Lino) wrote a book about water policy in English, in the 1970s, which the Gulbenkian Foundation has translated into Portuguese. Today, after twenty years, the work is still a key reference

in international literature. However, I think that without LNEC it would have been impossible. It could not have been done in a university. In this, I totally agree with what was said: that the state has to be able to create the conditions for interdepartmental and interdisciplinary cooperation. Universities can also try but it is more difficult because, in the end, it is something that has to be done among peers. There are power issues and territory issues, in the ecological sense of the word. So, the state can manage things a bit so that people can work together without personality clashes.

But there is another important issue: what is happening in Germany at this moment, and I think that we are underestimating what is happening. Let us hope there is no governmental crisis or we will have reason to regret having underestimated it. Two days ago, I was with officials from the German environment ministry, people connected to the CDU, and people from the SPD, who are following this with more enthusiasm than myself. There are a set of measures that are being thought about, which have not come out in the media, and which are fundamental. The debate is not only to end waste treatment, or getting out of nuclear energy within the next 50 years. What is also at stake is changing scientific research policy on energy in Germany and the rest of Europe. This is crucial!

Germany has not built a nuclear power plant since Chernobyl, and the US has not built one since Three Mile Island. However, every year, billions of marks are spent by the Germans on nuclear research, which is not going to be useful for anything, just because the system is already locked into place. On the other hand, the amount spent on solar energy, biomass, tide energy and other types of energy is next to nothing. Therefore, the minister is trying to get the German government to launch a very daring policy, which also includes changing scientific research programs in the area of energy. This policy may well be felt not only by Germany but by the rest of Europe. This is so big that frankly, I am having a hard time dampening my optimism with my customary intellectual pessimism. I think that it would be much easier to get rid of the current German government than to carry out this policy. That is why it is important for everybody outside Germany to try and put on a little pressure for this to move forward.

Evidently, throughout our lives, we have to be both politicians and scientists. As citizens, we have a political role to carry out. Sometimes we can even be politicians in the sense that we have to assume responsibilities as NGOs leaders or heads of a department involved in state policy. Nobody can say, “That will never happen to me.” Yet we cannot mix things. This aspect is very important.

This leads me to another very important mistake that I think we are committing here, namely with the issue of co-incineration. Until now, nobody has raised his or her voice. Maybe it is because there is so much noise being made about it already that it might just be time to shut up for a while and let the dust settle. What I heard from responsible people about the role of the advisory commission is unacceptable from all points of view. The role of an advisory commission is to come out with advice based on relevant scientific information. The role of an advisory commission is not to come to decisions. We vote for a government. We vote for representatives who will decide. We do not elect faculty, and that is good. Faculty members get chosen on the basis of academic merit.

But what I have heard from ranking politicians is that the advisory commission is going to study the case and decide. This is a serious issue. The commission is going to work toward the decision making process; it is going to supply elements that will allow a government decision to be made. Let nobody succumb to the temptation of saying afterwards, “Well, the commission decided!” We are creating victims in the academic world, because this does not make any sense. The role of science is not to decide. The role of science is to aid in well-based decisions. That is, unless we consider science to be a continuation of history, or a brave new word with the scientists as its prophets. We are all very well aware of our frailties and we have to understand that science is a fragile human construction. Shakespeare said that the gods are powerless to do anything about the shadow of human stupidity. Let us hope that at least the terrible shadow of human stupidity will be as diminished as possible. But we cannot assume the role of gods.

Audience Participant 7

I would like Viriato to clarify a detail that I did not understand. In the last part you referred to a central nucleus inside the movement. What will you suggest as a good

solution, a strong, central aggregate nucleus? I think that was the idea, one that aggregates the spurious movements throughout the country. I do not think I agree with this idea but I would like you to clarify what you meant to say.

