

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN PORTUGAL, 19TH-20TH CENTURIES

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Resumo/Abstract

The spurt of the pyrites mining in Portugal since the 19th century was mostly dependent on the ability of the firms to process locally ores with low percentage of metals but rich in sulphur in order to survive in the world market. Competitive technological solutions have been developed by mining and chemical engineers to benefit from large scale mining operations. The environmental impact generated by this export oriented growth was a concern for mining enterprises for their action polluted the air with sulphur smoke emissions, the rivers and springs thus affecting farmers, fishermen and the health of the population. There is now available numerous historical case studies about the problems of air, soil and water contamination that modern pyrites mining generated worldwide, sometimes causing violent conflicts and mass mobilization against companies. In this communication, we shall debate how technological advancement in pyrites processing interacted with social conflict and environmental change in Portugal in the long run. Different technological solutions adopted locally had also different environmental outcomes all contributing to the social and environmental change of this part of the Peninsula. The historical research that was carried out mostly on State Archives and printed sources (technical reports) also considered how different political regimes interacted with firms in this context.

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