

## THE CASE FOR A WORKSHOP ON EUROPEAN SEAPORT SYSTEMS FROM A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

The coordination team of HISPORTOS has appealed, since the very first moment of its constitution, to national and international debate on seaport studies from a multidisciplinary approach, in individual and institutional as well as epistemological and methodological terms.

Several European researchers and teams currently develop seaport studies according to their own guidelines, frequently without establishing contact among each other.

Furthermore, the main debates today on the history of seaports are focused on the definition of seaport networks, seaport hierarchies and complementarities, and seaport systems. Therefore, research teams should be aware of each others' work. It is, thus, imperative to define work gridlines that could be applied to several case studies, in order to obtain comparative results.

Defining seaport models, another goal of seaport experts, also demands teamwork in international cooperation, which presumes institutional and individual contact between experts. But it also presumes, at a more modest level, the development of micro approaches to seaport infrastructures and seaport spaces so as to achieve more comprehensive models.

This is one of the clearest conclusions reached by the Hisportos project, which, after four years of collective work, reveals the urgent need for international discussion around concepts and methodology on seaport history within Europe.

For this reason, we invited, from among the international participants, one of the most prestigious and highly renowned experts on European seaport history, Professor Gordon Jackson, whose presence is a honor for us all, as well as three other researchers on seaport History: Cátia Antunes and Louis Sicking, both from the University of Leiden, Cátia Antunes being also a fellow countrywoman, and Juan Torrrejon Chaves, professor at the University of Cadiz and an expert on Cadiz seaport history and construction, for whose presence we are also grateful. We further invited Agustín Guimera, a specialist on seaport systems, and Gérard le Bouedec, from France, whose work on French seaports on the Atlantic front is well-known, but their presence could not, unfortunately, be confirmed.

A considerable number of the speakers are members of the Hisportos team, since this workshop is, to some extent, a meeting point and an official closing event of the project's activities. It is our hope, however, that our joint work can be continued in the coming years. We are also exploring the possibility of presenting a *Hisportos 2 Project*, to give continuity to all the paths this project has opened, but could not conclude.

We thus welcome, beside the colleagues from the Department of Geography, João Carlos Garcia, Nicole Vareta and Assunção Araújo, Miguel Nogueira, responsible for the Cartography Office, Filomena Martins and Helena Granja, from the Universities of Aveiro and Minho respectively, and Amândio Barros, also from our University.

Finally, we are very pleased to announce the participation of two of our main young researchers: Sandra Brito and Elisabete Jesus, as well as for the presence of Sara Pinto and Patrícia Costa, two of our most recent yet valuable research assistants. I take the opportunity to mention Hugo Ribeiro da Silva, also a young team member, who could not, unfortunately, be present at this session.

This workshop was conceived so as to be able to, simultaneously:

1. increase contacts between European teams
2. update knowledge acquired by the several work teams
3. update and propose new research topics and investigation areas and, possibly,
4. prepare research work according to a joint program
5. create the basis for a research team network following European standards.

Whether these goals are too ambitious or, on the contrary, outdated, will comprise one of the topics for discussion in the round tables proposed.

So as to accomplish these goals, we have structured a program divided into four sessions, whose objectives are the following:

1. The goal of the first session is to present some research guidelines in Early Modern Seaports, from both the European and Portuguese viewpoints.
2. The goal of the second and third sessions is to discuss operative concepts, and also research problems involving sources, methodology, database construction and cartographic reconstitutions, and, last but not least, provide an opportunity to cross-reference historical materials.
3. The last session aims to provide a comparative overview on European seaport systems, even though by means of a sample which we hope is representative.

The workshop seeks to boost wide-ranging discussions among the speakers and the public on central issues in seaport history, and we have thus proposed English or French as the “official languages”.

Finally, we wish to thank to the sponsors of this meeting, The Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto, through the Department of History, the Foundation for Science and Technology, and the Administration of the Ports of Douro and Leixões, whose financial support have made this event possible.