

ERC Consolidator Grants

Two European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Grants, worth approximately 2 million euros each, were awarded to two research projects of the Centre for Social Studies (CES) at the University of Coimbra, coordinated, respectively, by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro and Helena Machado. The ERC grants, with the support of the EU, fund cutting-

edge research in Europe and have been granted to very few scientists in Portugal. Thus, this double award for studies conducted at the Centre for Social Studies is very significant, and representative of the quality and innovation of projects in the field of cultural studies and social studies of forensic genetics and criminology.

MEMOIRS - Children of Empires and European Postmemories



Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, Principal Investigator

MEMOIRS will offer a radical, alternative and innovative vision of contemporary European history, drawing on its colonial legacies. The project's primary aim is to show how the decolonization process affected and continues to affect Europe as a conglomerate of former colonial powers through memories transferred to subsequent generations by both the colonized and the colonizer. The project is based on the position that colonial experience is the defining feature of several European national identities and aims to interrogate its incorporation into different national narratives through the processes of inherited memory.

MEMOIRS will break new ground by focusing on the inherited memories of children and grandchildren of the generation that lived through the dying days of colonialism, the struggles for independence and the decolonization process. Through this focus, the project aims to demonstrate that colonialism never ends with those who enforced or suffered it. Traces of a colonial mindset impregnate generations to come and understanding those traces is what motivates this project. It points to a relation to the past mediated by both historical knowledge and a strong subjective investment manifest in family narratives in which the imagination of a non-experienced past

becomes the privileged ground for identity construction and intercultural role-playing both within Europe and on the North-South axis.

By conducting interviews with the children of both those who came from the colonies and those who fought to retain them in three European countries, and by studying public displays of inter-generational memory, the project aims to offer new insights into the European postcolonial collective memory. Research into the patterns of representation of the violence of past encounters will produce a suitable framework for understanding the web of intercultural relationships undergirding European identity today.

The project will study the French, Portuguese and Belgian cases, offering a comparative analysis. It will address an important topic related to current European post-imperial self-awareness and the continent's historical position in the world, and will

interrogate the concepts of transgenerational memory and postmemory, adapting them to postcolonial studies and contexts. This is a comparative project that will illuminate how inter-generational memories still structure the identities of the three nations under analysis and it is expected that it will provide a framework for further studies in other national contexts.

The project results will demonstrate the importance of the social sciences and humanities in the study of human relationships and in the search for solutions to the impediments on political success and social cohesion in European societies marked by both respect for difference as well as individual liberty—core values at the heart of the European ideal.



EXCHANGE - Forensic geneticists and transnational sharing of genetic information in the EU: relations between science and social control, citizenship and democracy



Helena Machado, Principal Investigator

Large computerized DNA databases are assuming a prominent role in security agendas in the European Union (EU). EU Law obliges Member States to create the conditions for reciprocal automated searching for the purpose of combating cross-border crime, terrorism and illegal immigration. The *Exchange* project will approach the cultural, social and political dimensions of this securitization process.

Forensic geneticists play a crucial role in this scenario of surveillance of criminality. In fact, they are the main drivers in the creation of technical-scientific harmonisation enabling DNA data exchange. One foundation of this phenomenon is the belief in the capacity of science to overcome social, cultural and political differences in the EU. The *Exchange* project aims to critically examine this neutralisation of the political and the economic dimensions. To achieve this purpose, the project will explore the views held by forensic geneticists in relation to the transnational DNA data exchange. In particular, it will examine how these key stakeholders attribute meanings to controversial domains of control of "suspect populations" and the respective implications on citizenship and democracy in the 21st century.

The *Exchange* project is lead by Helena Machado and involves a team composed by two post-doctoral researchers, four PhD students and one research manager. Over five years, the team will attain two main goals: 1) to provide a general picture of transnational



DNA data exchange in the EU; and 2) to develop an in-depth comparative approach involving the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and the U.K. The study will produce novel critical theoretical tools on the basis of empirically grounded research comprising interviews, ethnographic observation and analysis of criminal cases.

Exchange aims to stimulate interdisciplinary dialogue between the social sciences and the forensic genetics, and to create new dynamics of cooperation between different academic disciplines. The team will benefit from the support of a scientific advisory board composed by internationally renowned forensic experts and social scientists. External consultants from diverse professional areas related to transnational criminal justice cooperation in the EU will also be involved.

Questions of public importance will be discussed; for example, the research team intends to stimulate public debate on the role of science and technology in surveillance apparatuses. The results obtained will impact governance and policy-making related to transnational cooperation in criminal investigation and broader security issues.

We expect *Exchange* will also be of value in the development of the next generations of scientists. Through this project it will be possible to promote intensive training and long-term engagement of early career researchers in the still emerging – but already vibrant – field of social studies of forensic genetics.



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