Audience Participant 8

A remark and a question. The remark is about academic careers. The success of a faculty member is measured by the number of articles that he or she publishes in referee periodicals, and by the number of times that he or she is mentioned in the Science Citation Index, which requires as you say, having a niche. I usually tell my students that the tendency of the researcher is to know everything about nothing. This is the only solution. I am not against the existence of this type of researcher. But what I am against is the existence of this type of researcher only. What we need are people who know nothing about everything. These are the ones that can integrate knowledge, because integration is the cornerstone of Ecology, as a science. It is increasingly necessary to integrate global comprehension of phenomena, which should be part of long-range research work, which has to be in a different institution with a different career. People who are going to have a career like this, do not publish because they are not able to compete with others. These people will only act as collaborators, their names will never come first in referee periodicals, unless they have a lot of luck. Those people are stuck. This is the result when competition is created instead of cooperation. The same issue of cooperation should also be applied to NGOs. There is a need for someone to be able to combine efforts in the environmental movement. It is essential that there be a capacity to work together. Cooperation is fundamental. If we want to give legal power to small local associations someone has to give them support, someone who has the know-how and the staff. So an overall structure should exist, but not operating as a national NGO, because biodiversity is one of the main ways systems resist external attacks. And the environmental movement has to be diverse. This diversity, this complementarity, and this cooperation among different types of organizations is fundamental.

Audience Participant 9

In the same vein, I would like to take this opportunity to challenge and make a suggestion to the environmental organizations with regard to their expanding into other types of organizations. I envy the fact that the “Greens” have really diversified a

lot their sphere of action a lot. This probably because, they have cooperated with a number of associations some of which they have even asked for support. Unfortunately, here in Portugal, (probably due to the need to affirm one's autonomy), organizations are completely separate. There has been more and more talk about sustainable consumption, but it has not been put into its proper context and few people know exactly what it means. When I say this I am taking the side of the consumer, whom I think is in need of environmental education. For this, in Portugal, we need the support of the environmental organizations. The same goes for development organizations where interesting and dynamic bridges should be built. Therefore, I would suggest a forum, even though I am not sure that a forum would be the ideal solution. Maybe we should start with small things and small situations, so that we can create synergies and harmonize interests to go forward in the area of sustainable use, consumption, and development.

Audience Participant 10

This is just a remark. We talk and talk about environmental organizations and we never focus on the issue of what the urban environment is now and used to be. As an urban designer, I think there is a big gap, here. With regard to the role of the elite, I am currently doing a study on Lisbon. I have ascertained that, aside from the commission of residents that emerged after the 25th of April to demand basic conditions, currently the movements are evidently where there is a middle class and where there is an elite. We are talking about areas such as *Lapa*, *Telheiras*, *Av. EUA* and now *Arco do Cego*. This seems rather significant. The first urban movements started by demanding water and better housing conditions and now I think the elites are more concerned about a new set of issues, such as traffic. But they feel cut off and as if they do not have much guidance especially from the main environmental associations. The urban environment is an issue that has not been touched and when it has, the main environmental NGOs show little concern, as if the problems did not concern the general public. However, these urban movements have to learn a whole new way to participate. There is always a public inquiry when an urban plan is being developed. Yet, residents rarely present alternatives. There are no proposals from residents saying, "this solution is not adequate, I want another one". So they make demands but an alternate proposal is not offered. I think that this is connected to everything we have already talked about regarding policy. It also has to do with the

bourgeoisie, who have never learned to demand and propose. However, it is also because environmentalists who look at the larger issues do not get down into the urban fabric to look at the micro issues.

Audience Participant 11

I would like to remark on two or three things. One remark concerns Ribeiro Telles. As Professor Viriato said, he was a pioneer in several things. And he was also a pioneer in creating the first interdisciplinary teams in environmental studies. The under-secretary of state for the environment created the Environmental Studies Department in 1974. That department was very interesting but it ended precisely the day before we entered the European Economic Community, because it was too revolutionary and could have kept Portugal from getting EEC investment. The Government was really afraid that the department, with its interdisciplinary teams, would stand in the way of some developmental projects. As far as I am concerned, the fact that they never substituted it was a crucial mistake. At the end of the 1980s, there was a chance of having an environmental institute, since the work developed at LNEC or at INETI, or even at other specialized institutes such as the ISQ¹¹, does not approach environmental issues from different perspectives. Here, I want to congratulate our hosts, for organizing this forum, which highlights various points of view with regard to environmental issues. I would also like to congratulate the *Palácio da Fronteira*, which has become a place where different points of view are put on the table.

