

**ROUTES INTO THE  
FUTURE**  
NEW MAPS FOR THE  
SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES



**18 > 21 June 2008**  
\* International Colloquium

Teatro Académico Gil Vicente  
Auditorium of the Faculty of Law  
Auditorium of the University of Coimbra

## **SESSION VI: Governance and contemporary social dynamics: A world of diversities or of homogeneities?**

June 20<sup>th</sup>, 16:30-18:30

Contemporary social theory - from economics to sociology - bears within it important tensions which reflect significantly on how social, economic and political organization is regarded. Paradigms grounded on the primacy of globalization principles - which see in mobilities and in the rationality of non-territorialized players the essential power that conducts societies - are challenged by other perspectives which underline the variety of configurations shaping the world. It is essentially a matter of debating whether a principle of convergence of social systems will prevail, with regard to which differentiations are marginal, transitory and merely functional in terms of the dominant centres; or whether there is room for a logic of collective structuring and for differentiated modes of governance.

In addition to this debate, an assessment is also needed as to whether the players - the plurality of relevant players - develop intentional strategies seeking to ensure control over the contexts in which they act, or whether such a capacity will be denied them, given that it belongs to a limited and authoritarian core. If the first hypothesis is given primacy, value is given to the consolidation of institutional forms which enshrine difference and variety. If this is not the case, it becomes a matter of relative lack of interest to consider specific phenomena, since they are not sustainable.

The way contemporary capitalism is regarded serves as an example of this issue. In some cases, consideration of this historical form of social organization is limited to the facet currently known as neo-liberal. In other cases, it is important to understand non liberal capitalism and that which developed robust coordination mechanisms, outside the market. The notion of governance then emerges - not very worthy according to the former -, and the study of institutions becomes central. It is also along these parameters that it is worth debating whether evolution and social dynamics stem from differentiated social solutions, which are the result of hard work, built upon solid ground, from the local to the regional to the national and to processes of integration, or whether, in contradistinction to this, primacy should be given to an alternative on the same transnational scale, based on principles comparable to those of neo-liberal capitalism.

## **Bruno Amable | “The Lisbon Agenda: the end of the European model(s) of capitalism?”**

At the European Summit of Lisbon in 2000, the objective to make the European Union the most competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010 was set. At the root of the Lisbon Process lies the perception that Europe has difficulties facing the major challenges of the beginning of the new millennium: globalisation, aging and technological change. The problems met by Europe in the pursuit of the 2010 objective are commonly attributed to the existence of outdated institutions that would prevent the transition to a new era of capitalism: employment protection, competition regulations or even social protection. The diagnosis is that the European model cannot face these challenges if it is not ‘renewed’. The Lisbon Agenda established a series of structural reforms aiming at fostering growth and innovation. The paper will critically analyse this Agenda. On the basis of the theoretical framework and the empirical results proposed in Amable [2003], it will be argued that the Lisbon Agenda as such does not define a ‘coherent’ model of capitalism<sup>1</sup>; the Agenda has both accompanied and reinforced a pre-existing process of institutional change that is likely to lead European countries towards a type of capitalism that will be new to most of them. This process will take time and is very likely to meet substantial social and political opposition on the way. Although the aim of the Lisbon Agenda is to ‘renew’ the European model of capitalism, it looks as if the renewal process will alter so many important institutional features that it will lead to an altogether different model

## **José Reis | ‘Maps of Diversity. Beyond Globalisation and the “shrinking” of the World’**

This presentation will discuss, from a critical perspective, that which is viewed as the functionalist ‘drift’ of the social sciences today. The central position allotted to the phenomenon of globalisation has meant that, instead of seeking to situate it and delimit it, generalised use has been made of underlying hypotheses in analysing the totality of social phenomena. Thus, there emerged a ‘globalist’ paradigm for interpreting the social, the political and the economic which went far beyond the material which globalisation comprises as a contemporary phenomenon. It would, therefore, seem that the uniformising vision, grounded on a single principle of rationality and of action which, over a long period of time, economics performed in the context of the social sciences is now also claimed by other disciplines, namely sociology.

What this paper proposes is that notions be re-introduced with a view to giving back - to collective processes, to players, to social and territorial structures or to institutions - a nature which is not exclusively over-determined by principles of action which are external to it, but is also based on the capacity for determination and social structuring which they themselves contain. An inventory will be made of the ‘tensions’ which can reassemble the complexity and the variety of social dynamics. The paper also aims to show that the concept of governance stems precisely from these features, that is to say, from the existence of plural and diverse relational forms which imply coordination. Lastly, I will argue that variety is a stimulating challenge for the social sciences of our day and for the renewal of critical perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup> On the notion of ‘coherence’, see Amable et al. [2005].

## About the Participants

Chair:

**Maria Manuel Leitão Marques** is a Professor at the School of Economics, Coimbra University, specializing in Economic Law, and a researcher at the Centre for Social Studies where she coordinated the Observatory of Consumer Debt. Her areas of interest are competition law, consumer law and debt, and sociology of the administration of justice. She has published, among other titles, *Um Curso de Direito da Concorrência*, Coimbra: Coimbra Editora (2002).

Speakers:

**Bruno Amable** is a Professor of Economics at the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne and a researcher at CEPREMAP - Centre for Economic Research and its Applications. He has developed research on a theory of institutions and of comparative capitalism. His analysis of the diverse types of capitalism has been particularly influential. He has published, among other titles, *L'économie politique n'est pas une science morale* (with Stefano Palombarini), Raisons d'Agir, Paris, 2005.

**José Reis** is a Professor at the School of Economics and researcher at the Centre for Social Studies. His research themes in economics cluster around three main areas: the economics of territories, institutionalism, the state and governance and the Portuguese economy. *Ensaio de Economia Impura*, Edições Almedina, 2007 is his most recent publication.

Comments:

**António Manuel Figueiredo** is Visiting Assistant Professor at the School of Economics, Porto University, and Chair of the Administrative Council of Quaternaire Portugal. His areas of interest are economic growth and development, innovation, strategic territorial and urban planning, and the assessment of public policies. Among other publications he is the author of *National Urban System: Medium Sized Cities and Territorial Dynamics*, DGOTDU, 2002.

**José António Bandeirinha** is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Sciences and Technology, Coimbra University, Department of Architecture, and a researcher at the Centre for Social Studies. He is currently Pro-Rector for Culture at Coimbra University. His areas of interest include urban policies and environmental policies. Among other titles, he is the author of *O Processo SAAL e a Arquitectura no 25 de Abril de 1974*, Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 2007.