

# **PARLIAMENTARIAN RECRUITMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW MAKING IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: THE RAISING OF AN HISTORICAL SUBJECT**

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## **Resumo/Abstract**

In this presentation I will explore the consequences of universal suffrage adoption in different European states to favour political decision making towards environmental policies in Portugal, France, Spain, England and Italian states in the 1800s.

Within the 1870s and 1880s, legislation on inland waters and forest management with consequent regulation and several attempts for their implementation took place in Portugal. Policies defended in parliament since 1835 about the correction of torrential regime and forestation, expressed in bills of law presented in the House of the Commons in 1839, 1851, 1857 and 1872, were finally approved in the last quarter of 1800s. Why only then?

In 1878, the law of universal suffrage allowed to widen the spectrum of deputies elected for the Parliament with higher education. By this law, the major requirement for a men over 25 to vote in Portugal was the proof of capacity. This one was (mainly) the proof of literacy (ability to read, write and understand what was being presented in political “programs”), provided by the primary school diploma. Once the proof of capacity became the key requirement to participate in political decision making it contributed to change the recruitment and composition of MP’s elected for the Parliament, when compared to the electoral system of tax paying regime.

In this last system, a voter had to make proof of owning a minimum (quite high) sealing of income per year. These individuals would be wealthy landlords, industrials, financiers, entrepreneurs and also clergymen. Beyond these categories, after 1878, some of the new deputies would have education in engineering and other technical skills. Being also employed in the state, and their wages depending on it, these new incomers could be interested or compelled to obey, defend or promote governmental policies and state administration.

A similar inter-linkage between universal suffrage recruitment of MP’s and rising tension between private and public interest or state policies in the name of Common Good instead of the private property rights, could be established for other European regions. Indeed the universal regime for the management of inland waters was promulgated in France as in Italy in 1882, in Portugal in 1884 and in Spain in 1888. In England, the Act for universal sanitary sewage and water control was approved in 1875. All of these laws were approved only after the adoption of universal suffrage. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was adopted in England in 1867, in Spain in 1876, in Italy in 1881 and in France in 1848 and again 1882.

Thus, it is my intention to explore the correlation between environmental policies and the opportunities created by the adoption of universal suffrage to increase the tension between private and public interests that favoured environmental policies in constitutional regimes in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe

## **CV**

### **Cristina Joanaz de Melo**

- Integrated researcher IHC- FCSH-UNL

- Major interest of research

- Environmental history natural resources policies in the 19th century Europe, namely water, forest and rocks.

- Water resources uses

- Landscape transformation

- Landscape reading throughout History