

XI ECOECO

VII Congreso Iberoamericano Desarrollo y Ambiente

XI ENCONTRO NACIONAL DA ECOECO
Araraquara-SP - Brasil

APPROACHING ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS FROM THE EJATLAS PERSPECTIVE: THE CASE OF PORTUGAL'S POST-DICTATORSHIP CONTEXT

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Environmental conflicts in Portugal in the past five decades: EJAtlas conception

Expanded abstract

Our proposal is to present the methodology and results of the selection and preparation of the Portuguese environmental conflicts of EJAtlas (<https://ejatlas.org/>). The atlas is a product of EJOLT project - Environmental Justice Organisations, Liabilities and Trade - an FP7 project supported by the European Commission that runs from 2011 to 2015), that has the objective of bring science and society together to catalogue and analyze ecological distribution conflicts, confront environmental injustice and resistance. The project supports the work of Environmental Justice Organisations, uniting scientists, activist organisations, think-tanks, policy-makers from the fields of environmental law, environmental health, political ecology, ecological economics, to talk about issues related to ecological distribution. EJAtlas reflect reports nowadays more than 1400 conflicts in more than 150 countries.

EJAtlas Portugal conception was a product of an international cooperation between Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal; Research Centre in Economic and Organizational Sociology, University of Lisbon; and Center for Mineral Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Brazil.

Even though early cases of environmental conflict have been recorded in Portugal since the 1930s, our starting point for this study has been the end of Salazar's dictatorship (25 April 1974), when rapid social change (agrarian reform and mass out-migrations) and new developmental policies (i.e. intensive urbanization along the coast, the extension of road and energy infrastructures) were implemented for the 'modernization' of the country, especially after its integration in the European Union (1986).

For the selection of the Portuguese cases of EJAtlas Portugal, a consultation collected advice from several 'experts' (especially activists and academics) on environmental conflicts in Portugal between August and October 2014. After analysis and systematization of all information, a list of almost 130 conflicts was compiled, distributed across different areas: waste, industry, mining, agriculture, energy, mega projects, public administration and territory management, and 25 cases of environmental conflicts of greater intensity and relevance were selected to be appreciated by a pool of Portuguese activists, academics, public servants, technicians, journalists,

parliamentarians and politicians, asking them to choose the 15 cases that they reputed more relevant in October 2014.

We organized 16 cases in the EJAtlas Portugal that can be viewed in <https://ejatlas.org/country/portugal>. The cases are: A2 Motorway; Abandoned uranium mines; Alviela river pollution by tanning industry and other activities; Anti-GMO Struggle; Asbestos removal from the built environment; Co-incineration in Cimpor and Secil cement kilns; Eucalyptus monoculture and common lands; Foz Côa dam at Guarda; High voltage electricity transmission lines; Kaolin mining by Mibal company, Braga; Movement against the location of the Vasco da Gama bridge in Lisbon; Multiple landfill sites; Multiple struggles against new large dams; Nuclear power station in Ferrel, Peniche; Nuclear waste storage near the Spanish frontier; Pollution from hog farming in Leiria. Some of the cases are multiple conflicts, country-wide conflicts, considering that the central claims of the resistance movements are the same, as multiple struggles against new large dams that the central claim is the disagreement about the National Dams Plan policy. We studied each case (s) histories; the commodities affected; the investment and financial institutions involved; the kind and form of mobilization developed; the environmental, health and other impacts; the social movements, platforms, NGOs involved and other supporters and groups mobilization and/or creation; other stakeholders like public institutions and enterprises participation; which were the alternatives proposed and the impacts and outcome, success and/or failure of the different mobilization.

As far as the distribution of conflicts is concerned, Northern and Central Portugal are the regions showing the highest concentration of cases, followed by the Lisbon area and the Tejo Valley, and by the Alentejo region. No conflict of comparable intensity has been recorded (so far) for the island territory of Portugal (Açores and Madeira). Such geographical distribution, whose motives are still to be fully understood, may be in part related to physical characteristics of the country, i.e. with the location of most of the dammed rivers, of the industrial transformation activities, of the urban and periurban infrastructures. The selection of Portuguese cases to EJAtlas gives a general view of the socio-economic and environmental change occurred in the country in the past five decades, and the reactions of civil society to experience these transformations.