

The Origins of the EAESP: Social Psychology in Europe: The Role of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology

By Carl F. Graumann

Note: The text below was written by **Carl F. Graumann** (University of Heidelberg). It was first published in the first (1995) and second (1999) editions of the ProFile of the EAESP. Part of the text is based on a research project on the history of social psychology in Postwar Europe, making use also of the Archives of the EAESP (kept at the K.U.Leuven library).

Social psychology as it now exists in Europe developed mainly in the decades after the Second World War. The EASP (formerly: EAESP) has played an important role in this process, since it has been both determinant and product of this development. To understand this dual role better, the background against which and the context within which the Association came into being, is sketched.

Background

Before the middle of the 20th century no unitary social psychology existed in Europe. There were, however, individual scholars, most of them psychologists, who occasionally did research or, at least, published on topics that were either then or in retrospect labelled "social psychological." Some of them became known as social psychologists only after their emigration from Germany (Adorno, Fromm, Lewin) or from Austria (Heider, Ichheiser, Lazarsfeld) in the 1930s. It is due to their emigration that they contributed to the growth of social psychology in America, rather than in Europe. On this continent no scientific community of social psychologists developed before the end of the Second World War.

Context

Just as political forces and constraints had had their partly negative influence on the social sciences before the war, so is it impossible to understand their emergence or re-emergence after 1945 without taking the political and economic situation into account.

Two historical facts need to be mentioned.

(1) While nazism and fascism still reigned in occupied Europe, leading American politicians had come to the resolution that the reconstruction and evolution of democracy should be achieved with the help of the social sciences which, for that purpose, should be enabled to cooperate internationally. That was, from its foundation, the policy of UNESCO. In the first issue of its International Social Science Bulletin in 1949 we read: "Immense things were expected of the social sciences by a world which felt that one of the fundamental reasons for the chaotic world in which we live consisted essentially in the social sciences not having kept pace with our knowledge in other fields" (UNESCO, 1949a, p. 9).

Furthermore, we read that: "there is a wide consensus of informed opinion that a progressive internationalisation of the social sciences is one of the great educational, scientific, and cultural needs of the present age" (UNESCO, 1949b, p. 68).

Two instruments for accomplishing this goal were recommended:

- a. cross-national comparative research; and
- b. the foundation of international social science organizations.

Hence, the postwar situation in Europe is not only to be characterized in terms of an immense American investment of money, material and technical know-how, but also by considerable intellectual, personal and financial assistance in the (re)establishment of the social sciences.

In the context of this (re)organization of social science social psychology was also challenged to contribute to UNESCO's task of furthering peace through international understanding. Its truly international protagonist was Otto Klineberg who, for many years, was UNESCO's leading social psychologist.

(2) The other less constructive historical fact was the (almost transitionless) outbreak of the "Cold War" which, for about four decades, separated Europe along the "Iron Curtain," creating and fostering international tension, spreading the fear and threat of nuclear war and, as far as social science was concerned, restricting its resurrection largely to the Western part of Europe.

When, after some delay, social psychology became possible and was established in East European universities it was "politically correct," if not inevitable, to keep it distinct from its "bourgeois" counterparts. It was also, for a long period, politically desirable to restrict its representatives in Socialist countries from engaging in uncontrolled exchange with their Western colleagues.



Foundation Meeting EASP, Leuven 1965 , J.M. Nuttin, G. Jahoda, S. Moscovici, H. Tajfel, M. Mulder

Foundation

Such was the setting when, in the 1950s, an initial effort was made in Europe to gather social psychologists and sociologists within a common research project and framework. The project, commonly known as the "Seven Nations Study," and its ad hoc "Organisation for Comparative Social Research" (OCSR) have paradigmatic interest for the history of both social psychology in Europe and the EAESP, mainly for two reasons.

First, European social scientists were encouraged by UNESCO and by the (U.S.) Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), supported by the Ford Foundation, but designed in Oslo, where Erik Rinde, chairman of the Norwegian Institute for Social Research, and David Krech (University of California but at that time a Fulbright Scholar in Oslo), developed the idea of an International Seminar for Comparative Social Research, to prepare a study in which altogether more than 30 European social scientists (from Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and several American Fulbright scholars (among them Herbert Hyman, Daniel Katz, Stanley Schachter, and Eugene Jacobson) and other visitors (like Leon Festinger) would participate.

A second reason for referring to this first European experiment is the fact that with participants such as Hilde Himmelweit (UK), Joachim Israel (Sweden), Mauk Mulder (Netherlands), Peter Schönbach (Germany), and Ragnar Rommetveit (Norway), together with Stan Schachter and Leon Festinger, we have a substantial set of the subsequent founders of EAESP.

While the scientific goals of this cross-national and interdisciplinary project on threat and rejection, combining experimental and survey methodology, may have been too ambitious to yield consistent results, the purposes of the OCSR, viz. to encourage international cooperation and to increase training facilities for social scientists in Europe (Schachter et al., 1954, p.403), were later adopted by the new organization called EAESP.

