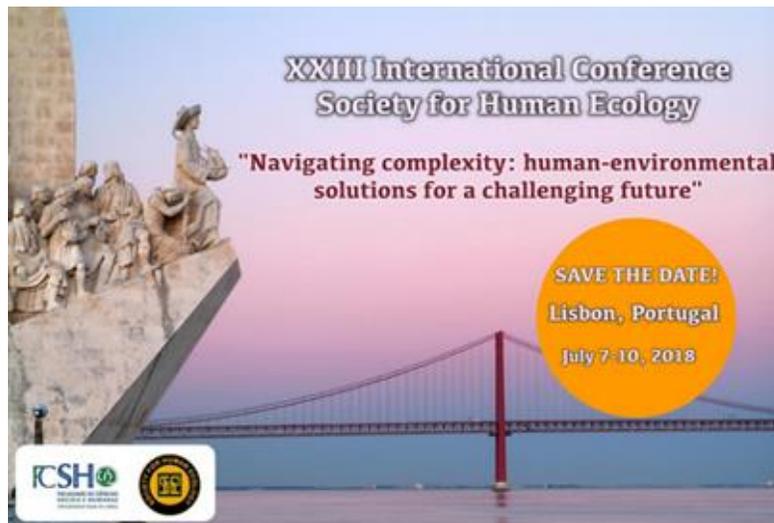


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Society for Human Ecology Meeting in Lisbon, July 2018



With the theme “Navigating complexity: human-environmental solutions for a challenging future”, the Society for Human Ecology meeting was held in Lisbon from July 7th to 10th 2018. Over 250 people from some 35 countries concerned with Human Ecology met in the social science complex of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, just up the road from the famous Calouste Gulbenkian Museum. CHEC was represented by Governing Board members Ian Douglas, Eva Ekehorn, Morteza Honari and Mark Robinson.

The conference opening session was held in the rooms of the Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa in a room surround by statues of Henry the Navigator, Vasco de Gama and other great Portuguese explorers of the 11th and 16th centuries. An astoundingly successful keynote address was given by **Duarte d’Araújo**, a landscape architect responsible for developing the green infrastructure of the Lisbon Municipality.



*Past Presidents of the Society for Human Ecology at the Lisbon Meeting
Richard Borden, Ian Douglas, Rob Dyball, Eva Ekehorn,
Thom Meredith and Alpina Begossi*

He talked about the ideals behind the greenspace planning and the way science, design and social engagement has to be brought together to achieve improvements that brought benefits to both biodiversity and human well-being. The reception following the address was in a nearby city centre building, the Casa do Alentejo whose magnificently decorated rooms were a delightful setting for a midsummer evening's socializing.



Livia Tirone and Bernado Salce



The atrium of the Casa d'Alentejo

Plenary Sessions and keynote addresses

The keynote addresses were an outstanding feature of the conference. **Livia Tirone** gave a highly inspiring talk on future cities, exploring the possibility of developing forms of urban living that work for all. She suggested that this might be achieved by everyone taking small, but purposeful, actions.

Photographer **Bernado Salce** explained how his enthusiasm for travel led him to become concerned about environmental action after seeing conditions in Cape Town, South Africa. In Cambodia he saw people's positivity and resilience in the face of disaster. He later interacted with the Cambodia Centre for Human Rights which was helping people who had lost land to large private companies owned by politicians. Visiting the houses on stilts in informal settlements in Manila, Philippines, he came to understand the poverty of child workers. His pictures told stories and were of a high educational value, but they had to be interpreted responsibly. Use of photography in human ecology should be ethical and responsible.

Prue Taylor, from New Zealand, talked about law and governance of the World's seas and oceans. Her remarks resonated with the comments on ocean governance at the 2018 CHOGM in London. She saw the problem as the territorial obsession of the states, each wanting to control its territorial waters and thus to treat and mistreat that portion of the seas as it wished.

Only a fragment of the high seas are beyond the control of individual states, but even the international agreements to protect those seas tend to work to protect national property rights. The concept of the oceans as "*The common heritage of mankind*" needs to be reinforced to promote non-appropriation, peaceful uses, and environmental protection of the high seas.

