

KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIETY

[António Firmino da Costa, Fernando Luís Machado, and Patricia Ávila (editors), 2009, *Portugal in the European Context*, vol. II, Lisbon, CIES, ISCTE-IUL, Celta Editora]

Adrijana Šuljok

Knowledge and Society is the second book in a series of publications which deals with the development of Portuguese society in comparison with the European countries (*Portugal in the European Context*). This collection of papers is one of the results of the productive scientific and research activity of the ISCTE—Lisbon University Institute, more specifically of its research centre CIES-IUL (Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology). The collection brings together papers by fifteen authors analyzing various aspects of the transition of the Portuguese society to the “knowledge society”. The very concept of the “knowledge society” is a complex and multidimensional one and so are the topics covered by papers in this collection ranging from issues of literacy and the relationship between social class and education, to the interaction between science and the public, as well as the social orientations of the Portuguese people.

In the first chapter “Social classes and educational assets: a transnational analysis”, António Firmino da Costa, Fernando Luís Machado, and João Ferreira de Almeida analyze class differences in a transnational context. Using European Social Survey (ESS) data, the authors classified 22 European countries into four groups according to the similarity of the class structure. The transnational dimension of the class differentiation becomes apparent when educational resources (measured by the duration of formal education) of the same social groups in different countries or clusters of countries are compared.

In the second chapter “Literacy and social inequalities in the knowledge society” the authoress Patrícia Ávila, using a comparative perspective, analyzes the social importance of literacy in Portugal. The results indicate a relatively low level of literacy by the standards of the International Adult Literacy Survey, as only about a fifth of the country’s adult population possesses a literacy level of 3 or higher, i.e., the level considered as the minimum for proper functioning in a modern society. A more detailed analysis, as expected, shows the strongest correlation between the level of literacy and the level of education, but also a strong influence of other factors, such as social origin, on the level of literacy. This indicates a correlation between an opportunity to participate in a knowledge society and the social class.

The concept of “knowledge society” is closely related with the concept of “network society” which was described in detail by Manuel Castells. The use of the internet becomes a key issue in terms of involvement in the “network society”, and knowledge of new technologies becomes the new literacy criterion and a prerequisite for an opportunity to participate in new forms of communication. More on the

patterns of internet use in Portugal is found in the third chapter titled "Communication practices in the network society" by Gustavo Cardoso, Maria do Carmo Gomes, and Cristina Palma Conceição. Data presented in this chapter show that the Portuguese lag far behind their counterparts in other EU member states (especially in northern Europe) in the use of internet and new communication forms, as well as that age and level of education are key factors behind internet use.

The transition towards a knowledge society largely depends on the relationship between the general public and the sphere of science (scientific research activity). In the fourth chapter, authors António Firmino da Costa, Cristina Palma Conceição, and Patrícia Ávila talk about scientific culture in Portugal and the modalities of the relationship with science. Although the Portuguese show a slightly lower interest in scientific topics (as compared to the average interest in EU member states), they have a predominantly positive attitude toward the usefulness of science and scientists. On the other hand, only about a third of the Portuguese are to some extent linked with science, while to the rest of the population science is more or less distant in everyday life. Different ongoing projects aimed at popularizing science could be helpful in changing the situation.

Trends in access to higher education of Portugal are analyzed by Rosário Mauritti and Susana da Cruz Martins in the fifth chapter titled "Higher education students: contexts and social origins". Enrolment in higher education in Portugal showed a significant increase between 1991 and 2002 since the total number of students grew from slightly less than 200 thousand to almost 400 thousand. However, this growth was not equal in different social strata. As data show, children of parents with university degrees and children of professionals and managers more often attend a university.

The fate of highly skilled professionals in the labour market and their contribution in raising the competitiveness of the Portuguese economy based on knowledge is the topic of the sixth chapter whose authors are Maria de Lurdes Rodrigues, Luísa Oliveira, and Helena Carvalho. The paper shows that lagging behind other OECD countries in the share of highly educated population is not Portugal's only obstacle towards raising the competitiveness based on knowledge. A further problem is the fact that the majority of the highly educated are concentrated in the public sector, primarily in education and health care, while a much smaller portion, or about 17 percent, are concentrated in economy as a sector that can help raise the country's competitiveness.

Changes in Portuguese companies, both organizational and technological, are analyzed in the seventh chapter, titled "Transformation and resistance: technology, economy and society" by João Freire. Through an overview of a number of studies of the changes in Portuguese companies, the author draws conclusions about the changes that have affected the Portuguese economy since gaining full membership in the European Union. A special attention was dedicated to the changes resulting from an increased role of the information technology.

In the eighth chapter, titled "Tertiary employment, the servicelisation of labor and technological systems", Paulo Pereira de Almeida analyzes consequences of the expansion of the service sector in Portugal and the European Union. Data

reveal the dominance of the service sector in the labour force in developed OECD countries since the 1980s, a trend which Portugal joined in the late 1990s. Clearly, the increase in the service sector share in GDP does not necessarily mean the increase in knowledge-based services, given the internal heterogeneity of the service sector in this regard. However, the key question is what makes the service economy different from the industrial one when it comes to organization and use of technology.

In the final, ninth chapter, the author José Luís Casanova explains the concept of social orientation that he had developed from the Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Using the basis of two dimensions, the relationship toward social inequality and an action orientation, Casanova identifies four types of social orientations: proactive egalitarian, proactive non-egalitarian, non-proactive egalitarian and non-proactive non-egalitarian. Research shows a proactive egalitarian social orientation to be the most represented one in the Portuguese society, but also that these orientations are correlated with the position in the social structure and predictive of attitudes towards various social issues, including the attitude towards investment in education and science as well as their social role.

In addition to the fact that this book was published in English as a necessary prerequisite for international scientific visibility, a diversity of topics and a comparative approach to research problems have contributed to the book being a relevant and interesting one. The value of the book largely stems also from the fact that we can learn about the social processes and the transition towards a knowledge society of a country that may not be "on the top" in terms of scientific and technological development (such as the USA, Japan and the United Kingdom), but which is, as such, a closer reference to many less developed societies, including European post-socialist countries. It is for this reason that we recommend it as a particularly relevant contribution to this type of analysis.

Adrijana Šuljok. Institute for Social Research, Zagreb, Croatia.
E-mail: adrijana@idi.hr