Audience Participant 12

It is common knowledge that there is a Portuguese Confederation of Environmental Associations, known as CPADA, presently under the executive presidency of Geota. It comprises close to 70 national, regional, and local NGOs, with a wide range of interests, from all over the country. These NGOs work on issues related to urbanism, cultural heritage, land use, conservation, hunting, and several other things. By the way, this is just to address the previous remark about urban intervention. Geota, for example, took part in two discussions on the new law on land use and urbanism, promoted by AdUrbem at the end of last year. In Portugal, NGOs have intervened in the area of urbanism. For example, AdUrbem has dealt with legal issues. Geota has a

¹¹ Institute of Soldering and Quality – N. Ed.

legal group that has already handled a hundred or so urban and environmental cases – some of which ended up in the courts. So, NGOs do have resources and tools that can be used even by the common citizen. However, there is a need for cooperation and coordination among the different environmental NGOs. But, what is more true, is that there is a need to create platforms to handle specific issues and projects, such as the Alcochete shooting range, the case of the nuclear power plant, and the new bridge over the Tagus River. These platforms have been formed and function fairly well, but there are other issues that demonstrate that civil society has some capacity to get organized. We have talked about urban tools, municipal master plans, and detail plans. It is true that the right to information is guaranteed in legislation. However, the right of citizens to understand that information, when their lives are going to be conditioned by those plans over several decades, is not protected and guaranteed. Because it is not possible for the state, the municipalities, the specialists in those municipalities, and the firms which produce the environmental impact studies, the detailed studies, the municipal master plans, and the land use plans, to explain them to the populations. Nor can they make what they want clear to populations in terms of development perspectives, so that those populations can form opinions and make accurate decisions. It is evident that the role of explaining to the people is not only the responsibility of the NGOs; it is also of the responsibility of the entities in charge of the development projects. What the NGOs need to do is require that these entities, use appropriate tools and technical resources to transmit the information in an understandable way, so that the informed people can intervene; so that they can participate, and move forward toward the ultimate target which is participatory democracy.

Audience Participant 13

I would like to make a very brief observation. The ecological activist is not responsible for finding solutions. But the ecologist is responsible for seeing to it that the authorities and the universities accept us as partners. Therefore, the role of the NGOs is, among other things, to try to become leaders in a revolution of mentalities, so that we do not lose our independence just because we work with the Government, with universities, with consumer defense associations. This is the only way we will be able to work with society across the board.

Audience Participant 14

At the moment, there is an association that includes close to 40 citizen groups. It includes Geota, Quercus, LPN and CPADA and is aimed at fighting that environmental crime known as the Municipal Master Plan of Sintra. We have been able to join together *ad hoc* social groups, even school associations, local associations, and national associations, and we are prepared to pursue this to the bitter end. We have organized a dossier with photos that illustrates the long-range serious impacts this will have on neighboring municipalities. This is only to give you some background.

Audience Participant 15

Good afternoon. I am a Boy Scout leader and I can safely say that, since the beginning of its foundation in 1907, the Scouts have been an environmental movement in the sense that they promote environmental education in global terms. Since the beginning, they have clearly been concerned with nature protection and environmental defense, recognizing nature, as older statements have affirmed, as one of God's creations. Our activities have been developed pacifically over several generations with this viewpoint in mind. We are not agents of environmental defense in terms of demonstrations, though demonstrations are often needed. Our action is subtler on a day-to-day basis, and we try to educate our Scouts to become positive agents for change in society. But my main comment today has to do with trends. At this moment in Portugal, there has been an attempt to regulate and classify environmental organizations according to the law that was approved in the Assembly of the Republic in the middle of last year. There is a threat that this regulation will generate fragmentation or oversimplification of the environmental movement in the sense that a lot of organizations, which until this moment have been recognized as agents for the defense of the environment, are in risk of not even being considered NGOs or anything vaguely similar. For me this is serious and I would like to hear any remarks you have about this.

Viriato Soromenho-Marques

My remarks will be rather brief because we are already over time. First, I would like to clarify what I really intended to convey when I said that it was important to be able to expand national and international components in Portugal. In my mind it would be

unthinkable to end the “biodiversity” by creating top-heavy bureaucratic superstructures that would eliminate all the different colorings, all the different tones that are the beauty of the movement. What I meant was this: in the last few years, organizations have been able to go from a phase when they effectively did not talk or cooperate with each other, to a more “federalist” phase in which associations united around specific projects. In other words, there has been a certain tendency to “federate” around specific projects. It has even been possible to include associations that did not have the environment as their core objective. There have been initiatives, in the area of the urban environment too, dealing with the quality of drinking water, an issue of enormous consequences in terms of urban policy. Here it was necessary for environmentalists to join up with the consumer defense association – Deco; this was a 1993 joint action carried out by Quercus and Deco. There is the example of where environmentalists have joined up with defenders of policies to support the development of the Third World. I am thinking for example of the platform of the Portuguese NGOs which was presented in the Rio de Janeiro 1992 Summit. It included the CIDAC, the *Amilcar Cabral Information and Documentation Center*, a NGO that for a long time has been doing an excellent job of cooperating with what is called the Third World, mainly former Portuguese colonies. They also signed our document and were present in Rio, which shows that a certain maturity already exists. People have been at it long enough to realize that they only stand to gain in specific objectives by creating synergies.

