

Repositório ISCTE-IUL

Deposited in *Repositório ISCTE-IUL*:

2022-11-29

Deposited version:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Lopes, J.M.T., Abrantes, P., Ferro, L., Ramos, M., Melo, B.P., Ferreira, A:...Aníbal, A. (2020). Sociology in Portugal: Local, national, and international dialogues. In Sari Hanafi, Chin-Chun Yi (Ed.), Sociologies in dialogue. London: Sage.

Further information on publisher's website:

<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/sociologies-in-dialogue/book271773>

Publisher's copyright statement:

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Sociologies in dialogue

Sociology in Portugal: local, national, and international dialogues

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Abstract

Although the institutionalisation of sociology in Portugal was only possible after the revolution of 1974, it is currently characterised by a remarkable vitality, noticeable for instance in the number and diversity of the members of the Portuguese Sociological Association (*Associação Portuguesa de Sociologia*), as well as the participants at its national conference. However, significant challenges have also emerged, not only resulting from the expansion and diversification of sociologists, but also from the economic crisis, the austerity policies, the growth of social sciences specialisations, and policies favouring business, law, health and engineering in research and the labour markets.

Keywords (5): Sociology, Portugal, Portuguese Sociological Association, Sociological Dialogues

Introduction

It is relevant to discuss the current situation of sociology in Portugal, considering the recent trends worldwide and the ability of sociology to dialogue with society, at local, national, and international levels. This text is organised in three stages: firstly, an overview of sociology in Portugal is presented; secondly, the development of the Portuguese Sociological Association (*Associação Portuguesa de Sociologia – APS*) is sketched; thirdly, the process of internationalisation of Portuguese sociology is discussed. We start by analysing the context in which sociology was born in Portugal and the conditions that made its expansion possible since the 1980s. Then we discuss the availability of the teaching of sociology considering its regional distribution and we present a social demographic picture of its graduates. The professional activities performed by sociologists, namely the fact that many of them work in local

administration, is then analysed, also taking into account the results of the national public meetings focused on the professional practices of sociologists in a local context. In the second section, we discuss the important role of the Portuguese Sociological Association in the institutionalization of sociology in Portugal, highlighting the actions developed to promote the integration and dialogue between academic and professional sociologists from different regions and generations. According to Burawoy's typology, we suggest that, despite some tensions, academic and critical sociologies were developed and are currently present in the Portuguese context. However, the connection with a large group of applied sociologists has weakened over time. Public sociology may be the missing link for fostering a dialogue among sociologists and other sectors of society. Finally, the third section focuses on the recent efforts of the Portuguese Sociological Association to broaden international dialogue within the community of sociologists worldwide. This is being achieved through the collaboration in projects and networks especially in Europe and in Portuguese-speaking countries such as Brazil and Angola. The conclusions present a critical discussion on the role of academic degrees in sociology and sociologists in Portugal, and define a strategy to respond to the current challenges faced by our discipline and professionals.

1. The birth of sociology in Portugal: a never-ending dialogue

The development of sociology in Portugal was considerably delayed during the authoritarian regime in government from 1926 to 1974. Actually, the pioneer efforts of some liberal and republican intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century, especially inspired in the French founders of sociology, were persecuted by the dictatorship. Nevertheless, during the authoritarian regime one can still find some scattered sociological research, mainly focusing on labor productivity and workers' physical and moral conditions, developed by agencies under the Ministries of Agriculture, Corporations and Overseas, and Schools such as the Lisbon Institute of Agronomy or the Lisbon Social Work School (Ágoas, 2013). But it was only in the 1960s that sociological thinking and methods started to be more significantly discussed in universities, particularly by the few economists concerned with development and inequality. These were supported somewhat by progressive sectors of the Catholic Church and inspired a new generation of students eager to promote social and political change.

In spite of the few resources and high political control, the Social Research Office (Gabinete de Investigações Sociais) was founded in 1962. In the following year, the scientific journal “Análise Social” (Social Analysis) was launched in Lisbon, with the journal “Economia e Sociologia” (Economy and Sociology) being launched in Évora a few years later in 1966. This office and the journals introduced into Portugal key sociological concepts and discussions, producing and disseminating some empirical studies, with a considerable impact on a country where any utterance against the regime was censored. Despite the many efforts made during the 1960s, the government never allowed the teaching of sociology in public universities. It was only in 1974, right after the democratic revolution, that the first public graduations began in ISCTE, Lisboa (Pinto, 2007; Machado, 2009).