Another brilliant keynote was delivered by **Michael Jahi Chappell** on how the world is beginning to end hunger, using lessons from political economy in the context of Belo Horizonte, Brazil. He talked about a 46% drop in stunted growth among young children; the impact of safe drinking water and sanitation; the roles gender equality and secondary education for girls; and, particularly dietary diversity. He emphasized the 5 "A's" of the food environment:

- AVAILABILITY: sufficient
- ACCESSIBILITY: distribution
- ACCEPTABILITY: nutritionally adequate and culturally acceptable
- ADEQUACY: ecologically sustainable
- AGENCY: rights and socio-political ability to access rights

He described how the application of these five A's in Belo Horizonte had increased fruit and vegetable consumption; led to a decrease in hospitalization for malnutrition; seen a decline in infant mortality and also a decline in diabetes. Urban agriculture in school gardens and other localities was encouraged. Organic produce fairs were held, bringing food in directly from

the surrounding countryside. A subsidized people's restaurant made good food available at affordable prices. In 2006 in Brazil, the right to food was embedded in law. The government was a partner and guarantor of the schemes in Belo Horizonte. [Michael's book *Beginning to End Hunger: Food and the Environment in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, and Beyond*, published in 2018, won the Society for Human Ecology's Gerald L. Young Book Prize in that year].

Symposia

CHEC organised Symposium 1 on the human ecology of natural hazards. Ian Douglas brought Professors Celeste Coelho from Aveiro and Ana Monteiro from Porto and colleagues to talk about the socio-economic impacts of detrimental changes in the biophysical environment.

Ian Douglas spoke about "Responsibilities for overcoming inequities linked to urban flooding". He pointed out that the causes and impacts of floods, human vulnerability, possibilities of risk reduction and political and management responsibilities vary from the household and community levels up to sub-continental hydrologic systems and the global climate system. Co-ordinated action needs to be taken at all these scales to reduce urban flood risks to reduce the aggravation of floods hazards caused by individual actions that avoid local flooding by pushing water elsewhere. All too often urban development upstream leads to ever more serious flooding downstream. Well-drained affluent suburbs often contribute greatly to flooding of poor neighbourhoods further downriver. To overcome such inequities, urban flood management needs local, regional or national action at appropriate scales, with communities dealing with problems entirely with their areas, local governments acting on issues that are totally within their boundaries and national governments or international river basin organizations dealing with problems across many administrations.

Ana Monteiro discussed the latest stage of her decades of research into the climate of Porto and the effects on the city's inhabitants. She discussed efforts to prepare communities in the city for the impacts of climate change. She had found that the lack of individual and institutional engagement in developing a climatic risks adaptation plan for the Oporto Metropolitan Area (OMA) in 2018, even though the subject has been constantly featured in the news, public debates, and both scientific and popular articles, was the biggest constraint encountered by the team that working on

the plan. The results of an six-month long online survey reaching out to citizens and institutional representatives and of interviews conducted with environmental officers from the 17 towns in the OMA showed a good deal of concern about heat waves, cold spells, droughts, heavy rainfall or strong winds, but much misunderstanding as to "what to do". So, lack of potential adaptation strategies is the major constraint hampering improvement of resilience to climate risks in urban areas.



Ana Monteiro

Ana also presented work with her colleague **Helen Madureira** on "Climate Risks – a syndrome with an inappropriate therapy". This was really a criticism of lack of awareness of, and even willingness to listen to arguments about the implications of climate change on health and human well-being. Adaptation and mitigation proposals have not motivated political decision-makers to try other ways of planning the spatial distribution of people, activities, industry, housing and infrastructure. The severe impacts on ecosystems and human beings of human use of environmental resources have been accompanied by an increase in social, economic and environmental inequities. There are thus severe climate change impacts on health, with a huge rise in respiratory and circulatory excess-morbidity that call for attention to the serious need of a local scale approach on such issues.

From urban climatic hazards, the session turned to forest fires, a severe environmental issue in Portugal. **Celeste Coelho** asked "Forest Fires in Portugal: How can we adapt to disaster?" Forest fires affect Portugal and other southern European countries to a greater or lesser extent every year. Since the 1980's, large fires have occurred in association with extreme climatic conditions, land use change and human activities. Large fires are a threat, and cause significant annual losses in terms of human lives, environmental and economic

damages (for example the fires in 2003, 2005, 2011, 2017). In the light of global warming with temperature increases, drought, lower humidity, change in rainfall patterns, large fires are expected to recur in future years.

