

PREFACE

In five major chapters, the E-book “**Overarching Issues of the European Area - Moving Towards Efficient Societies and Sustainable Ecosystems**” reflects on the efforts of researchers and academics from various parts of the world to debate and investigate the socio-environmental dynamics of the 21st century. It addresses not only problems, but also solutions in the face of population and urban growth, climate change and its effects, as well as new reconfigurations in teaching, environmental education, and world geopolitics, as well as rearrangements in the production of rural and urban space given the need for sustainable ecosystems for the survival of humankind.

The first chapter, “**Environment and Sustainable Development**”, addresses different aspects related to the environment and applicable legislation, as well as the challenges and solutions for environmental sustainability in a variety of contexts. The first sub-chapter, “**Destruction of Nature and Anti-Ecological Discourse in Brazil: a Brief Analysis of the Environmental Policy of Jair Bolsonaro’s Government (2019-2022)**”, discusses the environmental policy of Jair Bolsonaro’s former government in Brazil from 2019 to 2022. It delves into the relationship between social movements and environmental policy in Brazil, highlighting the government’s impact on the destruction of nature and the advance of capitalist accumulation over protected areas. These actions reflected an option for immediate profit, to the detriment of environmental conservation and respect for the rights of traditional communities. The next three sub-chapters complement each other: “**The Environment in Brazilian Mineral Legislation from 1934 to 1988; The environment in Brazilian mineral legislation from 1988 to 2017; Advances in Brazilian Mineral Legislation regarding the Environment since 2017 with the Creation of the National Mining Agency.**” They specifically address Brazilian mineral legislation and its evolution over time, from 1934 to the most recent advances in 2017 with the creation of the National Mining Agency. The articles analyse the environmental protection measures provided for in the laws and regulations, as well as the responsibility of mining companies for repairing environmental damage, as well as establishing standards for the recovery of areas impacted by the changes introduced in order to increase the effectiveness of penalties in cases of environmental violations. The next article of Chapter I, “**Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change in Southern Europe: Soil and Ecosystem Services**”, highlights vulnerabilities to climate change in Southern Europe due to its dependence on the agricultural sector. It emphasises the crucial role of soil in climate change mitigation and adaptation, providing ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and food production, which are threatened by unsustainable soil quality practices. The last sub-chapter, “**Environmental Sustainability in the Higher Douro, a Border Territory of the European Union**”, deals with environmental sustainability in the Higher Douro (*‘Douro Superior’*) sub-region in Portugal, especially in the context of vineyards and wine production. It emphasises the importance of the sustainable management of natural resources, such as water, and proposes the integration of environmental

studies into local history to promote the sustainable development of the region. In summary, these articles address different aspects of the relationship between human activities, legislation, and environmental conservation, highlighting challenges and possible solutions to ensure a sustainable future for the environment.

The second chapter, "**Landscape, Heritage and Tourism**", presents various discussions covering agricultural landscapes, industrial heritage, territorial marketing, as well as rural development, deforestation, and mono-functional urban centres. The first sub-chapter "**Agricultural Landscapes - Tangible and Intangible Values of Cultural Landscapes**" discusses the importance of agricultural landscapes, highlighting the effects of combining physical, agronomic, and intangible factors. It highlights four examples of agricultural landscapes, discusses management challenges, and proposes recommendations for sustainable management, emphasising the need to consider cultural and economic aspects in addition to physical ones. The second sub-chapter, "**Antimony and Gold Mines in the Municipality of Gondomar: An Opportunity for Industrial Heritage Tourism**", highlights the tourism potential of the antimony and gold mines in Gondomar, Portugal, and proposes the creation of an Interpretive Centre to preserve and promote the memory of these mines. The author adds that there is a need to create policies for the preservation of mining and industrial heritage in Portugal. The third sub-chapter, "**Territorial Marketing as a Tool to Develop Rural Tourism in Dombe Grande, Angola**", explores the application of territorial marketing to promote rural tourism in Dombe Grande, Angola. It is considered a strategy for sustainable development, emphasising the importance of inclusive land use policies and services that improve the living conditions of local populations. The following sub-chapter "**How Formal Education, Productivist Agriculture and Deforestation Cause Environmental Disenchantment and Ontological Injustice in Brazil**" presents the approaches of political ecology and relational ontology. The article explores how they are used to demonstrate that bio-centric environmental education and deforestation caused by productivist agricultural systems lead to the loss of animist folklore which, as part of non-productive rural ways of life, contributes to sustainable socio-ecological land use in the Amazon and Atlantic Forest biomes in Brazil. And finally, the last sub-chapter, "**Monofunctional Urban Centres in Bulgaria - Theoretical and Practical Aspects**", addresses the functional and spatial structure of monofunctional urban centres in Bulgaria, providing examples and indicators of great relevance.