In spite of many similarities in economic, cultural, and political history, the development of sociology in Portugal was quite different from that observed in Spain where this subject was incorporated by the dictatorship, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, as a tool of empirical research and social control. In the Spanish context, the political conflicts and academic hierarchies were a major challenge for the development of sociology and, especially, for building a notion of a scientific and professional community when the dictatorship was overthrown by democracy (Álvarez-Uría and Varela, 2000). It is significant that, in contrast to close political and economic links between both countries, the cooperation and interconnection among Portuguese and Spanish sociologists was almost absent until the turn of the twentieth century.

The expansion of sociology in Portugal from 1980 to 2000 was quite impressive. This is revealed by the fast evolution in the number of degrees, students, professionals, members associated to the Portuguese Sociological Association, conferences, journals, and research projects, as well as the increasing presence of sociologists in politics and the media. The fact that sociology could be institutionalised as an autonomous field of education, research, and professional activity only during the last two decades of the twentieth century, a period characterised by economic growth, political integration with the EU, and cultural openness, paved the way for a particular ethos of Portuguese sociology. This ethos is characterised by a considerable freedom concerning traditions and hierarchies, particularly in academia. There is also a strong bias towards international theoretical and methodological frameworks, especially with France, the UK, and the US, an interdisciplinary and worldwide openness, and a close involvement in the processes of democratisation, modernisation, and social intervention (Machado, 1996; Baptista and Machado, 2010). This process led to a specialization in multiple professional activities and research topics that, on the one hand, proves the vitality of the graduates in sociology, but on

the other, raises some concerns regarding fragmentation and the potential weakness of a sense of community (Pinto, 2007).

Still, especially from the economic crisis in 2008 on, a different pattern arose. Since then, concerns about the ability of sociology both to generate an effective professional integration and to produce significant social change arise within the sociological field. Obviously, the economic crisis imposed a downturn in all professional fields, but some doubts emerged specifically concerning sociology. The discipline is often perceived as too soft to be considered as a “real” science (a status increasingly attributed only to hard sciences), but also as too theoretical to be useful both in macro-analysis (compared for instance with political sciences) and in micro-analysis (compared for instance with social work). From another perspective, sometimes sociology is perceived as too critical to be applied in planning, administration, and evaluation (compared to economics and management), and by others as too positivist to generate a critical and emancipatory discourse (compared with anthropology, philosophy, or with social sciences as a whole). Nonetheless, the intersection position and the ability to dialogue fruitfully with these different fields of thinking, research, and intervention is still an advantage when one considers the importance of flexible, open, and multi-tasking projects and professionals.

2. Mapping Portuguese sociology

An overview of sociology in Portugal necessarily requires an analysis of the educational institutions, courses, and academic degrees, as well as the professional activities performed by sociologists. These will be presented in the following sections.

2.1.- Education

The first relevant point to address is that sociology is not included in the national curriculum in basic schools in Portugal. It is an optional subject in upper secondary education that, nevertheless, is not offered in many secondary schools, and, when present, is usually taught by non-sociologists; this situation is being challenged by a public movement and by the National Sociological Association. Curiously, the presence of sociologists is more significant in vocational education and training, as well as in adult education. These professionals are

often involved in curricula development, students' orientation, preparation for the labour market, or citizenship subjects, rather than in teaching sociology.

