

Thoughts and Considerations

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR: "Climate Change and its social and environmental repercussions"

Brígida Rocha Brito

brigidabrito@netcabo.pt

Professor at the International Relations Department, Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa within the fields of Environment and International Cooperation. Researcher at OBSERVARE (UAL) and sub-director of JANUS.NET, *e-journal of International Relations*, she has lectured at the Sociology Department, Universidade de Évora, as Invited Auxiliary Professor and at Escola Superior Agrária de Coimbra as Adjunct Professor. Consultant in the field of Cooperation for Development, she has been responsible for conducting studies, diagnoses and assessment of intervention projects in Portuguese-speaking African countries at the request of Civil Organizations (*Instituto Marquês de Valle Flôr, Artissal, Ação para o Desenvolvimento, MARAPA*) and International Organizations (*The World Bank Group; International Organization for Migration and Bureau Internacional do Trabalho, Program STEP-Portugal*). She participated in the design of a strategy for Environmental Education by the Brazilian Ministry for the Environment, a strategy called "Passo a Passo", which was implemented in all Portuguese-speaking countries belonging to CPLP (Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries), as well as cooperation (training) sessions in São Tomé and Príncipe at the request of the Portuguese government. She has conducted research in Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe.

The International Seminar on "Climate change and its social and environmental repercussions" ("Alterações Climáticas e suas repercussões socio-ambientais") took place from 20 to 23 August 2012 in Palácio dos Congressos, in the city of São Tomé, Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe. This meeting was organized by a group of nine public, private and civil society institutions acting in São Tomé and Príncipe, Portugal and Spain, in compliance with the principles of international partnership: Direção-Geral do Ambiente (DGA)¹ and Direção das Florestas (DF)² of the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe; Observatório de Relações Exteriores, Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa (OBSERVARE, UAL)³; Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade

¹ Dr. Arlindo de Carvalho, director of the governmental office Direção-Geral do Ambiente (Directorate-General for the Environment) of the Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe, was our liaison. The technical team at Direção-Geral, in particular the chemical engineer Sulisa Quaresma and Dra. Aline Castro, also collaborated with the project. Direção-Geral do Ambiente was the local coordinator, ensuring logistics and coordination with the other national partners.

² Direção das Florestas (Directorate-General for Forests) was represented by its director, Eng. Faustino Oliveira. Meyer António, forest engineer in Departamento de Biodiversidade, Sensibilização e Estudos (Department of Biodiversity, Awareness and Studies) played a key role in the organization of practical activities in the forest area, for which he was responsible.

³ The author represented OBSERVARE and Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa as she is Auxiliary Professor in the International Relations Department, researcher within the international relations research unit and Sub-director of JANUS.net, *e-journal of international relations*. She was responsible for international coordination of the Seminar, ensuring the link-up among the different partners, selecting papers, structuring the scientific and the practical activities' programs as well as the creation and management of its webpage and the contents made available.



de Lisboa (ICS-UL)⁴; Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (USC), International Association of Investigators for Environmental Education (NEREA Investiga) and Associação Portuguesa de Educação Ambiental (AsPEA)⁵; Centro de Extensão Universitária e Divulgação Ambiental de Galicia (CEIDA)⁶; the NGO from S. Tomé and Príncipe Mar, Ambiente e Pesca Artesanal⁷ (MARAPA).

Nationally, the meeting was considered important both in terms of theme relevance and approach as well as because it offered the possibility to further projects and organize events based on the principles of Partnerships for Development (PD). State representatives from the Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe acknowledged the importance of the seminar through institutional support provided by the Presidency and through the involvement of government members who actively participated in the programmed activities⁸. National technical staff considered the Seminar an opportunity for informal training, a means to meet or better know the speakers, thus allowing for the establishment of a network of different actors.

Thirty experts from three countries, São Tomé and Príncipe, Portugal and Spain, were present, all from different fields including Sociology, Anthropology, Geography, Economy, Law, Pedagogy, Environmental Engineering and Biology; and about a hundred and fifty participants contributed to the debates. The papers were allocated to the four theme panels - I) Frameworks; II and III) Insularity in debate; IV) Strategies for the future -, which allowed for critical debate on climate change from the perspective of its impact, though always bearing in mind internationalization by means of international cooperation mechanisms.

The program was devised considering a multidisciplinary approach so as foster the mixing of theory, methodology and strategy and focus on pragmatic solutions for real and previously identified issues. Therefore, real problems related to insularity were presented, especially in São Tomé and Príncipe and Cape Verde, as well as problems in continental areas, particularly in Portugal and Spain, though never neglecting to consider these as part of global issues.