Cristina Ribeiro followed up this fire theme by examining how people affected by fires or involved in fighting them and planning to avoid future disasters are thinking about appropriate fire hazard reduction methods. Post fire management strategies for minimizing the impacts of fire can change the frequency and / or severity of future fires, and promote the recovery of the conditions of the pre-fire landscape situation. Post-fire management can be seen as a short, medium or long term process directed to different scales (e.g. local scale, scale of landscape), and should include different, but complementary interventions. Based on 28 semi-structured interviews, the views of local, regional and national stakeholders, involved in forest management and post fire management, about the concept of post-fire management and its operationalization were analysed. Despite the high frequency and severity of forest fires and the importance of post-fire management in the Mediterranean region, stakeholders in Portugal demonstrated limited knowledge about the aims and actions needed for a successful post-fire management process.



The SHE conference venue: New University of Lisbon

Symposium 4: A European college of Human Ecology
CHEC also contributed a symposium on “A European College of Urban Ecology – New Directions in Higher Education”. Plans are moving ahead to create a college in Germany similar to that in Bar Harbor, USA.

Harry Weekes talked about Adolescent Education, Human Ecology, and the Future of Humanity” based on experiences at the Sage School, in Hailey, Idaho, USA that he founded. He said that as we fully recognize and embrace the Anthropocene, we understand that humans are coming to the end of the age of “We Went Too Far.” The decades ahead will continue to define the trajectory of the human endeavour. How we teach our children will determine this future as much as anything. Adolescence is a critical and essential window for redefining our relationship with the natural world, for building a hopeful and constructive identity around the social, natural, and built challenges humanity faces, and for creating long-term, systemic change. The Sage School creates a thriving environment for students through a challenging, authentic curriculum centred on human ecology and engaging experiences designed specifically to promote self-awareness, community responsibility, and a sense of place. The school’s vision is: “To help create sustainable and thriving human and ecological communities “.

Ian Douglas tried to convince his audience that fieldwork in cities could be an effective way of showing how human ecology uses a wide range of specific disciplinary tools to understand people: environment interactions. The most extreme environmental modifications are found in urban area, but also there is a huge diversity of habitats for organisms, especially inside buildings and on their exteriors. Much urban infrastructure modifies natural flows of energy water and materials. Such changes have left both beneficial and harmful consequences for present and future generations. Rectification of one set of problems can lead to new hazards and risks, particularly because different communities and groups of people interpret and value sectors of the urban environment in different ways. Teaching about urban environmental problems has to take an integrated approach, through field classes, to create awareness and sensitivity to both the perturbation of natural systems and the diverse social implications of urban change.

Ulrich Loening looked at human ecology in European Universities arguing that it is so wide-ranging that even universities with their diverse faculties, have rarely taken it on. There were several post-graduate courses in Human Ecology in Europe; but most of these have closed, just when they are needed more than ever. Reviewing this situation and drawing on his own



Ulrich and Mrs. Loening in the Casa d'Alentejo

experience in the Centre for Human Ecology in Edinburgh, and others, he outlined how courses could be designed, saying that they are best closely linked to universities but given independently. Pointing to the challenge of modernizing education for an uncertain future, Ulrich said that which the students should be better equipped to understand the Anthropocene and to develop the new opportunities that older generations have left them with. He believed that Human Ecology education continues to promote an emerging new enlightenment.

Contributed Papers

Session 14 Urban Ecology

Ian Douglas chaired a fascinating session that dealt with a fascinating aspect of urban political ecology and environment deterioration. **Clare Cannon** began with a discussion of plans to rebuild a New Orleans High School in the lower ninth ward that was so drastically affected by Hurricane Katrina. This High School was built on the former Silver city open dump which was later found to be widely contaminated with mercury, lead and other toxic substances. This segregated High School was planned to be rebuilt, but former pupils felt that the potential health risks from contamination were too dangerous to permit reconstruction. The state government alleged that the site was not hazardous. School alumni hired advocates to challenge this. The site became part of a biomedical complex. Meanwhile, 14 years after Hurricane Katrina, the area was becoming gentrified with modern condominiums being built, it was doubtful whether the school was still needed at all, but the State did not pass a bill to stop the building of schools on contaminated land. This case study clearly showed the complexity of politics, environment chemistry and the housing industry dynamics in the urban environment.