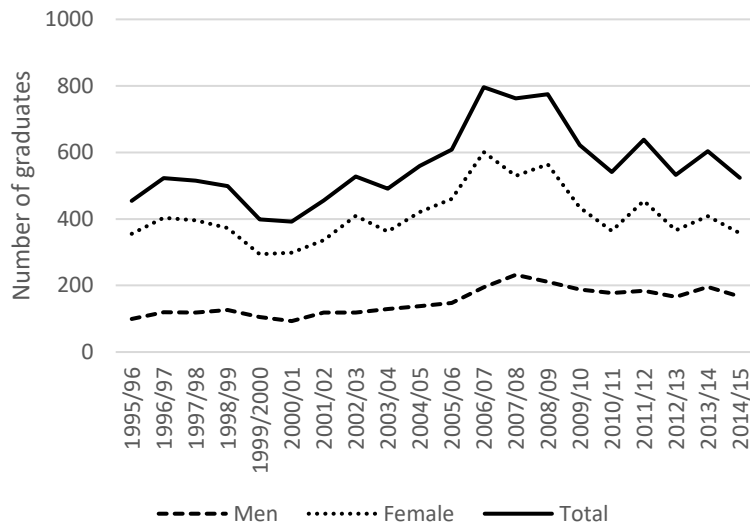
In higher education, in the academic year of 2016-2017, there were twelve undergraduate courses, ten Master's and eight Ph.D. programmes in sociology. All of these courses are offered by public universities, except one undergraduate and one Master's course offered by a private university. Also, there is a considerable concentration in Lisbon (four undergraduate, four Masters', and three Ph.D. programmes), but there are courses available in all the five regions of Portugal, and also in the Azores Islands (undergraduate and Master's levels).

According to the National Census of 2011, 6,901 citizens hold a degree in sociology (Portuguese Statistics, Census 2001). If one considers the 8,435 graduates between 2001-02 and 2014-15,¹ the universe of graduates in sociology at the end of this period was 15,336. Among these, there is an evident predominance of women; in fact, between 1995-96 and 2014-15, 73% of all graduates were women.

However, despite this prevailing trend of feminisation, the weight of women in the total number of sociologists has been decreasing. In 1995-1996, 78% of all graduates were women, while in 2014-15 this number decreased to 68%. Also important is to notice that the evolution of the number of graduates during this period does not present a uniform trend (Figure 1). Although the total number of graduates has increased over time, since 2008-09 there is a negative trend, which is much more significant in females: between 2008-09 and 2014-15 there was a decrease of 32% for the total number of graduates, 21% for men and 37% for women.

Figure 1: Number of graduates in Sociology (undergraduate, Masters' and Ph.D. holders between 1995/96 and 2014/15)

¹Latest information on this issue is from this year (Survey of Registered Students and Graduates of Higher Education; DGEEC/MEC).



Source: Survey of Registered Students and Graduates of Higher Education (DGEEC/MEC)

The analysis of the distribution of graduations by degree and gender for the period from 2001/02 to 2014/15 (Table 1) clearly shows that despite the above-mentioned decrease in the total number of female graduates, there is a feminization of sociology in Portugal. This is particularly noticeable at the undergraduate level where there are almost three times more women than men (ratio=2.8) and also at the Master's level, where women are present 2.2 times more than men. This situation is different at the Ph.D. level where the presence of men and women is almost balanced (ratio=1.1).

Table 1: Number of graduates in sociology by degree and gender (total numbers: 2001/02 to 2014/15)

Degree	M	F	MF	Ratio F/M
Undergraduate	1791	5001	6792	2.8
Master	377	831	1208	2.2
Ph.D.	194	216	410	1.1
Other	7	18	25	2.6
Total	2369	6066	8435	2.6

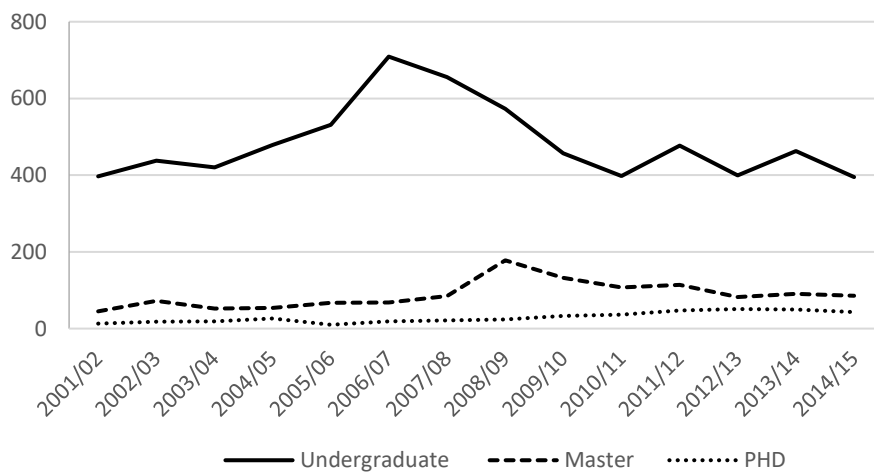
Source: Survey of Registered Students and Graduates of Higher Education (DGEEC/MEC)

Also important is to notice that if the number of sociology graduates between 2001/02 and 2014/15 presents an oscillatory pattern, this does not occur in all degrees (Figure 2). In the period between 2001/02 and 2006/07 the number of undergraduate students increased by 79% (from 397 to 709). From then on the trend reversed dramatically until reaching values in 2010/11 close to those recorded in 2001/02. From 2010/11 to 2014/15 there were some oscillations with a slight tendency towards stabilization.