The great common concerns to all speakers and participants, regardless of their geographical context, considered as resulting from climate change were:

- a) increasing social and economic precariousness of local populations, which has caused them to become more and more vulnerable and made them redefine strategies to get more income thus leading to more environmental damage;
- b) identification of key sectors in society and economy, considered crucial to ensure social and environmental sustainability but which are impacted by climate change

⁴ Professor Maria Luisa Schmidt, who represented Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa, has coordinated research projects on social and environmental impact of climate change.

⁵ The three institutions - Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, International Association of Investigators for Environmental Education and Associação Portuguesa de Educação Ambiental – were represented by Dr. Joaquim Ramos Pinto, a specialist in Environmental Education and the driving force behind *Plataforma Lusófona de Educação Ambiental*.

⁶ The partner CEIDA was represented by its director, Dr. Carlos Vales Vázquez, who represented the network PARDELA, *Rede Hispano-Lusófona de Gestores de Áreas Naturais Protegidas*.

⁷ The NGO MARAPA was represented by its president, Eng. Jorge de Carvalho do Rio. Technicians from MARAPA assisted in the organization and implementation of practical activities in the coast and the sea areas, namely Elísio Neto, Hipólito Lima, Anne Vidie and Bastien Loloum.

⁸ The Minister for Public Works and Natural Resources, Eng. Carlos Vila Nova, gave the opening speech and the Minister for Planning and Development, Dr. Agostinho Fernandes, gave the closing speech.



- first. Most vulnerable activities include: fisheries, particularly artisanal fisheries; agriculture; non-intensive rearing of livestock; exploitation of natural resources for immediate consumption or semi-processing;
- c) increasing frailty of ecosystems, particularly those in coastal and transitional areas due to erosion, shortage of rain and rise in the seawater level;
 - d) the risk of loss of biodiversity, including in endemic and vulnerable fauna and flora whose number is decreasing globally and which are viewed as more than indigenous species, as element of natural world heritage;
 - e) the need to adopt global international measures, framed and supported by formal, informal, bilateral, multilateral cooperation mechanisms promoted by civil society organizations, universities and research centers;
 - f) the urgent need to adapt national plans on management and use of common space and resources to internationally agreed measures in high level summits so as to create effective synergies which will promote a balance between the ratified principles and the practices carried out *in loco*;
 - g) the understanding that practical actions which imply adopting new behavioral models – by the State, corporations, groups and individuals – demand educational programs to raise awareness, train and provide guided information thus leading to a widened citizenship;
 - h) increase in the importance of a common human heritage, tangible and intangible, and the need for a global management which bears in mind the idea of what is common to all.

To complement the seminar and also be subject of debate, four field visits were organized: two to the forest area and the other two to the coast and the sea areas. These visits, promoted by national partners, took place on two separate days, included practical activities and were attended by both seminar speakers and participants.

- 1) the activities in the forest area were the responsibility of Direção das Florestas; the focus of the visits to the two very different places – the Botanic Garden of Bom Sucesso, at the entrance of Obô Natural Park and to the tree nurseries and Parque Florestal Urbano, a forest in the city - was species recognition and risk assessment due to climate change;
- 2) the activities carried out on the coast and at sea areas were organized by MARAPA, the NGO from São Tomé and Príncipe; their main concern was to show the risks some species are faced with, namely sea turtles and cetaceans. The activities carried out at sea involved collecting the eggs of the sea turtles and their transfer to an artificial incubator and cetacean watching, besides assessing the limitations these species are faced with.

All activities were considered an asset in terms of learning, as they allowed all participants, including the experts, to have new perspectives on this matter based on their experiences during the activities.

The main conclusions drawn from the sharing of ideas and experiences and from the debates were:



1. climate change is a global reality visible in several problems arising which have become globalized (have international impact), especially in fragile areas whose ecosystems are vulnerable, as is the case of islands;
2. the effects of climate change are of different types and more evident in small islands, especially in some geographical areas by the sea (increase of sea level, erosion, variations in biodiversity with an impact on species survival) and affecting their communities in particular;
3. the social and professional activities that are more impacted are those which either depend on halieutic resources (artisanal fisheries) or are related to other activities from the primary sector, such as agriculture, rearing of livestock and direct exploitation of natural resources (collection and artisanal processing);
4. tourism is an activity which, though closely dependent on climate change, contributes to its damage. However, it can minimize some of its impact if events are promoted to raise awareness, to regulate and control the damages;
5. there is an urgent need to adopt national measures (Plano de Ação da Direção-Geral do Ambiente) based on international criteria which allow for the correct treatment of solid waste, especially urban, and thus contribute to reduce gas emission and prevent accidents with chemicals pollutants that have a high social and economic impact;
6. the idea that, from an environmental point of view, there is the need for a shared responsibility is usually accepted by the international community; yet, this is not always the reality, which demands for an immediate intervention and differentiation criteria;
7. cooperation initiatives are viewed as strategic to minimize the problems caused by climate change, so they should focus on new models using participatory methodologies (formal and non formal environmental education; education in citizenship; education for development) which foster the responsible involvement of all stakeholders in the promotion of case by case behavior . These cooperation initiatives should allow for the involvement of traditional bilateral stakeholders as well as universities and research centers to facilitate education towards real needs;
8. all participants agreed that the strategy for promoting environmental education should continue and be enhanced through international cooperation, including through informal mechanisms;
9. there is a need to involve all actors – the State, Private organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Citizens and Universities – as co-responsible and enhance active and participating citizenship;
10. the opportunity should arise to further cooperation initiatives based on partnerships, even informal partnerships, among different actors and through different channels – bilateral, multilateral, and encompassing the scientific community through the involvement of universities and research centers.

Once all conclusions had been systematized, the decision was made to organize a series of initiatives to promote the ideas put forward:



1. The creation of the platform *Plataforma Lusófona de Educação Ambiental* identifying core points who will allow for the implementation of initiatives with Portuguese-speaking organizations. This platform encompasses universities and research centers, civil society organizations and representatives of the different States involved;
2. The enhancement of the network *Rede Pardela*⁹ - *Rede Hispano-Lusófona para a Gestão de Áreas Naturais Protegidas* – with more participants and a selection of future cooperation initiatives;
3. The organization of an annual Seminar based on international partnership and with the involvement of national actors. Though it may take place in other Portuguese-speaking countries, in 2013 the Seminar on “Reservas da Biosfera: Cooperação e Serviços Ambientais” (“Biosphere reserves: Cooperation and Environmental Services”) will take place in Príncipe, with the agreement of all members of the Organization. This was widely acclaimed by the representatives of the archipelago;
4. The promotion of (eventually not formal) thematic training sessions so as to optimize the presence of the experts who participate in the Seminar as well as of the members of the Organization. These sessions will be mostly practical and focused on the perceived needs;
5. The online edition of Seminar Proceedings will be made available; eventually a reduced paper version may be published. In this case, a selection will be necessary of the papers to include.

⁹ See <http://www.pardela.org>

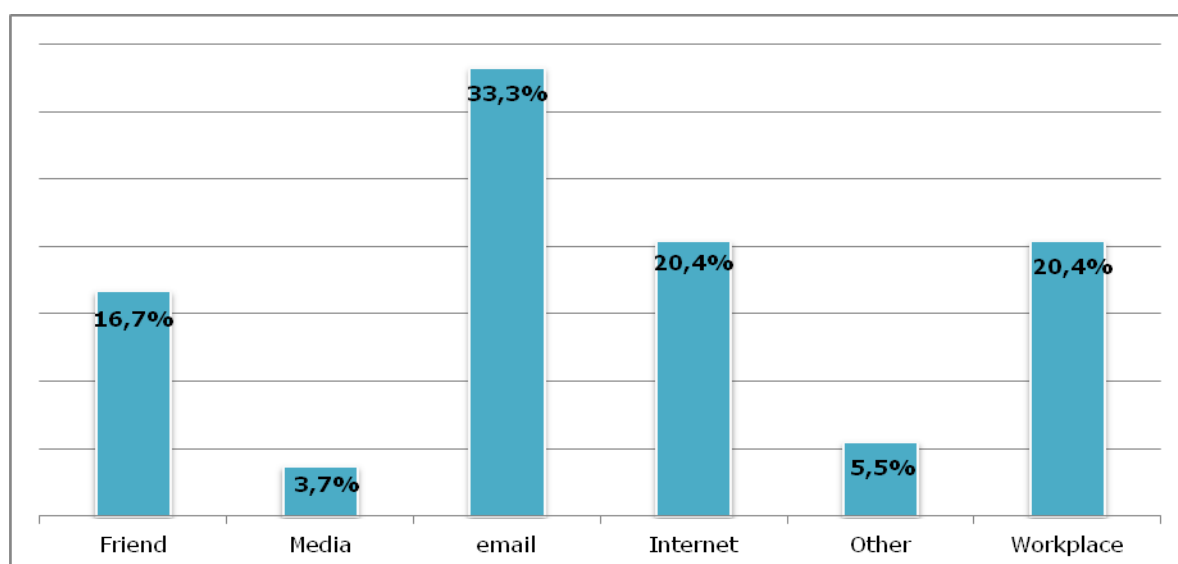


ATTACHMENT – Brief assessment of the International Seminar

An online questionnaire was applied to participants at the end of the Seminar. The objective was twofold: on the one hand, assess the relevance of the promoted activities and, on the other hand, understand the importance of carrying out new initiatives so as to understand which themes are priorities.