In any case, it has remained the historical achievement of Erik Rinde and his Norwegian and American advisers to have brought together European social psychologists and sociologists who until then had not known of one another or of their colleagues' work. Through the shared experience of the Seven Nations Study they became interested in an enduring form of international cooperation.

This came about several years later, in 1963, when once again visiting American scholars, John Lanzetta and Luigi Petruccio, under the impression that Europe's social psychologists needed to be brought together, established a Planning Committee, with the help of which Lanzetta convened a "European Conference on Experimental Social Psychology" at Sorrento. According to Jozef Nuttin's report (Nuttin, 1990), of the 28 participants, 21 came from eight European countries, two from Israel, the other five being Americans, four of them visiting scholars and the fifth Ben Willerman (a former MIT assistant of Kurt Lewin's) as representative of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). SSRC from then on became a kind of foster agency for the European-Association-to-be. John Lanzetta also used the Sorrento Planning Committee (consisting of M. Mulder, R. Pages, H. Tajfel, R. Rommetveit and J. Thibaut) to prepare and submit a more ambitious "Proposal for Contributions to the Development of Experimental Social Psychology in Europe." This "Proposal," submitted to SSRC for financial support, contained in outline some of the future objectives of the EAESP: a further European Conference, a first summer school, the idea of an exchange program within Europe, specialized seminars, etc. (cf. Nuttin, 1990, p.365).

The next of three steps, leading from the Association's conception (in 1963) to its birth (in 1966), was a "Committee on Transnational Social Psychology," appointed by SSRC in 1964 and chaired by Leon Festinger. Its task was "the stimulation of international cooperation and developments in experimental social psychology" (Nuttin 1990, p.366). Two major elements of the "Proposal" were approved and supported by the SSRC Committee: a second European Conference and a first summer school.

The conference was held in Frascati in December 1964 with about 30 participants, of whom six were Americans. At the end of this conference a "European Planning Committee" was elected, with G. Jahoda, S. Moscovici, M. Mulder, J.M. Nuttin, Jr., and H. Tajfel as members. According to Nuttin (1990, p.366), this Committee was invited "(a) to plan some form of organizational structure for the continuing activities; (b) to plan the detail of these activities; (c) to explore the possibility of finding funds in Europe; (d) to report to the next conference."



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF EXPERIMENTAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
LEUVEN 1972

Voorste rij (v.l.n.r.): W. DOISE, H. HIMMELWEIT, J.M. NUTTIN, C. FLAMENT, H. TAJFEL, J. RABBIE, M. IRLE, A. BECKERS, J.P. LEYENS
Group: E. TIMAEUS, G. SEMIN, H. LÜCK, S. MIKA, R. GHIGLIONE, L. GARAI, G. TROMMSDORFF, J.P. CODOL, H. WILKE, E. APFELBAUM,
C. FRASER, M. ZAVALLONI, M. ARGYLE, M. STROEBE, T. SLAMA-CAZACU, J. JASPARS, H. HIEBSCH, P. ROBINSON, H. LAMM, H. ANGER,
D. VAN KREVELD, H. MALEWSKA, J. INNES, J.C. ABRIC, P. SCHÖNBACH

General Meeting, Leuven 1972, Front row (from left to right): W. Doise, H. Himmelweit, J.M. Nuttin, C. Flament, H. Tajfel, J. Rabbie, M. Irle, A. Beckers, J.P. Leyens Group: E. Timaeus, G. Semin, H. Lück, S. Mika, R. Ghiglione, L. Garai, G. Trommsdorff, J.P. Codol, H. Wilke, E. Apfelbaum, C. Fraser, M. Zavalloni, M. Argyle, W. Stroebe, T. Slama-Cazacu, J. Jaspars, H. Hiebsch, P. Robinson, H. Lamm, H. Anger, D. Van Kreveld, H. Malewska, J. Innes, J.C. Abric, P. Schönbach

Chaired by Serge Moscovici, the Planning Committee devised a name for the Association, its organizational structure, its major objectives, and a Third European Conference on Experimental Social Psychology, which was held from 27 March to 1 April 1966 in the famous Abbaye de Royaumont near Paris. It was there that the foundation of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology was formally approved and the criteria for

membership were laid down. The European Planning Committee, coopting M. Irle and R. Rommetveit, became the first "Executive Committee," and Serge Moscovici the first president of the Association, which a year later became legally established in the Netherlands.

Development

Like its foundation, the development of the EAESP also has to be seen in the social, political and economic context of the first three decades of its existence. The 1960s and the better part of the 1970s were a time of affluence in Western Europe, leading to the foundation of a series of new universities. Part of this development involved the institutionalization of social psychology with chairs, even institutes, of its own. Social psychology, with a firm place in the psychological curriculum, began to attract more and more students and, hence, to produce textbooks and readers; by the end of the 1960s, the first 2-volume Handbook of Social Psychology to be produced outside the United States was published in West Germany. In the Socialist countries of Eastern Europe it was Hiebsch and Vorweg, active members of the EAESP, who established a social psychology program in Jena and who wrote an Introduction to Marxist Social Psychology as early as 1966.