At the Master level, there was a similar evolution although with some delay: there was sharp growth until 2008/09 (almost quadrupling the number of Masters’); it decreased thereafter until 2012/13, with a tendency to stabilise after that year.

Regarding the Ph.D. level, there was an increasing trend until 2012/13 when the number of Ph.D. graduates was almost four times higher than that of 2001/02. This number seems to have stabilised thereafter.

Figure 2: Number of graduates in sociology by degree (2001/02 to 2014/15)



Source: Survey of Registered Students and Graduates of Higher Education (DGEEC/MEC)

Still, these previously presented figures and corresponding numbers must be contextualised. In fact, one should consider that the number of students in higher education actually decreased during the recent economic crisis (CNE, 2015), a trend that has been explained by restrictive government policies and the new process of course evaluation and accreditation that has generated a shortage of many courses, especially at the undergraduate level. As such, the considerable stagnation of the number of sociology graduates is not necessarily translated into a negative balance. Besides, the increasing trend towards more focused and applied academic offers at Master and Ph.D. levels includes many

interdisciplinary programmes in which the presence of sociology themes and sociologists is considerable (*e.g.*, urban studies; gender studies; human ecology).

2.2.- Labour Markets

According to the 2011 Census, the employment rate among holders of sociology degrees was 84%, a number that is similar to the employment rate for all graduates in social sciences, management, and law. In addition, the employment rate among the younger generation of sociologists (from 25 years to 29 years of age) is also analogous to that presented by all graduates in social sciences, management, and law (Mauritti & Costa, 2014). Among employed sociologists, almost half are working in scientific and intellectual activities (47%), including teaching (17%). Others are leaders in public administration or private companies (12%) and specialists in social and cultural affairs (22%). Altogether, these data mean that more than 75% of sociologists are working in professional (and privileged) socio-occupational positions. Based on these data, the authors questioned the validity and the intentions of the persistent argument in the public space regarding the usefulness of a sociology (or of a social sciences) degree in the current labour market.

Still, some concerns are raised. On the one hand, during the last decade public policies have been reducing public servants, blocking new hirings and career progressions. This is particularly relevant since most sociologists were working in public administration. Besides, the recent expansion of undergraduate and Masters' courses in areas such as management, human resources, social services, social education, or political science has also limited the ability of sociologists to be selected in some professional activities in which they were successfully incorporated before.

Sociologists are then integrated in a diverse range of professional activities, including public administration at a local, regional, and national level, social and educational services, human resources, politics, the media, and so on. António Firmino da Costa (1990) has explored the tensions, variations, and possibilities of the development of a professional culture articulating scientific requirements and diversified occupational demands. Under his guidance, a programme involving professors and students at ISCTE-IUL has been collecting, analysing, and discussing the work pathways, conceptions, and practices of sociologists in a wide range of occupations. This research and its debates are focused on the way in which sociological

identities, skills, and affiliations are managed in these different occupations, without avoiding tensions and dangers, but also acknowledging common features (some of the most promising studies under this programme were published in a special issue of the journal *Sociologia On Line* in 2015).

A recent survey carried out by the Portuguese Sociological Association (Ramos, 2015) focusing on Portuguese sociologists (n=981) has shown that almost 50% work in activities related to education and most of them work in the public sector, including schools and hospitals (this rate increases later in the career). However, there is also a considerable group working in the private sector (around 24%) as well as in research centres (13%). Consistently with other studies, the vast majority of sociologists are in highly qualified and privileged occupations (Allen and Weert, 2007), and the rate of those in intermediary positions decreases throughout the career path, while those in intellectual and scientific positions grow. The situations of over-qualification (graduates working in occupations not requiring an academic degree) are just 9% for young sociologists, a number that decreases to 6% in those who have completed their degree more than five years earlier. In addition, the fact that the length of the sociology undergraduate courses was reduced from five to three academic years also implied that more recent graduates potentially have had insufficient preparation to develop the necessary skills for a more qualified and qualifying professional performance. Finally, and as already mentioned, sociologists were affected by the economic crisis and the increase in the number of non-permanent and precarious posts. Thus, the stability of employment is no longer a reality for a large number of young sociologists and this necessarily interferes with the quality of work they can develop.

