

## Editor' note

### Points of interest:

- Salt gardens
- V International Salt fair
- Routes of Sea research

### Three trimesters - nine months!

Whoever visits the [Atlantic Area](#) site will see that ECOSAL was officially born on January 1, 2010 (at 12.00!) This means that nine months have passed, with all the symbolism that this date may have.

In these nine months, from January to October, much has happened on our sites, on the production sites the salt pans have been cleaned up, various compartments for the different productive functions have been prepared; the salt has crystallized and been harvested various times in a generous year for most of the sites. Depending on the latitude, the birds came and went at different times, built nests, incubated eggs and nurtured their broods, often with the rhythm of the salt calendar. The halophytes brought forth flowers, dropped seeds and with the rains of autumn the first shoots emerge.

This is the normal course, a sequence of actions and events, with well determined rhythms and time. But many other things happened: in the winter the powerful waters and tides broke walls, and the gaps where not covered, in the dry season, with no one to open the floodgates, the pans dried up, the channels silted up a little more and for some older salineiros 2010 was, sadly, their last season, since their work, their knowledge, and even perhaps their site will not continue ... Facts that show that the salt pans are vulnerable locations and that we have a responsibility to safeguard them both as beneficiaries and as participants in a project designed for the recovery of these spaces.

ECOSAL has also followed its course: the newsletter and website were started, to promote the project to the outside world, the organization of activities and actions began, some of the working groups met to establish their programs and goals, particularly to create an inventory of cultural heritage and biodiversity. At the level of individual countries we started off the process of European recognition of the brand and image "Sal Tradicional - Rota do Atlântico" in each of the national languages, the institutionalization of which is the unifying instrument to encourage other sites to be included in the route. But now that the partners already know the capabilities and constraints of each other, we must do much more, and better.

In fact, we are now taking the first steps in this adventure together, with the necessary consolidation of some ideas and giving sequence to a number of previously determined tasks, such as the mapping of habitats. This will allow us to have a detailed "portrait" of the various sites in terms of landscape and use.

The general meeting of partners to occur in mid-November in La Rochelle (France) will therefore be a decisive moment in the life of our project because it will take stock of preparations for future actions and will outline a strategy to consolidate them.

Renato Neves  
National coordinator of ECOSAL ATLANTIS in Portugal

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## The Salgado da Figueira da Foz A Garden of Salt

The salt pans of Figueira da Foz (about 50 km west of Coimbra, along the Central Region's coastal area) like most of the salt pans of the Atlantic, developed within an estuary, in this case the river Mondego estuary, which is one of the main water courses of Portugal, the source of which is located inside the largest mountain mass of the country (Serra da Estrela).



The history of the Figueira da Foz salt pans, dating back to the twelfth century and up until the late eighteenth century is a story of permanent conquest of land for the salt-producing activity with moments of greater or lesser expansion, depending on various crises and contingencies. In the mid-twentieth century the salt-flats occupied 798ha, divided into about 229 units that occupied three different areas of the estuary: Vila Verde on the north shore (17 salt pans), Lavos on the south bank (71 salt pans) and the Island of Morradeira, roughly in the middle (141 salt pans). At that time, many hundreds of people worked on the salt-works, one of the main pillars of the local economy.

Salt was transported to many places in the world through the harbour of Figueira da Foz, and besides exportation, there was a regional market of great significance. The salt was transported on barges up the Mondego River to the mouth of the Dão, there it was transported by ox-carts to a distribution warehouse located at the crossroads of several pathways. Its importance was such that the town was named Carregal do Sal "place where you load salt" (100km north-east of Figueira da Foz), from where the salt was distributed to many locations of the Portuguese hinterlands and even Spain.



The local importance of salt motivated a real culture surrounding all the activities involving salt, expressed in folklore (Rancho das Salineiras de Lavos – the folk-dancing group of the salt workers of Lavos), gastronomy (salted fish, potatoes baked in salt) and numerous expressions and techniques that exist only in Figueira da Foz. These include singularities like the communal management of breeding grounds for fish that supplied the salt pans, with common ownership, functioning as extensive fishing grounds, where fishing was carried out annually.