On the other hand, there was the undeclared war in Vietnam which toward the end of the 1960s provoked a strong reaction, mainly among students, against the politics of the US Administration. This became one of the major sources of the so-called "student revolution." Among psychology students there developed an attitude of criticizing and questioning the "established" way of doing teaching and research. For quite a few social psychologists this attitude led to what came to be called the "crisis" of social psychology, a debate waged mainly in the 1970s before dying down and almost being forgotten in the 1980s. A collective, but highly diversified, reaction of EAESP members to the unrest in social psychology after "1968" is to be found in the second volume of the European Monographs series, under the title *The Context of Social Psychology* (Israel & Tajfel, 1972). The growth of universities (but not of student numbers) also reached a ceiling in the late 1970s, with a corresponding tendency to reduce or "re-dedicate" social psychology positions in the 1980s, when funds became scarcer. These were some of the facilitating and inhibiting conditions for the development of social psychology after the foundation of the EAESP.

Against this background the new Association developed. It soon became visible to the scientific community through the consistent and successful pursuit of its major goals (Jahoda & Moscovici, 1967):

- a. to promote communication among European researchers by means of General Meetings, of specific conferences which brought together social psychologists from Eastern and Western Europe (so-called East-West Conferences), of Medium Size and Small Group meetings on special topics, and (since 1965) by means of a Newsletter (now called the European Bulletin of Social Psychology);
- b. to promote research by means of Training Seminars (i.e., Summer Schools) to expose young researchers to new theories and advanced methodologies, and by means of a programme of exchange visits;
- c. to disseminate theories and research by two types of publications: the European Journal of Social Psychology, and a series of European Monographs in Social Psychology (both since 1971). If one counts the Royaumont Conference as the first regular meeting, with about 30 participants, and then proceeds through the first ten triannual assemblies, one may take the tenfold increase of participation as a measure of EAESP's attractiveness.

More distinctive features of the Association were the East-West Meetings and the Summer Schools. The former were designed to extend "our contacts and communication with our colleagues in the socialist countries of Europe" (Tajfel 1972), which until 1980 was possible only in neutral (e.g., Austria) or socialist (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria) countries. It was not until 1992, at the 9th East-West meeting in Münster, that all participants were free to travel. European Summer Schools have been held since 1965 (The Hague). The second Summer School (Leuven 1967) gave birth to the first volume of the European Monographs series, *Social Context of Messages* (Carswell & Rommetveit, 1971); this book was based on one of the working groups of this summer school, followed up by a small-group meeting in Oslo and some "exchange visits" - all of these facilities being provided by the Association. That is why Henri Tajfel (1972, p.312) aptly concluded: "The social context of this message is, one hopes, quite clear." It is evident from statements made by many participants (cf. Doise 1982; Jaspars 1980, 1986; Tajfel 1972) that they consider the Summer Schools to be one of the highlights in the life of the Association, if not in their own academic lives.

Of the many activities which are either initiated or at least co-organized and co-sponsored by the Association, two special features remain to be mentioned. One is the idea of "Joint Meetings" when, sometimes in connection with an International Congress, EAESP joins forces with its American "cousin," the Society for Experimental Social Psychology (SESP), as in Paris in 1976, in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve in 1992, and in Washington, DC in 1995. Together with the introduction of the category of Affiliate Membership, which is used by many Americans who want to be associated with the EAESP, the Joint Meeting symbolizes and realizes the conception of a peer relationship between American and European social psychologists. The other feature is the establishment of the Laboratoire Européen de Psychologie Sociale (LEPS) at the "Maison des Sciences de l'Homme" in Paris, made possible and sponsored by the former Scientific Director of the Maison, Clemens Heller, who was one of the senior European patrons of many EAESP activities (cf. Doise, 1982).

While it is difficult to single out individual members of the Association as men or women of merit, the Association itself has treated two of its past presidents with distinction, through the inauguration in 1982 of a Henri Tajfel Lecture (for substantial career achievement) and in 1990 of a Jos Jaspars Lecture (for early scholastic achievement), both lectures being delivered at General Meetings of the Association.

Thirty years after Sorrento (1963-1995) it can be said with justification that the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology has become a major institution within the social sciences of Europe and an indispensable element of international social psychology. With respect to all three of its epithets, "European," "Experimental," and "Social," the Association has proven to be very liberal. Members have from the beginning come from countries outside geographical, although not cultural, Europe, and leading representatives of the Association have always stressed the importance of accounting for the cultural diversity of Europe within a social scientific framework. Research, fostered, funded and published by the Association has never been restricted to experimental methodology, although this has, nevertheless, maintained a leading role. The 'social dimension' to which, under the editorship of Henri Tajfel, many members of the Association dedicated a two-volume monograph (Tajfel, 1984) is an umbrella term under which all kinds of empirical social psychology, from 'social cognition' to 'societal psychology,' have been gathered. Nevertheless, for many the social dimension remains an important way of accounting for the relationship between individuals' mental processes, activities and their social environment.

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