2.3.- Local dialogues: sociologists working at a local level

Portuguese public administration is an important employer of sociologists. In fact, the Portuguese Sociological Association Professional Practices first survey (APS, 2013) revealed that 85,5% of the graduates in sociology work for others, and most of them in public administration. More specifically, 41.2% of all graduates were employed in 2013, with 32.4% of all graduates employed one year after graduating and 44.4% five years after graduating. In addition, a significant number of those sociologists work in local authorities. In fact, the local professional context has always been a privileged space for sociologists' activities. Machado (1996) reports that, between 1988 and 1996, the number of sociologists increased six times in central administration and seven times in local administration. In 1996, there was a total of thirty-one

municipalities that employed about seventy sociologists. Although we do not currently have up-to-date statistical data of this reality, we estimate that these numbers have been increasing (Banha, 1999).

The work, developed by sociologists in municipalities and other local organisations, is diversified integrating the study of social reality with the design, management, and evaluation of projects of local intervention. Sociologists are involved in action research projects and in their evaluation. These activities run in parallel with the day-to-day management of local tasks. The main domains (in descending order) are: "sociocultural, housing / urban planning and human resources" (Banha, 1999). These professionals "act from a basic scientific training in sociology, to which they add skills acquired from both work experience and complementary training" (Mauritti and Costa, 2014).

The need to think about and discuss the professional practices of sociologists working in a local context was the motto of two meetings organised by the Portuguese Sociological Association. The first one, "Cultural Dynamics, Citizenship and Local Development" was held in Vila do Conde in 1993 and, more recently, the "Sociology and Local Intervention" meeting took place in 2017 in Marvila, Lisbon. In both cases, it was possible to share experiences, build bridges, and strengthen the professional identity of sociologists who are often overwhelmed by their "contextual professional identities" (Mauritti and Costa, 2014). At the recent meeting in Marvila, projects and experiences of sociological intervention in various contexts were presented, as were the professional pathways of sociologists in local councils and local development associations. Furthermore, professionals with other academic backgrounds have shared, what they considered to be, the main contributions of sociologists in local teams and organisations. Those were key moments of the work of the Portuguese Sociological Association promoting dialogues among professionals working in local authorities and organisations, reinforcing identities, and articulating this work through academic sociological research.

Altogether these data show that a way has been paved in Portuguese sociology, but the challenges imposed by the redefinition of the curricula and by the labour market shall feed more research and discussion on the future of sociology and sociologists in Portugal.

3. The Portuguese Sociological Association: building dialogues since 1985

1985 marks the emergence of new associative actors in sociology in Portugal. This is the year when both the Portuguese Sociological Association and the Portuguese Association of Professionals in Industrial, Organisations and Labour Sociology (Associação Portuguesa de

Profissionais em Sociologia Industrial, das Organizações e do Trabalho – APSIOT), two associations that currently remain active, were founded. In the following year, the short-lived Professional Association of Portuguese Sociologists (Associação Profissional dos Sociólogos Portugueses) was set up with the specific role of discussing the professional careers of sociologists (Carreira da Silva, 2016; Garcia et al., 2014; Machado, 1996). The emergence in the 1980s of this new type of actor is very revealing of the pressing need for a professional representation of sociologists in Portugal and of a collective discussion on the role of sociology and sociologists in Portugal. Overall, the establishment of these associations constitutes an additional step towards the institutionalization of sociology in Portugal.