After 1970 this situation changed radically; beginning a long process of abandonment and conversion to other activities (aquaculture) and destruction (port works and road-building). After the golden decade (when was this - the 1960s?) of traditional salt-works, the region witnessed a gradual decline in salt activities. The water latticing that was so distinctive of the region, covered with white mounds of

salt between Spring and Summertime, gave rise to a progressively dry and barren, abandonment-coloured landscape, laced with creeks, where, gradually, the long salt skiffs fell asleep, left at the mercy of the same fortune that befalls all such elements of salt: to turn into old wooden skeletons, forgotten too quickly for time to heed the many significant losses that, like them, became grounded.



human resourcefulness.

Aware of the importance and the need to conserve the landscape of the salt pans of Figueira da Foz, the Municipality acquired, in 2000, the Salina do Corredor da Cobra – Lavos - with its associated warehouse, providing it, over the years, with some additional features, such as a pedestrian route, a River route and, more recently, an Interpretive Center, also known as the Núcleo Museológico do Sal (Salt Museum Centre) which is an open space for experimentation and creation of knowledge, for the structuring of new identities that constitute it, based on the different kinds of relationship between Man, Society, Culture and Nature. All this together has served to develop some community projects, the highlight of which is ECOSAL ATLANTIS - a strategic program of comprehensive and sustainable development of the salt flats of the Atlantic.

As it is a project with a very strong tourism slant with best practices geared toward ecological tourism, the proposed actions to be put in place by 2012, for Figueira da Foz, focus mostly on the territory of the salt-flats, especially two large centres of artisanal salt production; the warehouses of Lavos and Morraceira Island.

We want the restoration of the Rota das Salinas (route of the salt pans) and the salt-producing area it lies in, to improve access to them and provide them with the required suitable infrastructures for the growing number of visitors and pedestrians who increasingly seek out this space, recognizing it for its unique, natural beauty.

We hope to lead our visitors and travellers to rediscover, with each visit, the unique privilege of coming to the idyllic beauty of these increasingly better known Gardens of Salt.



Sónia Ferreira Pinto (Câmara Municipal da Figueira da Foz)

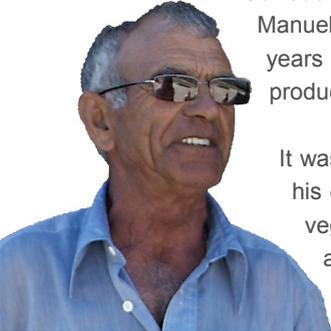


Arquivo Fotográfico Municipal da Figueira da Foz

# Character

## Manuel Ferreira Oliveira

With the underlying intention of perpetuating the memory and history of salt, the municipality of Figueira da Foz acquired the salt pans Corredor da Cobra in 2000. For some years this saltpan had "lain fallow", in need of renovation and cleaning, Manuel Oliveira was the man chosen for this task, and with all the dedication and commitment of the last ten years of his long life, he devoted himself to the task of recovering and keeping the Corredor da Cobra, as a production unit of the Núcleo Museológico do Sal da Figueira da Foz, running, as resident salineiro.



It was a hard and complex task, in which Manuel Oliveira, accompanied by some comrades, had to put all his effort and knowledge. They had to scrape up and load tons of sediment, had to repair woodwork, cut vegetation and unblock channels and water passages, but in the very first year after this effort, it was already possible to witness the "miracle" of the return of the salt.

Born in 1938, the story of Manuel Oliveira is the story of a generation, now passed, who was practically born and lived on the salt pans, who knew all the secrets of the time and art of harvesting salt, who saw years of abundant harvests and years in which virtually nothing was produced. As a salineiro he was born in the time of the greatness of salt and followed its downfall. He started working in the salt pans when he was only seven years old which kept him out of school but this did not affect his very keen intelligence and excellent memory because he recalls all the salt pans where he worked, the years spent in each and often the production of these years!

