

**Report of the External Advisory Committee, Instituto de Estudos Medievais (IEM),  
Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova, Lisbon (Portugal)**

*December 5, 2014*

**Meeting**

The meeting of the advisory committee took place on Saturday, 23 November 2014, between 10am and 1.30pm, in the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, in the presence of the director, the faculty members responsible for the research groups, the editor of the online journal *Medievalista online*, and many colleagues, doctoral students, and post-doctoral students. The meeting had been well prepared; committee members had received via email the report sent to the FCT (2013), who were thus able to familiarize themselves with the issues in advance. The IEM also provided committee members with a brochure entitled *Institute of Medieval Studies: Promoting Research and Supporting Researchers*; this brochure includes—in addition to an organogram—helpful sections entitled “Who we are”, “Mission”, “Research Groups”, “Thematic Lines”, “Thematic Networks”, “IEM/FCT Projects (ongoing)”, “Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Projects (ongoing)”, “International Research Projects (ongoing)”, “Dissemination activities”, “*Medievalista online*,” “Training”, and finally, “Facts and Figures”. The IEM similarly supplied a complete package including a ‘SWOT’ and Strategic Plan, as well as sections on management structure, self-evaluation and research, and “IEM in Numbers”, while the editor of *Medievalista online* provided an assessment of the journal.

The director presented the centre and its activities with a PowerPoint presentation, after which the faculty members responsible for the two research groups spoke for around fifteen minutes each, providing a synthesis of the activities of their group and the lines of research with a PowerPoint written in English. The director and team leaders are entirely conscious of the centre’s many strengths as well as specific weaknesses: among the latter, its limited international visibility, the scarcity of financed projects and grants for doctoral/post-doctoral students, and the absence of administrative staff. They are also conscious of the factors that may diminish production and limit research productivity, notably the reduction of financial support and the limited number of positions available for post-doctoral students.

**Committee members present:**

Prof. Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, Universidade de Coimbra  
Prof. Simon Doubleday, Hofstra University, New York.  
Prof. Denis Menjot, Université de Lyon 2, UMR 5648/CIHAM  
Prof. Harvey L. Sharrer, University of California, Santa Barbara

*Profs. Ermelindo Portela Silva (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela) and Silvia Maddalo (Università degli Studi della Tuscia-Viterbo) were unable to attend.*

**Assessment**

The IEM, created in 2002, has already become a **hub of research** into medieval studies in Portugal. It has achieved high standards of excellence in terms of its administration and research production, and has justifiably achieved national and international prominence. It integrates almost all the medievalists, from different disciplines (history, art, literature, archaeology), in the faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at the Universidade Nova de



Lisboa. It includes 82 permanent researchers, and 26 associated researchers, as well as 38 postdoctoral students and some twenty researchers from abroad. It is a powerful magnet attracting researchers, doctoral and post-doctoral students, and advanced students from abroad. In 2013, it received 10 new doctoral students, 7 post-docs, 7 FCT researchers, and 1 Marie Curie (a total of 25).

The **research program** of the IEM is outstanding in both quality and quantity. The committee was impressed by the exceptionally high quality of IEM members' scholarship, and in particular by the nature of their interdisciplinary work. Despite the financial difficulties arising from the financial crisis in Portugal, it has maintained a wide-ranging research agenda, in which interdisciplinary approaches are truly cutting-edge. Interdisciplinarity here does not mean simply a conventional crossing of borders between literature and history (for example), but an innovative challenging of disciplinary borders that continue to exist in other countries: for instance, the borders between art history and science. The researchers share a common commitment to work across entrenched disciplinary frontiers. The committee recommends that this research might in the future be defined and promoted using more specific language that underlines more clearly the genuinely innovative and often cutting-edge nature of the work that is being done by the members of the IEM.

Research activity is structured clearly into **two research groups**—"Territories and Powers", and "Images, Texts and Representations"—and, to facilitate cooperation between the researchers, two thematic lines: "People and Knowledge in Motion: Medieval Portugal in Trans-European Networks" and "Archives and Sources: Rethinking the Writing and the Materials for Medieval Studies". The restructuring into two research groups—recommended by the previous committee—and two thematic lines, reflects the centre's responsiveness to changes in the profile of researchers and the nature of their thematic interests. The IEM's strategic plan is coherent and realistic, in the view of the committee, combining continuity with necessary adaptations and the accentuation of the interdisciplinarity that is essential for future historical research.