As the Portuguese Sociological Association grew, not segregating science from profession, it was increasingly represented as the association of all sociologists, independent of their academic or non-academic affiliation, public or private jobs. This process impacted on the development of the Professional Association of Portuguese Sociologists, ultimately leading to its dissolution. Specifically regarding the Portuguese Sociological Association, its members have been steadily increasing since 1985 reaching 2,559 members today representing approximately a fifth of all sociology graduates in Portugal. Although the founders were mainly academics, from 1990 onwards most members of the Portuguese Sociological Association hold a degree in sociology but work outside of academia, mainly in public administration. This pattern is consistent with the professional profiles of sociologists in Portugal presented earlier and suggests that the widespread professional integration of sociologists in Portugal is accompanied by the institutionalisation of sociology. In respect of gender, the male prevalence was reversed in the early 1990s with women reaching around 70% of the Portuguese Sociological Association members in recent years. Currently, the Portuguese Sociological Association has 1,684 female and 875 male members. These numbers, revealing a clear feminization pattern of the members of the Portuguese Sociological Association, are very much consistent with the numbers presented earlier regarding individuals holding a degree in sociology in Portugal (see section “2.2. Labour Market”). It has been suggested that this pattern results from the more general feminisation pattern of scientific and intellectual activities in Portugal. Noticeably, the concentration of members in the Lisbon region has slightly decreased from 72% to 57%, with an increasing presence in the northern region and an increasing presence throughout the Portuguese territories. These data confirm that sociology in Portugal is increasingly feminised, associated with a diversified set of professional integration patterns and presenting a widespread geographical distribution (Carreira da Silva, 2016; Garcia et al., 2014; Machado, 1996).

This composition has led the Portuguese association to be particularly active in promoting integration and dialogue between academic and professional sociologists from different regions and generations. The major event is the National Sociological Conference, organised every four years since 1988, and every two years since 2012. During all of this time, this event has mobilised hundreds of sociologists, including an increasing number of foreign colleagues, as well as graduates of other scientific areas. Also, and specifically aiming to meet the regional distribution of sociologists in Portugal, this conference has taken place in different regions of the country (Lisboa, Porto, Coimbra, Braga, Évora and Faro). From its very beginning, and despite its major focus on academic research, the Portuguese Sociological Association has promoted special sessions and roundtables focused on sociology as a professional activity, which include participants with diversified experiences outside of academia, and which promotes a discussion on practices, identities, and ethics. Since 2012 to the present, the Portuguese Sociological Association has been receiving more than one thousand proposals for presentations at the National Sociological Conference. These numbers are very revealing of the dynamism of the sociological field in Portugal as well as of its growth, consolidation, and social and scientific recognition.

Another important field of activity of the Portuguese Sociological Association was the approval in 1992 of a Deontological Code that guides the professional activity of sociologists in Portugal. This was followed by the establishment of the Deontological Council, which is responsible for the discussion and production of recommendations on issues raised by sociologists, both academics and non-academics, concerning the nature and the boundaries of sociologists' professional activities. Also among the Council's activities is the elaboration of ethics' declarations of conformity for international grants applications as well as the evaluation of complaints of plagiarism presented by its associates, issues that, with the growth of the Portuguese Sociological Association memberships, internationalization, and widespread access to the internet, require increasing attention.

From 2003 to 2006, the association has also organised a cycle of lectures and talks, entitled *Sociology: Science and Occupation*. As for the National Conference, this cycle was carried out in different towns around the country and promoted keynote speeches by sociologists working inside and outside of academia. Altogether, these lectures and talks presented high regional repercussions and contributed to bringing together academic and non-academic actors. Especially since the organisation of a conference on *Public Sociology* with Michael Burawoy, in Lisboa, 2006, there has been an increasing relationship with the International Sociological Association's activities, and a major concern with the role of sociologists in the public space. In

2007, a conference on the *State of Sociology in Portugal: Education, Research and Professionalization* and an online debate on the employability of sociologists were promoted by the Portuguese Sociological Association. These activities are very much in line with the original goal of the Portuguese Sociological Association regarding the role of sociology and sociologists in Portugal.

In 2012, the Observatory of Sociologists' Employment was created in partnership with universities, government, Statistics Portugal, and other institutions. Moreover, the national association was deeply involved in the development of thematic sections, including one devoted to the professional experiences and profiles of sociologists. The current board of the Portuguese Sociological Association is committed to updating and reinforcing this activity, particularly regarding (a) bringing together sociologists in different occupations on topics of common interest – a first conference took place in April 2017 and focused on “local intervention”; (b) working with universities to enable a close relationship between sociology courses and professional activities; (c) promoting a wide debate among members on the skills required to be a sociologist today, and one that aims to be a key reference both for sociology education and for labour market institutions.