As an interesting and lively conversationalist, he captured the sympathy and respect of all who visited the Corredor da Cobra, whether they were leisure visits or study visits, all those who came in contact with him admired his hospitality, joy and love for his profession. At 72, 2010 is the year that marks the end of his life as an active salineiro. We wish him a long life and that he might pass on a part of his knowledge to others who may continue his legacy, as for his qualities and his experience, Manuel Oliveira is recorded in the book *Arte do Sal da Figueira da Foz*.



Renato Neves  
National coordinator of ECOSAL ATLANTIS in Portugal

# Events

## V International of Salt

Between 15 and 19 July during the Festival of Ria, Aveiro held for the fifth consecutive year, its International Fair of Salt

The initiative had as its main objective the promotion of traditional salt as a product with economic and heritage value, and is part of the program of activities for promotion of the City Museum | Ecomuseum Marinha da Troncalhada associated with the project ECOSAL Atlantis.

The event, which this year took place in one of the central squares of the city, promoted salt and derivatives products from Aveiro, Ílhavo, Figueira da Foz, Rio Maior and Isla Cristina [Spain] traditional producers.

In parallel, the Educational Services presented the City Museum to the public, and included tours in the eco-museum to observe in situ, the production techniques of the Salgado de Aveiro.

Museu da Cidade de Aveiro | Câmara Municipal de Aveiro



## Presidential visit to the University of Aveiro

The President of Portugal, Prof. Aníbal Cavaco Silva, visited the University of Aveiro, on September 27th, where he chaired the session "Research on Routes of the Sea," in order to meet the university's contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge and intervention on the Sea .

The President also visited an exhibition of posters from several projects at the University of Aveiro concerning the Sea, including one from the ECOSAL ATLANTIS.

Traditional salt production and ECOSAL ATLANTIS were highlighted, being the first research group to receive the President.



University of Aveiro

### Salinas tradicionais do Atlântico – desenvolvimento integrado e sustentável do ecoturismo

ECOSAL ATLANTIS

**Objetivos**

Promoção do desenvolvimento conjunto, integrado e sustentável do turismo baseado no património cultural e natural dos espaços salícolas do Atlântico

**Intervenção**

- Gestão do património cultural e natural dos espaços salícolas
- Valorização e promoção dos espaços salícolas tradicionais do Atlântico
- Desenvolvimento do ecoturismo
- Implementação de uma Rota das Salinas

**Entidades participantes**

Associação Produtoras Sal de Rio Maior  
 Fundação Casimiro Nabuco Portugal de Aveiro (FUNDATUPA)  
 Associação do Mar Salado  
 Centro Nacional de Investigação Científica (CIN) – Gêotemas  
 Universidade de Coimbra (UCP) – Gêotemas  
 Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, Figueira da Foz e Rio Maior  
 Universidade de Aveiro

**Entidade Financiadora**  
 União Europeia – Fundo Europeu de Desenvolvimento Regional (FEDER)



## Events

### Field work of Action 6.1 - Evaluation of biodiversity in salt areas

On September 30, 2010, we began the field work under Activity 6 - Biodiversity and Eco-Tourism

With a view to define the sampling sites and the methodologies and techniques for observing the different parameters in evaluation in this activity, we visited the salt pans at Santiago da Fonte, Corima, Primavera/Casqueira and Troncalhada regarding the Salgado de Aveiro and the Corredor da Cobra from the Salgado da Figueira da Foz. In order to define sampling strategies and other parameters for evaluating sites, visits were made to the salt pans at Santiago da Fonte, Corim, Primavera/Casqueira and Troncalhada, from the Salgado de Aveiro and the Corredor da Cobra from the Salgado da Figueira da Foz.

For each of these salt pans places were pre-marked where we will be monitoring the physical, chemical and environmental factors defined for this action, over the three years of project ECOSAL ATLANTIS implementation

University of Aveiro



## Calendar activities

#### Past activities:

- **July, 2010**  
V International Salt Fair (Aveiro, Portugal)
- **September, 2010**  
Presidential visit to the University of Aveiro (Aveiro, Portugal)  
Field work of Action 6.1 Portugal (Aveiro e Figueira da Foz)

#### Future activities:

- **November, 2010**  
Workshop "Salt, an enemy to kill or a product to know?" (Aveiro, Portugal)  
Partners' assembly (La Rochelle, France)