The IEM's impressive **publication** output includes numerous collective works, conference proceedings, and individual monographs. The IEM has understood the importance of publishing in languages other than Portuguese, in order to ensure greater diffusion. Two prominent examples are: *Historiography of Medieval Portugal* and *La Ville Médiévale en Débat*. Projects in progress include a bibliography on scientific production in medieval Portugal, and an interdisciplinary project on communities in the High Middle Ages. Twelve doctoral theses are currently in progress. The many strong points that the committee observes include the IEM's responsiveness to calls for scholarly collaboration, and its resourcefulness in applying for grants from public and private institutions, including the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, for colloquia and publications.

**\*\* Important note:** The committee is very surprised to learn that the FCT does not allow the sale abroad of FCT publications: it is essential to rectify this aberration, to ensure that the work of IEM scholars is better known internationally \*\*

Alongside traditional print publishing, the IEM also promotes **electronic publishing**, and has begun to publish a number of e-books. It also has a pioneering electronic journal, *Medievalist online*, which publishes texts in medieval studies both in Portuguese and in other languages. The review has been able to attract a growing number of submissions from abroad, having been indexed in databases such as Dialnet, Latindex, Lusopen Edition and Scielo. As



the committee advised in 2011, *Medievalista online* now has an advisory board with 14 international members. This number could be further increased, to include Belgian, Italian, German colleagues (etc.), to expand the audience and attract new articles.

A number of extremely valuable **databases** have been developed, among them *Litter*, *Imago*, and *Medieval Colours*. The committee recommends that all databases be made publicly accessible as early as possible. We also recommend that, as the momentum of research production is continued, a particularly high priority be placed on placing articles with leading international journals (e.g. the *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, etc.). International publication should not only be increased and enhanced but also more concentrated on presses with high international prestige.

The IEM has a useful **website** with links to important databases. It would be helpful if all the databases currently sponsored by the IEM could be easily accessed directly from the home page rather than being embedded currently under the "RECURSOS" button. **Social media** could also be used effectively (Facebook, Twitter, and such email discussion groups as "ESPORA" and "Mediber") in order to promote IEM publications and upcoming IEM sponsored conferences, particularly those with international participation. More involvement of individual IEM members in social media outlets should also be encouraged in terms of dialogue with specialists in other countries. Academia.edu is another useful outlet for IEM scholars to publicize their work; some are already doing so, but it could be used even more widely. The submission of IEM publications for review in international journals (print and electronic) would also be an effective means of diffusion: *The Medieval Review* (TMR) is one essential resource here; so is the book review section of the American Academy of Research Historians of Medieval Spain, whose board and new president are keen to promote Portuguese medieval studies. The following journals publish a large number of reviews: *Speculum* (Medieval Academy of America); *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* (CESCM, Poitiers); *Medievalia* (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona); *Médiévales* (Université de Vincennes), *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* (CSIC, Barcelona).

The importance of the IEM as a hub of international research is also evidenced by the participation of numerous researchers in the **scholarly meetings** it organizes and the participation of some of its members in international meetings. The director of the IEM has been president of the European Association for Urban History in 2012-14, and organized the 11<sup>th</sup> conference of this association, attended by more than 500 participants. Individual IEM members have participated in 14 international projects. There are close connections between some members of the team and European and global (particularly Brazilian) scholarly circles. The IEM is well integrated into national and international **research networks**, including ABREM (Associação Brasileira de Estudos Medievais), CARMEN (Co-operative for the Advancement of Research through a Medieval European Network) and FIDEM (Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales). It might in the future also become involved in networks such as AARHMS (American Academy of Research Historians of Medieval Spain).

There is a close symbiosis, at the IEM, between research and the **teaching** of doctoral and post-doctoral students. Members of the IEM provide Master's and doctoral-level teaching in the departments of History, Literature, Archaeology, and History of Art. It has wisely offered a workshop in research methods, and members participate in the teaching of units directly relating to their research: *Espaços e poderes na Idade Média* and *A Guerra na Idade Média*, as well as in summer courses. The IEM might encourage co-direction or co-advising

of theses with foreign colleagues, and might enhance support for candidates seeking grants in foreign countries.

The IEM also has a close interaction with social and cultural institutions, enabling it to organize exhibitions and participate in cultural events.

### Conclusion

The IEM plays a pivotal role in the development and diffusion of knowledge of the Middle Ages, within the scholarly community and in society as a whole. The IEM is, in the view of the committee, a centre of scholarly excellence whose work should be supported vigorously by the FCT and by the UNL, in both financial and human terms. A full-time secretary is essential, as are office spaces suitable for allowing team members to work in good conditions, to attract researchers from Portugal and beyond, and to develop European projects.

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*M-Coelho*

15/12/14

Simon Doubleday