

# **The Story of a Defamation**

or

## **How it all happened**

### **The defamatory chapter**

In March 2023, the prestigious Anglo-Saxon publisher, Routledge, brought out *Sexual Misconduct in Academia. Informing an Ethics of Care in the University*, a collection organized by Erin Pritchard and Delyth Edwards. The 12th and final chapter, by Lieselotte Viaene, Catarina Laranjeiro and Miye Nadya Tom, was entitled “The Walls Spoke When No One Else Would. Sexual-power Gatekeeping within Avant-garde Academia”. The chapter, which explicitly targeted the Director Emeritus of CES (Center for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra), Boaventura de Sousa Santos (BSS), did not respect the UK's anonymity law: the first two authors indicated on their CVs which research center they had worked at. For this reason, in September 2023, the publisher withdrew the chapter from circulation. But long before that, several feminist social scientists, long-time CES collaborators - Gay Seidman (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Linda Gordon (New York University), Ángeles Castaño (University of Seville), Alice Kessler-Harris (Columbia University), Elodia Hernandez (Pablo Olavide University, Seville), Mary Layoun (University of Wisconsin-Madison) - had already addressed Routledge protesting against the publication of a text posing as scientific, but without any academic quality or professional ethics, with obvious signs of resentment, bad faith, and retaliation, and discrediting feminism. Even so, some CES researchers signed a document stating that the withdrawal was considered an act of

ensorship, thus aligning themselves with the very falsity of what is reported in the chapter.

### **Origin of the defamatory chapter**

To one of the authors, Lieselotte Viaene, who is ostensibly the writer, the CES refused to host a European Research Council project. The decision was a difficult one, because it meant CES losing a large amount of money in overheads. It turned out that Viaene's institutional behavior, as a CES researcher and as a Marie Curie (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions) grant recipient, strongly discouraged further association with her. She had actually complained about CES to the Marie Curie Agency. In settling the dispute, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions proved CES right: Viaene had not complied with the terms of her contract. The reason for Viaene's request, despite her complaints about the disciplinary proceedings against her and about CES in general, had nothing to do with scientific commitment. Viaene wanted to stay close to one of the CES researchers with whom she had fallen in love (there is documentary evidence). She would later boast that she was writing an article to take revenge on CES and its Director Emeritus (there are witnesses and documents). The chapter would serve as a pretext for a group of female researchers and former researchers from CES, calling themselves the “Collective of Victims”, to continue their defamation of BSS with finesse.

### **Cancellations**

When he learned about the chapter, which the CES management didn't see fit to alert him to at the time, BSS was leaving for Chile. It was in Chile that he learned of the extent of the public repercussions that the chapter was

having. The international dissemination of the article was professionally organized, given its scope and speed. On April 12, his visit to Alberto Hurtado University (Chile) was canceled. Cancellations of activities in different countries followed in a chain. On April 15, CLACSO (Latin American Council of Social Sciences) issued a statement declaring that: “Mientras se desarrollan las investigaciones en curso, hemos decidido suspender todas las actividades de Boaventura de Sousa Santos en CLACSO”.

### **Coup d'état at CES**

On 12 April, a turbulent General Assembly of CES was held, which was not attended by BSS (because he was absent) or the two other researchers, Maria Paula Meneses, from Mozambique, nicknamed Watchwoman in the article, and Bruno Sena Martins, from Cape Verde, nicknamed Apprentice, (given the aggressive and chaotic atmosphere that had been created in the meantime). It became clear that some researchers were trying to take advantage of the publication of the article to foment the resentments and rivalries that are now commonplace in university institutions. This assembly resulted in the resignation of the Board and the calling of elections at short notice. That election resulted in a new Board and the re-election of the Scientific Council that had fomented the turmoil. The new management team's alignment with the “veracity” of the article was total and from then on they behaved in such a way as to prevent any contrary version from being known in the institution

### **Independent commission and self-suspension**

In the meantime, CES decided to set up an Independent Commission to investigate the allegations contained in the chapter. BSS welcomes the decision and, on 14 April, decides to self-suspend himself from all its activities at CES in order to facilitate the investigations. Regrettably, the communiqué issued by the CES Board stated that it was the Board that had suspended BSS, a fatal “mistake” that justified chain cancellations of activities in various countries and of various kinds, such as the banning or suspension of his publications, or the withdrawal of his articles from university courses. The “mistake” was rectified only a few hours later, but to no avail, since in the meantime the news that BSS had been suspended by CES had already been widely disseminated around the world through various channels. In fact, on May 4, the Director of the Faculty of Economics (FEUC) and the Chair of the Scientific Council of CES once again informed the doctoral students that BSS had been suspended, not self-suspended.

