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“Resilience of agricultural systems against crises”

Medicinal Herbs Cultivation, Trade and Consumption in Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay

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Abstract

In the global era, few value single-site ethno-geographic research. It is everybody's dream, however, to travel to far distant places, usually green sites, for pleasure and tranquility. There we all hope to forget everyday troubles, the exigencies of urgency and action, which characterises the 21st Century interconnected working places worldwide. This contribution focus is on a unique living in-between two countries city – Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay – one hour distant by ship from the capital city of Argentina, Buenos Aires. Over one million tourists travel year-round to this small oasis of peace, enjoying nature as much as architecture. Colonia del Sacramento is located on the northern bank of the River Plate. The town has an aura of mysticism due to the fact of having been dedicated to the Holy Sacrament. Founded in the late January 1680 by the Portuguese Governor of Rio de Janeiro, the port soon became a strategic base, aimed at conquering sites further inland. In the midst of the year 2011 I've interviewed fifty urban gardeners and herb traders as to their preferences in terms of medicinal plants, teas and cataplasms. Results show that the first preference is constituted by herbs of European origin, followed by Native Americans. It was the first time that the European influence was singled out in this research. So far I have interviewed over 1,000 people from other eight Latin American cities and metropolis (Santiago, Belem, St. Louis, Lima, Habana, Central Mexican Region, Rio Cuarto, San Jose), and the local medicinal species were always the top ranking use. Hope is to contribute to value single-site ethnography in the field of traditional medicinal knowledge.

Keywords: Single-site ethnography, traditional medicinal knowledge