In summary, the Portuguese Sociological Association has clearly consolidated and broadened its activities throughout its existence and is now working hard towards bridging academic and non-academic sociology, working both, and simultaneously, in the education and in the labour market fields.

4. International actions and future dialogues

At the international level, the Portuguese Sociological Association has been active in consolidating links and establishing collaborations, most noticeably since the beginning of the twenty-first century, and especially with colleagues from Portuguese-speaking countries. In fact, one of the most important events was held in 2005 when Fernando Henrique Cardoso, sociologist and president of Brazil from 1995 to 2003, gave one of the opening keynote speeches at the Portuguese Sociological Association national conference. This event paved the way for collaborative efforts among Portuguese and Brazilian sociologists. In fact, the Brazilian colleagues form the first scientific community from outside of Portugal consistently participating at the Portuguese Sociological Association national conferences.

Among Portuguese-speaking countries, another important initiative is the Luso-Afro-Brazilian Conference of Social Sciences, a multidisciplinary arena of discussion uniting Portuguese-speaking social scientists, and a very important meeting of several social scientists including a considerable number of sociologists working in Portuguese-speaking countries. This event has been supported by the Portuguese Sociological Association. In fact, our national association was officially represented at the Luso-Afro-Brazilian Conference of Social Sciences held in Angola in 2006. In 2011, the president of the Portuguese Sociological Association participated at the Luso-Afro-Brazilian Conference of Social Sciences, this time held at Salvador da Bahia, Brazil.

Another important international activity was the joint organisation of the session “Portuguese Language” by the Portuguese Sociological Association, the Brazilian Society of Sociology, and the national associations of sociology from Mozambique and Cape Verde. This event took place in Sweden at the ISA XVII World Congress of Sociology in 2010. In the following year, the president of the Portuguese Sociological Association participated as an invited delegate at the Brazilian Congress of Sociology at Curitiba, Brazil.

The international networks developed by the Portuguese Sociological Association have been mainly developed in the Portuguese language space and very especially with Brazilian colleagues, as mentioned before. Among the international activities is the research project on social scientists’ life stories of Portuguese-speaking countries that was begun in December, 2007. The main objective of this project was to map the trajectories of Portuguese-speaking social scientists. This was carried out by interviewing social scientists and making the records accessible online (<http://cpdoc.fgv.br/cientistassociais/lista>). The available interviews form a precious archive of information shared by Portuguese-speaking social scientists. The project was led in Brazil by the historian Celso Castro, the anthropologist Karina Kuschnir, the sociologist Helena Bomeny, and the journalist with post-graduation in sociology and anthropology, Arbel Griner. In Portugal, the project was led by the sociologists António Firmino da Costa and Maria das Dores Guerreiro; in Mozambique, Guilherme Mussane was responsible for the research. This project further contributed to mapping the international networks of sociology. Several joint projects were developed and links across the Atlantic were consolidated.

The internationalisation of Portuguese sociology has been developed mainly through the relationships established with national associations, sociologists, and other social scientists from the Portuguese-speaking countries

There is no doubt that it is desirable to widen the process of internationalisation of sociology to other points of the globe. Currently, the president and board of the Portuguese Sociological

Association are committed to promoting the already-successful internationalisation process of Portuguese sociology. The participation of the Portuguese Sociological Association at the national associations conference at Taipé, Taiwan in 2017, constitutes one of the efforts towards increasing the international dialogue with the community of sociologists worldwide. Also, this text intends to be a contribution towards global sociological dialogues.

Concluding remarks

With the Portuguese Revolution of 25 April in 1974, came social, individual, intellectual, academic, and disciplinary freedom. After this period of social upheaval and a society in deep and rapid transformation that cut across all social fields, a scientific field was needed that could provide a “clear definition and effective solutions to problems starting from a profound, objective and rigorous knowledge of the social reality and of the transformations that Portuguese society was undergoing” (Sedas Nunes, 1963) [own translation].

Sociology did indeed begin its consolidation process in turbulent times, but as this text has clarified, it is today a well-established scientific area in Portugal. Data presented on the teaching of sociology within higher-education institutions revealed a considerable number of universities that include sociology in their undergraduate, Masters’ and Ph.D. courses, almost entirely offered in public universities, but characterised by an excessive concentration within the Lisbon metropolitan area. But the teaching of sociology in Portugal is not without its challenges: the 2008 economic crisis also had a negative effect on the number of graduates and postgraduates in sociology in Portugal. Also, the teaching of sociology at the basic and secondary levels of education raises a greater level of concern. This is mainly due to the absence of sociology in the basic curricula and the small number of sociologists teaching at the secondary level. This is an issue in which the Portuguese Sociological Association has been actively involved, particularly via its participation in meetings at the Ministry of Education.