The third chapter, "**Society and Culture**", covers a range of topics, including migration and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as tax justice, the social return of spatial policies and the role of public libraries in community civic education. The first sub-chapter, "**Labour-Related Migration under Conditions of Free Movement: Polish Nationals in Ireland**", examines the migration of Polish citizens to Ireland following Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, using population data and statistical analysis to trace migration patterns. The second sub-chapter, "**The Impact of COVID-19 Outbreaks on Migrant Workers**", explores how

the COVID-19 pandemic has affected seasonal migrant workers in Turkey, especially in the south-eastern region, where many depend on seasonal agriculture. The third sub-chapter, **“Recruitment and Selection in the Third Sector in Times of Pandemic - Some Evidence”**, analyses the changes in recruitment and selection practices in non-profit organisations in Portugal during the pandemic, highlighting the need for rapid and effective adaptation. Based on a literature review, the fourth sub-chapter, **“How Political Systems and Social Policies Affect Well-Being”**, examines how social policies and political systems influence individual well-being, emphasising the importance of subjective indicators as well as material measures. The fifth sub-chapter **“Tax Justice in the 21st Century”** explores the challenges of effective taxation in a globalised and digitalised world, emphasising the importance of transparency and efficiency in taxing taxpayers’ global income. The sixth subchapter, **“The Social Return of the Territorialisation of Domestic Violence Responses”**, analyses the social impact of territorial projects to fight domestic violence in Portugal, using the SROI methodology to assess the return on social investments. Finally, the last sub-chapter, **“In Libraries There Are No Flags”**, discusses the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Role of Public Libraries in Training the World’s Citizens, highlighting the importance of public libraries in promoting citizenship, using the António Mota Municipal Library in Baião, Portugal, as an example.

The fourth chapter, **“Education and Teaching”** addresses different topics related to education and teaching, with an emphasis on innovative strategies and technological tools applied in different geographical and disciplinary contexts. The first sub-chapter **“Application of Participatory Geographical Information Systems in the (Co)Construction of Child-Friendly Cities”** discusses the lack of inclusion of children’s needs in contemporary urban planning. Despite the rights recognised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, they are generally excluded from the planning process. The research presents the results of the application of a Participatory Geographical Information System (GIS) that involved children from a school in Braga, encouraging them to map and propose solutions to existing problems in their community. The second sub-chapter, **“Environmental Educommunication as a Tool for Publicising and Conserving Protected Areas in the Baixada Fluminense Region - Brazil”**, explores the role of environmental ‘educommunication’ in publicising and conserving protected areas in the Baixada Fluminense region, with a focus on the Mário Xavier National Forest. This sub-chapter highlights the use of social media and the actions undertaken in protected areas to raise public awareness to the importance of environmental conservation, emphasising the need to involve society actively in its conservation. It brings up the example of the Flona Mário Xavier Shared Guardianship Extension Programme, a partnership between the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro and the Chico Mendes Conservation Institute. The third sub-chapter **“Normative Reading and Didactic Sectioning to Locate the Place and Role of Posters in Geography and Economics Education in Bulgarian Schools”** discusses the importance of posters in geography and economics education in Bulgarian schools, highlighting the need for an

interdisciplinary approach and the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs). It also analyses the curriculum and the role of posters in presenting geographical information, highlighting the importance of expected competences and learning outcomes. Finally, the last sub-chapter, “**Scientific-Normative Specificities of Country Grouping in Geography and Economics Teaching – Deterministic Didactic-Synergistic Interpretation and Digital Models Through MapChart**”, explores the classification and grouping of countries in geography and economics teaching, highlighting the importance of specific indicators to characterise and group countries. It discusses educational standards and curricula for different levels of education, emphasising the need for teacher skills and the use of digital tools such as MapChart to create personalised geographical maps.

The fifth and final chapter, “**Social and Ecological Dimensions of Rural Fires**”, addresses issues related to the prevention and mitigation of forest fires in different regions of Portugal. The first sub-chapter “**Mapping and Calculating Burnt Areas and Forest Fire Severity Levels Based on Satellite Image Analysis**” highlights the importance of analysing areas affected by forest fires in order to prevent and mitigate their effects. Remote sensing techniques and geographical information systems were used in the analysis, focusing on the fires of August 2022 in the Guarda region, Portugal. The methodology involved the use of spectral indices from Sentinel-2 satellite images to estimate the burnt areas and their severity, relating this data to land occupation. The second sub-chapter, “**The Challenges of Implementing the Safe Village/Safe People Programmes in the Municipality of Ribeira de Pena**”, addresses the challenges faced in implementing the Safe Village/Safe People programmes in Ribeira de Pena, Portugal. It emphasises the predominance of rural occupation, especially forestry, in the municipality and the threat of forest fires due to depopulation and rural abandonment. The study reflects on the experience of Ribeira de Pena’s Civil Protection and Forest Defence Office, identifying challenges such as time management and collaboration with other municipal tasks. The third sub-chapter “**Empowering Communities: A Local Perspective on the Safe Village, Safe People and Rural Fire Preparedness Programmes in Vale Florido**”, discusses the experience of the Municipality of Ansião in implementing the Safe Village, Safe People programmes in the village of Vale Florido, Portugal. It highlights the importance of the community-centred approach, as well as the involvement of local authorities to promote a culture of prevention. Obstacles, strengths, and recommendations for improving the implementation of these programmes are identified. And, finally, the last sub-chapter “**Adapting Policies and Programmes to Local Realities: The Implementation of the Safe Village, Safe People Programmes in the Municipality of Góis**” discusses the implementation of the Safe Village, Safe People programmes in the municipality of Góis, Portugal, following the 2017 fires. It highlights the adaptation of the programmes to the local reality and the challenges faced in getting local associations and populations on board.

As we can see, the International Seminars on the Overarching Issues of the European Area, organised by the U.PORTO and its participants, have taken many different paths. Nevertheless, they all have one thing in common: the hope of living in more efficient and sustainable societies that are socially just and socio-biodiverse. We wish you all a great read!

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