The analysis of the results (N=73) has enhanced the importance of the event to the archipelago. Most respondents knew of the event through email and the Internet (53.7% no total), some through information made available in their workplace (20.4%) and through friends (16.7%).

Chart 1 – How did you know about the Seminar?



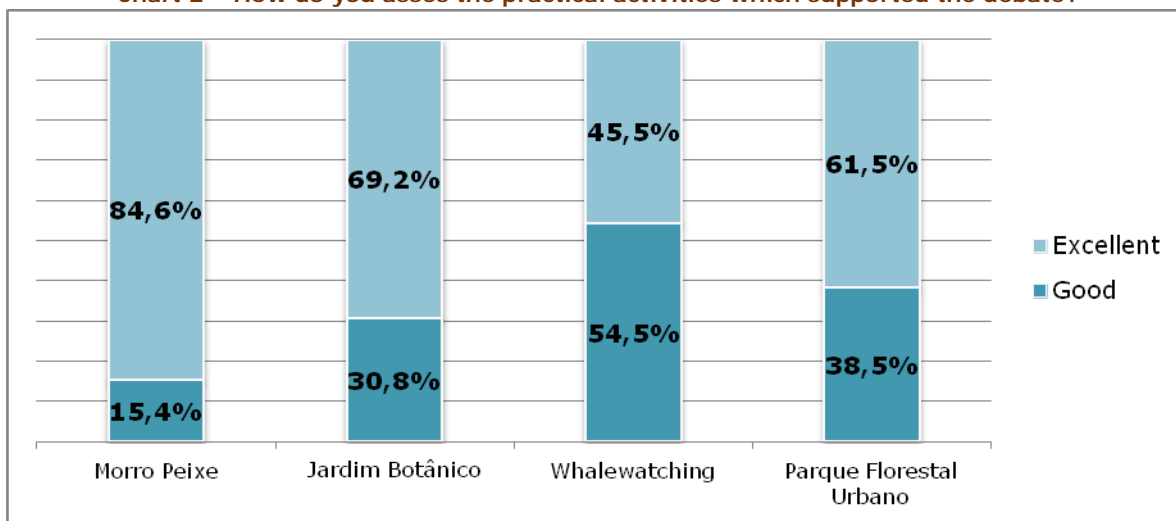
The information made available on the webpage¹⁰ especially created for the Seminar was considered sufficient and relevant by most respondents (97.1%).

As far as the practical activities are concerned, the assessment showed the relevance and importance of the activities on the coast and the sea areas, and in the forest area, to better contextualize the debates. Respondents rated these activities excellent or good in all items (the scale included the following options: excellent; good; average; indifferent; bad).

¹⁰ The webpage <http://climatechangestp2012.weebly.com/> is still active for consultation and documentation. It includes the presentations made available by the speakers, the book of abstracts, the opening and closing speeches, contacts of all speakers, the rationale and the reasons behind the choice of the archipelago of São Tomé and Príncipe for hosting the seminar.