Currently, the number of graduates holding a sociology degree is considerable and the data regarding sociologists within the Portuguese labour market enabled the deconstruction of the false, but common, idea that sociologists have low employment rates. In fact, employment rates of sociology degree holders are 84% and, of those, almost half (47%) are employed in scientific and intellectual activities.

The Portuguese Sociological Association has closely monitored the trajectory of sociologists and sociology degree holders in Portugal. This has been achieved through the application of surveys

that aim to understand the professional trajectories of sociologists. From education to the public and private sector, and research centres, the data collected demonstrates that 75% of the degree holders in sociology are in professional and socio-occupation situations where they have responsibility and autonomy. Sociology degree holders are scattered around a vast number of professional activities, which undermines the argument of some that question the social usefulness of sociologists within the labour market. As a way of keeping track of this professional sociological diversity, the Portuguese Sociological Association actively collaborated in the creation of the Observatory of Sociologists Employment, an important tool for monitoring these professional trajectories.

Due to the professional diversity of sociologists, one of the objectives of the Portuguese Sociological Association is to promote dialogues between academics and other professional sociologists. This is particularly relevant since the Portuguese Sociological Association has a significantly high number of members working outside of academia. Hence, this association has had a unifying role whether by the promotion of special thematic meetings – the most recent was precisely on professional sociologists working in local public administration – or by the organisation of cycles of lectures and talks. Furthermore, one cannot overlook the role of the Portuguese Sociological Association in the development of the Deontological Code that frames and guides sociological professional activity in Portugal.

But perhaps the highlight of the Portuguese Sociological Association's activities is the Portuguese Sociological Congress which is now organised every two years. These events are considered an excellent barometer of the vitality of the Portuguese sociological community (Veloso, 2013), but also of the closeness between Portuguese sociologists and sociologists from other Portuguese-speaking countries. Colleagues from countries like Brazil and Angola have been increasingly represented at these congresses; a clear sign of an internationalisation process that has allowed the association, among other activities, to be invited to participate in several sociological international conferences, international networks, and research projects.

Despite all of the great achievements of Portuguese sociology there are many challenges ahead. Out of all of these, perhaps two are paramount. The first is the vitally important need to pierce the entrepreneurial fabric where there is still an under-representation of sociologists. This has had clearly negative effects in both the entrepreneurial sphere that loses out by disregarding sociological expertise and in the absorption of sociology professionals, which, among other consequences, has contributed to the massive brain drain, more prevalent during the economic crises.

The second relates to the need for cultivating a dialogue between sociology and other sectors of society and public opinion in general, following Burawoy's idea of a public sociology (Braga and Burawoy, 2009). This seems to be sociology's big and perennial challenge, perhaps because it was "built on a great paradox of, after almost 200 years, wanting to act in the heart of institutions in order to 'oil' their systems on the one hand, and wanting to be part of social dynamics of change by unveiling social iniquities within social structures and institutions on the other" (Estanque, 2014) [own translation]. It is precisely at these intersections that the Portuguese Sociological Association is consolidating its activities.

Sociology in Portugal faces a macrostructural framework similar to what happens in the rest of the European countries. This means that it faces severe cuts of public funding for research, aging of professors working on the academic field and a wide spreading of precarious labour situations in research and teaching, especially encountered by the younger generations (short-midterm projects, multiplication of grants and internships, etc.). The semi-peripheral condition of Portugal and the severe economic crisis has been contributing to reinforce its lack of attractiveness: many high-qualified researchers moved to the centre and north of Europe (mainly to Germany, The Netherlands, France, United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Switzerland, etc.).

However, we can argue that the Portuguese sociology has its own singularity due to two features. On the one hand, there is a strong associative culture (articulating training, science/research and a variety of academic and non-academic professional profiles, throughout the Portuguese Sociological Association). On the other hand, the openness to international dialogues carried out with a diversity of centres and peripheries of scientific production, thus assuming an important role as a post-colonial platform between Europe, America and Africa.

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