

securing future funding. In many regards students are having to work harder and smarter, developing skills which will open up employment opportunities beyond academia in the private or NGO sectors. And this has to be done in a context where funded professional development training opportunities are almost entirely absent. This problem is amplified by difficulties students encounter sustaining themselves over the course of their studies as a consequence of financial institutions that are unwilling, or unable, to consider offering long term student loans. For those nearing completion of their PhD studies, the feeling is that the financial crisis has made emigrating a necessity to successfully develop their new careers. Whilst the challenge and opportunity inherent in this broadening of horizons is both positive and invigorating, it is hard to watch so many of our highly skilled and promising graduates leave without any certainty that they will ever have the opportunity to return.

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## Portugal

### **How to keep social-psychological research alive and well in times of European financial crisis? A perspective from Portugal**

Dear colleague, the following paragraphs are a response to a kind and challenging request of the EBSP editors for a junior Portuguese social psychologist to give his perspective on the consequences of the European financial crisis on social psychological research in Portugal. The challenge here was to produce some thoughtful and concise writing about the recent history and main achievements of social psychology in Portugal, and from that, project what the future might enclose and how we can address anticipated adversities.

I guess it is never easy to speak about your own country, especially when in the midst of a lively and acrimoniously political debate that encloses many of the ingredients of a typical intergroup exchange. Watching the news on the European financial (economic, social, and political) crisis, I cannot help going through a mental checklist of confirmed social psychological hypotheses on intergroup dynamics, and to go revisit seminal work by social psychologists and other social scientists on these issues (e.g., Breakwell & Lyons, 1996; Hewstone, 1986; Mummendey & Waldzus, 2004). Recently released polls seem to indicate that the antagonisms between European countries and towards the EU are on the rise (e.g., Pew, 2013). From a research perspective, this (in many ways) new and very dynamic context might offer an opportunity for social psychologists to restate the soundness of well established theoretical models and hypotheses, as well as to enrich the public debate by bringing into play other perspectives beyond the economic perspective.

At the same time, and as it happens so often with social psychological research, I see myself within a large scale, uncontrolled, "study", assigned to an experimental condition that puts subjects through a myriad of insidious events, such as being exposed to the word

“crisis” (and “unemployment”, and “public debt”, and “recession”, and “cuts”, etc.), in the first 10 seconds every time you switch on the TV. After a couple of months this operates as a black-hole-mantra for any sort of hope, vision, and creativity – a depressive shared *frame of reference* (Sherif, 1936) – that also blocks most of your capacity for acknowledging big chunks of inconsistent (i.e. positive) reality. So, in order to give you a fair-minded perspective on Portugal and its social psychology – where it stands and where it might go –, I guess I have to take one step outside this very reductionist and negative frame of reference.

Over the last decade Portugal undertook hulk steps in developing its scientific field. Between 2005 and 2010 the number of Portuguese *doctorates* and *publications* per 100.000 inhabitants increased significantly (respectively, 11.4 to 15.8 and 70.5 to 121.7). In Social Psychology the number of published papers increased 10 times within the same period, and 2010/2011 contributed alone to 57% of the total production between 1996 and 2011 (SCImago, 2013). Portugal has also contributed in a very active way to many of the activities of the EASP during the last two decades: in 1993 the country hosted the General Meeting, several small/medium-size meetings were organized since 2000, and the upcoming Summer School will be held in Lisbon, next year, under the joint collaboration of ISCTE-IUL and ICS-UL.

There is no doubt we came a long way in our recent history as Portuguese social psychologists since one of its symbolic inaugural events, the 1980 Symposium *Social Change and Social Policy* that took place in Lisbon, in Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, under the auspices of Henri Tajfel, Willem Doise, and Jacques-Philippe Leyens (Lima, Castro, & Garrido, 2003; Vala, & Costa-Lopes, 2012). Coincidentally, and as I write these lines, the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of *Psicologia Social* (Vala & Monteiro, 2013) is being released, an handbook that has been instrumental since its first edition in 1993 in disseminating the discipline of social psychology in Portuguese speaking countries.

These developments in science and specifically in social psychology are the result of many factors, two of paramount historical significance: the 1974 democratic revolution that liberated the country’s human capacity from over four decades of dictatorship, followed by a strong and consistent investment in education and (more recently) in science. Between 2005 and 2010 the public and private expenditure for R&D as percentage of the country’s GDP doubled from 0.8% to 1.6% (PORDATA, 2013). The impact of this investment was greatly boosted by one key ingredient: *a two-way openness*.

On the *one-way*, young Portuguese researchers applied for individual doctoral and post-doctoral grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF) with the option to carry out part of their research program abroad. This was my case, as well as the choice of 46.4% of the doctoral students with a NSF scholarship in 2011, that went to the UK, the USA, Spain, France, The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, etc. (FCT, 2013). On the *second-way*, doctoral and post-doctoral candidates from other countries could also apply for these grants, and many did so. Alongside, there were also work opportunities for more experienced researchers which attracted colleagues from abroad. In my research center (CIS-IUL), in Lisbon, we have colleagues from Germany, the USA, Italy, and Poland, more than half of the teachers in our Masters in Psychology of Intercultural Relations are non-Portuguese, and our International Meeting in social and organizational psychology for Ph.D. students that takes place every two years in ISCTE-IUL attracts students from many different countries.

These are just some, very personal, examples of this *two-way openness*, or *internationalization*, which exists today and was still a project two decades ago in the minds of a few enthusiastic Portuguese social psychologists. What, then, are we at risk of losing with the financial crisis, and with the prospect of cuts in the funding for research projects, Ph.D. and post-doctoral grants, travel grants, etc.? My short answer would be, precisely the vigor and stability of these prolific two-way open exchanges between junior/senior social psychologists, that overcomes national borders, something that took many years and hard work to build, which was instrumental not only for the development of social psychology in Portugal, but also for the integration and excellence of social psychology within Europe.

The EASP has played a key role since its foundation in 1966 in building this inclusive network of researchers, while facing many challenges on the way. For that reason, I'm convinced that together we will find both traditional and innovative ways to keep this network of people alive and well, while at the same time increasing the visibility of the contributions of social psychology outside our network. In a way it is interesting to note that if you Google the words "crisis", "Europe", and "social psychology", you have to scroll down a bit before you find a reference to a "crisis" situated "outside" social psychology. Maybe we might gain some perspective and insights if we challenge ourselves to take one step outside our customary frame of references.

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