Conflict between users of urban amenities and managers of those facilities arose in the next paper by **Emilio Padoa-Schioppa** who discussed issues in the development of the Parco Nord regional Park in Milan, Italy which was established as a green area in northern Milan in 1957. Today it is unusual to have such a protected area in the suburbs of an Italian city and it is heavily used by local residents as an urban park at weekends.



Sunset at the Parco Nord, Milan

To establish the values perceived by both users and managers, Emilio set up participatory focus groups to identify cultural ecosystem services. (Ecosystem services are the direct benefits people obtain from plant and animal communities. Cultural services include non-material benefits from walking, fishing, bird watching, enjoying scenery or the sacred and historic value of trees and parks). Emilio found that park users and park managers considered different ecosystem services important and believed that managers should take more account of visitors' perceptions and needs in planning the upkeep and improvement of the protected area.

Flavia Silva examined another type of public engagement, this time in urban waste management. She and her colleagues are part of UrbanWINS a three-year EU-funded project that aims at developing and testing methods for designing and implementing eco-innovative strategic plans for waste prevention and management in 8 pilot cities: Cremona, Albano Laziale, Pomezia and Torino (Italy); Leiria (Portugal); Bucharest (Romania), and Manresa & Sabadell (Spain). The UrbanWINS team believes that waste does not exist: we see waste as a resource. By having a better understanding of how cities consume resources and generate waste, we will be able to move towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns, and promote a circular economy (see www.urbanwins.eu for more information).

Jan Ulčák dealt with another key urban issue: allotment gardens, which older generations remember from the mid-20th century, but which remain significant food sources in most European cities. Sometimes called urban farming, these small plots of land are now under constant pressure, as land for housing is in high demand. In Brno, Czech Republic, 1000 ha of allotment gardens supply many ecosystem services, with food provisioning being the main one. The average plot is 20 m x 20 m. However, not everyone uses these gardens the same way, older gardeners use fertilizers, while younger people prefer organic food production. Neighbours who do not have a plot feel that these green areas should have public space rather than being a publicly-owned private closed space only accessible to those with gardens.

Human Ecology: a view from the Philippines

An outstandingly interesting Symposium on **Research and Practice for Food and Nutrition Security** was presented to a small but select audience by colleagues from the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

Angelina Felix began by discussing changing tastes for how rice is cooked in the Philippines. From being fluffy and chewy in the nineteen-eighties, rice has gradually been served in a softer form. The change may contribute to food security because the softer rice is more satisfying, but there are concerns that the change in rice preference may contribute to the national problem of Type 2 diabetes, through a lower amylose content linked to the proportion of starch associated with cooked rice texture.



Colleagues from Los Baños at Symposium 14

Clarissa Juanico then enquired whether changing to corn grits might alleviate the Type 2 Diabetes problem. A feeding trial of the benefits of substituting corn for rice showed that people's weight and other body

characteristics generally improved after the change. This could be a consequence of calorie intake, control of intake of saturated fats or increased dietary fibre. Other factors than just changing from rice to corn could contribute to the change.

Virginia Cuevas looked at a real human ecological problem, the impact of coffee and cocoa farming on the people of the Agta Magbukun tribe in Batan who had traditionally lived by collecting wild honey, hunting, fishing, and rice and sweet potato cultivation. Batan is a small volcanic island to the north of Luzon, the main island of the Philippines. The people were being encouraged to improve their livelihoods with coffee and cocoa by establishing an agroforestry system. Trichoderma, a special organic fertiliser developed in the Philippines, was tested by 12 families who had planted seedlings with the hope that it would improve seedling survival. The overall goal was to make a higher standard of living available to the people of a remote island.

Urban considerations came up in a presentation by **Maria Mendoza** on the pollution: poverty link in Iloilo City, Visayas Islands. The aim was to examine the link between pollution by toxic metals and human health. The poorest people seemed to live closer to the polluted sites, with a high relationship between heavy metal pollution and poverty in the *barangays* (informal settlement) of Iloilo.