However, it seems to me that the time has come to go a little bit further and to think about more challenging ways of sharing resources and information. In the end, this has to do with the issue of support, the social basis of support, the issue of funding associations, the issue of volunteers. Because I think that we need to have a bit of everything in the associations. We have to have people such as myself, Prof. Eugenio Sequeira, and so many others who have spoken here today like Jorge Palmeirim, people who are, in fact, university faculty by option and vocation. We do not want to be anything else, at least Jorge never told me that he wanted to be an association leader by profession, but we also need to have paid professionals in the associations. That will only be possible if there are more people registered in the associations.

In the US, foundations are a great tradition. They are made up of people who understand that their own personal fortunes and buying BMWs are important; but living in people's memories is also important; as is donating, so that this industry or that steel company is known for its contributions to the fields of culture, music and art. There are instruments, namely in the area of corporate sponsorship, that can be developed to widen this field in Portugal. But as I told you, none of this involves putting at stake or restraining creative capacities or aiming to create control mechanisms. This, however, is connected to the law, and I must admit that I have just glanced at the revised law that was approved.

I agree with what you said about the Scouts, I have the greatest respect for the Scouts. Even though I never joined, I belonged to a mountain climbing club for a long time. But a lot of my friends are Scouts and Scout activities in many ways unite the best 19th century traditions of respect for nature with religious belief; though evidently, there is also the aesthetic dimension – not only the theological dimension or the ethical dimension. Nature should be respected because it is beautiful, and beautiful things should be preserved. But, I think that there is a great difference between Quercus and the Scout movement or between the Scouts and Geota. How this can legally be expressed, is a case that should be discussed in a forum more appropriate than this one. However, if there were ever any legislation aimed at keeping the Scout movement from cooperating with other organizations with common objectives, I would obviously be against it. I do not think that the new law takes that direction. I believe it is aimed at conceptual clarification.

The urban environment is also a central point. I mentioned that one of the things that characterizes our movement in Portugal is that it is predominantly urban, and that it is connected to some urban elites. However, we should not think that the environment is only defended by the urban elites. Everyone knows that throughout the world there are lots of ways to organize environmental movements. The ones present at the Rio Summit were reminiscent of a folk festival – in the best of senses – with Amazon Indians, alternative food devotees, vegetarians, *etc.*

In the end, we are facing a set of causes and fights, which can and should be developed in our country. I think that our country still has a lot to develop, in

environmental terms, namely in the rural areas. All these years we have been wasting a lot of money in trying to meld farming policy with environmental policy. Unfortunately, our farmers' associations have still not realized that it is possible to take advantage of our biodiversity potential to create other types of farming policies with partners from Northern Europe where the two areas – farming and the environment – can be coordinated and get more positive results.

Finally, there is the issue of academic careers. Truly, the university should be able to respond to various demands. It should be possible to produce several types of services. I do not believe that interdisciplinary initiatives have to be achieved at the expense of people not doing research, or at the expense of halting research in some specialties. A lot of scientists and researchers have to continue to explore specific areas. But that is not the problem. The biggest problem, after mixing this with that, in terms of consistent, transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary projects, is to understand – in the domain of each atom and cell – what is being discovered; and then if we can restore holistic unity.

There are usually long-range research projects, the so-called projects of strategic planning, developed by the State or the large firms. The big projects that I know of, using strategic orientation in scientific terms, up to the 1940s and the 1950s, all dealt with defense. If you want to know about interdisciplinary policy until the 1950s, you have to study a bit of military history. Environmental policy is going to be the big interdepartmental policy of the 21th century, as defense policy was the big interdisciplinary policy during this century that is ending now. Environmental projects are going to be those in which companies or countries, aiming at strategic development, bring together different researchers to create interdisciplinarity, joining people who know everything about nothing or a little about everything.