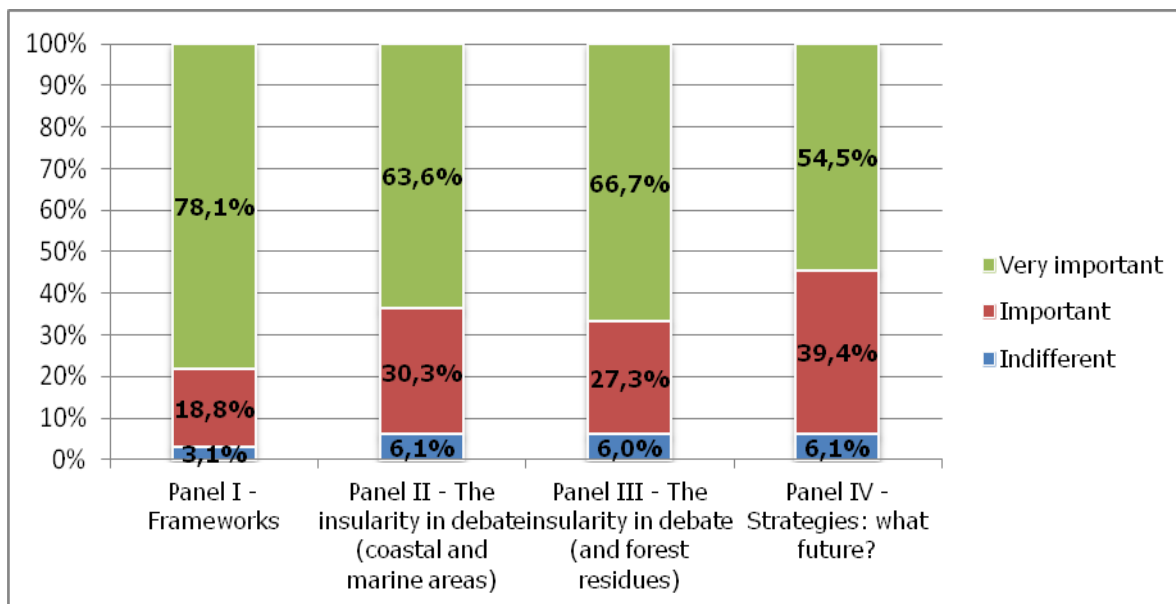


Chart 2 – How do you assess the practical activities which supported the debate?



Noteworthy is the fact that the activities considered excellent (84.6% at Morro Peixe; 69.2% at the Botanic Garden and 61.5% at Parque Florestal Urbano) were those whose aim was pedagogical, in which a close interpersonal relationship was formed between the participants and the local promoters and facilitators.

Chart 3 – How do you assess the papers presented at panel?

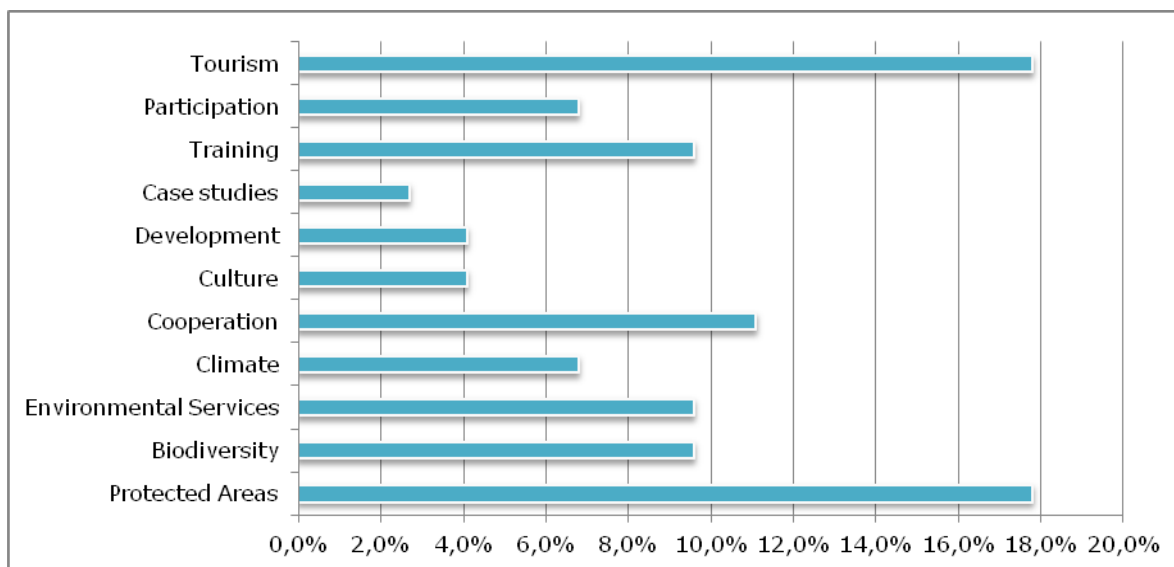


Respondents assessed the papers presented at panel as Very Important and Important; the option "indifferent" did not obtain a relevant result.

Most respondents (88.2%), when asked about the opportunity and relevance of future initiatives, replied stating their intention to participate in new events and selected some priority themes.



Chart 4 – What areas would you select for future scientific meetings?



The themes selected as priority for a future event were those directly related to the environment, namely those connected with protected areas, the problems of environmental services, conservation of biodiversity, the influence of climate and tourism. Cooperation for development, continuing of training sessions and use of participatory methodologies as a means of intervention were also selected. Thus, and bearing in mind the concerns mentioned, an international event will be organized in 2013 on cooperation and environmental services, including tourism, within the scope of protected areas, the reference being Reserva da Biosfera da Ilha do Príncipe. We hope new partnerships will be signed with other Biosphere Reserves, which will allow for exchange of experiences and further learning.

How to quote this paper

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