Carla Jimena examined how micro-enterprises could help Filipino farmers, 44 % of whom are poor, and fishermen, 50% of whom are poor. Agro-enterprise development helped to link small holder farmers to markets. They assist in improving income equality and in inclusive growth, enabling farmers to have greater global competitiveness. It enabled big business to deal directly with farmers, who were supported by a business-led social development organization.

All these activities reported by the colleagues from Los Baños were socially relevant, highly practical and demonstrated how a positive, active approach by a Human Ecology College could change people's lives for the better.

Sustainable Fisheries and Local Knowledge

The symposium explored several issues regarding fisheries around the world. **Karl Bruckmeier** talked about the weakness in the EU's Common Fisheries

Policy. Several failures about management and vested interest must be overcome. Possible ways would be to adopt fisheries local action groups. The problem is TBTI: Too Big to Ignore. **Ana Fraga** discussed the sustainable challenges for artisanal fisheries around the Azorean Islands. There is a lack of understanding of social and environmental issues for local fishermen in regards to illegal fishing. The fishermen argue that the conservationists 'think that the sea should be an aquarium'. An ecosystem based approach focusing on the human actions and a more comprehensive view to promote sustainable fisheries was recommended.

The Ecological Sense

Morteza Honari, a dedicated human ecologist, and a long-serving member of CHEC's Governing Board has decades of academic experience in Australia, the UK and Iran. In Lisbon, he shared his life experience of *The Seventh Sense* with us. Morteza began his presentation on "**The Ecological Sense**" with a brief description of the five senses by which we experience the world around us; seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. He then mentioned the sixth sense (extrasensory perception or getting a feeling about someone or something). This is to see things not with the eyes, hear sounds not with the ears, smell odours not with the nose and so on. Although western science has talked about the Sixth Sense for the past eighty years, it has existed in Morteza's own Persian culture for hundreds of years.

However, Morteza said he was born at 6.15 pm, on 8th September 1949, in his family old home, built with sun baked bricks, in his home town of Khor, an ancient town in the centre of Iranian Desert. The *Sense of belonging* to one ecological spot on the surface of Earth has always been with him. This *Seventh Sense: The Sense of Ecological Belonging* has an important role in forming our perceptions, character, behaviour and functionality throughout life. Awareness of this has implications for people and their environment, especially as people move within and beyond their own countries and encounter other cultures and other landscapes.

The Politics of Rewilding

Rewilding Europe states that "Rewilding is a progressive approach to conservation. It's about letting nature take care of itself, enabling natural processes to shape land and sea, repair damaged ecosystems and restore degraded landscapes. Through rewilding, wildlife's

natural rhythms create wilder, more biodiverse habitats@ (<https://rewildingeuropa.com/what-is-rewilding/>). Symposium 17 in the last segment of the conference was devoted to aspects of ecological restoration and the re-introduction of wild species. Mihena Tanasescu discussed the re-introduction of bison into the Carpathians. From an original 12 individuals there were now a 6000 roaming in the wild. He noted that there were ethical responsibilities in taking such actions. Local people needed to consent to the introduction of new elements in the surrounding ecosystems, even if they disappeared only 100 years ago.

The concept of the cultural landscape was said by **Tiago Toma** to have a political connotation. In a country like Brazil it is important to recognize the multiple cultural impacts on the landscape, even those now covered with rainforest but which contain the remains of pre-Columbian earth-building.

Martin Drenthen emphasized that Europeans view their cultural landscape as part of their heritage. Some ask whether their existing landscapes are wild enough. Others believe that altering the balance of mammals, say by re-introducing the wolf, will be beneficial. Clearly, rewilding means different things to different people. It is a form of ecological restoration, but the goals of those advocating rewilding vary. Allowing nature to take its course by minimizing landscape management is one route. Re-introducing long absent species is another. Like beauty, a re-wilded landscape is in the eye of the beholder.

The Gala Dinner

A delightful Gala Dinner was held at the Naval Association of Lisbon building by the yacht harbour on the Tagus at Belem.



The Naval Association at Belem

Our thanks go to Iva Pires, who is now the President of SHE, and her team for organising such an intellectually stimulating and socially friendly conference.

More information on the Society for Human Ecology can be found at
www.societyforhumanecology.org
and more about the Conference at sheconference2018.weebly.com/

Ian Douglas (editor)
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Lisbon

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