

**Transitions in Agriculture and Rural Society.
Global Challenges in Rural History.
II International Congress
(XVI Agrarian History Congress -SEHA # VII Encontro RuralRePort)**

Santiago de Compostela (Spain), 20-23 June 2018.

CALL FOR PAPERS

SESSION P156

**Natural Resources, Collective Action and Egalitarian Cultures.
Property Rights, Organization and Stewardship of Common Lands
from the Middle-Ages to the Agroecological Transition**

Holding a congress on Rural History in the Spanish region of Galicia necessarily reminds us of the traditional practices of land usage rooted in the local community. This involves communities that since the Middle Ages have exercised their rights of stewardship (alone or interacting with higher powers) over the land as a whole, including not only its common resources (forests, pastures, and water) but also those of individual appropriation, prioritising the common good over individual interests. Nevertheless, it is in the management of communal property that communities' collective activity and their capacity for self-regulation is most clearly expressed. It is true that this capacity communities have for regulating their collective property does not exclude, but rather incentivises, the efforts made by outside players to intervene in the mechanisms for the exploitation of communal resources. The importance of these processes during the Middle Ages helps us to understand both the durability of these forms of organisation and the structural nature of the tensions and disputes associated with the commons.

In short, communal practices respond to complex mechanisms for regulating the use of resources, although they are sometimes also the outcome of specific balances of power at local and regional level. These balances may translate horizontal alignments, which reinforce an egalitarian culture, or vertical relationships that express authority and subordination, or both at the same time, into a continuum or gradation. Balances, nonetheless, that are partial and unstable, in which there is conflict leading to new trajectories. Cooperation and conflict are not therefore conflicting terms, as instead they forge links and interactions between them that define the institutional boundaries and the framework for the relationships and possibilities of stakeholders.

The aim of this proposed session is to explore the complexity of the relationships of ownership and community that determine the access to resources in rural communities, as well as further our understanding of collective management since medieval times. The session is open to diverse geographies, including not only Spain and Portugal but also other lands in Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia. It is also open to different working methods, from the registering of documents to the participative approach, including archaeology and toponymy, which have permitted embracing certain practices that are sometimes not very clearly outlined in published documents.

Particularly welcome will be those contributions that provide far-reaching views and which lead to comparative exercises that further our understanding of the dynamics of shared resources and agroecological transition. Especially useful as a reference framework along these lines may be theoretical proposals based on the environmental sciences, peasant studies, the new institutional economy, the theory of collective action and agroecology that have reflected upon common resources. Equally welcome will be those proposals of a practical nature that advance our understanding of the agroecological transition.

Deadline for paper proposals:

30/09/2017

Languages:

EN+ES+PT

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