### **The inexplicable and illegal behavior of the governing bodies of CES and FEUC**

Neither the Board nor the Chair of the CES Scientific Council ever called in BSS to ask for his opinion or even to inform him of what was going on. As the founder of CES and its Director Emeritus, he legitimately expected this to happen. In the meantime, on 20 April, he was informed by the President of the Scientific Council of CES and the Director of the Faculty of Economics, via email, that all his doctoral students had been taken away from him and, shortly afterwards, that his seminar in the Post-Colonialisms and Global Citizenship doctoral program had also been cancelled.

On 4 May 2023, BSS doctoral students were also informed by the President of the CES Scientific Council and the Director of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Coimbra of the “suspension” of BSS. **The**

**seriousness and illegality of these decisions stem from the fact that they were taken without any prior process, without prior hearing of the person concerned, on the basis of a falsehood (suspension and not self-suspension), and drawing definitive consequences from a provisional situation (self-suspension or suspension).**

### **The Independent Commission's Report**

The Independent Commission (IC) began its work on 1 August 2023. BSS appeared before the IC on 4 December 2023. He testified before the IC for three hours on 4 December, handing over some 600 pages of documents and dozens of witnesses (who were never heard). The IC Report was due to be presented on 31 December 2023, but was postponed until 13 March 2024. The IC consisted of four women and one man. At the end of the complaints investigation process, 14 people, 9 of them women, had been denounced. However, the IC did not charge any of the people denounced with criminal offenses or serious crimes. BSS's name is not mentioned in the Report (nor that of any other investigator).

The IC never uses the term “victims”, always using the terms “persons denouncing” and “persons denounced”, precisely to ensure that the fundamental right to the presumption of innocence is guaranteed, since the use of the first term implies the assumption that the people who accuse are, in fact, victims, and that the people who are accused are, in fact, perpetrators of crimes.

### **The “victims”**

Contrary to the understanding of the IC, which never used the term “victims”, minutes before the release of the IC's Final Report, on 13 March

2014, the Board and Scientific Council of CES issued a letter apologizing to the “victims”. Whatever the intention of the governing bodies in publishing a letter that directly contradicted the IC's conclusions, the fact is that this letter was understood nationally and internationally to mean that the IC’s report confirmed the version of the facts presented by the alleged victims with regard to BSS (the Letter can still be found on the CES website).

### **More cancellations**

Because of this letter, a few days later BSS was dismissed from the Universal Tribunal for the Rights of Nature, which he had helped to found, and the Times Higher Education Supplement of 15 March 2024, through a post on the social network “x”, announced that the allegations of harassment against BSS had been confirmed. BSS asked the CES Board to immediately distance itself from this misinterpretation of the conclusions of the IC. The Board refused and, in doing so, denounced itself for having acted in bad faith by publishing the letter of apology. Several CES researchers, in turn, wrote a letter to the Board, vehemently criticizing it for having acted so unilaterally, sticking to one narrative, without worrying about the existence of other narratives, or the damage this would cause to the people being investigated.

### **Self-suspension? Or *de facto* suspension *sine die*?**

After the publication of the IC's report on 13 March 2024, which BSS saw as the end of a long and painful process, BSS informed the Board of his intention to end its self-suspension. Contrary to what would be expected under the law, BSS's students were not informed that his self-suspension had ended and that they could therefore be supervised by him again.

## **CES researchers, the Victims' Collective and the Sixth Letter**

In the meantime, several letters were published in an effort to reduce the “Boaventura Case” to an issue to be debated in the public square, without concrete evidence, with a view to completely destroying the reputation of BSS. On 20 March 2024, the Sixth Letter of the self-designated Collective of Victims was published, signed by 13 denouncers, who had thus abandoned their anonymity. The letter called for the expulsion of the researchers denounced and the opening of legal proceedings against them, as well as the adoption of decisions by the governing bodies of CES against them (expulsion, dismissal or non-renewal of employment contracts).

Among the signatories were several CES researchers who had internal bodies for lodging complaints. Instead, they used a letter that was widely circulated in Portugal and abroad. This letter revealed, among many other things, two facts that confirmed all the suspicions that had been building up over the year about the bad faith of the Board and some researchers. On the one hand, no disciplinary action was taken against the signatories, who were full members of the institution and therefore subject to the CES statutes. On the other hand, it was shown that neither the denouncers nor the CES governing bodies were interested in knowing the truth, as they were complicit in making accusations in contexts that violated the presumption of innocence and all the procedural guarantees of the rule of law.

**Was it finally possible for BSS to defend himself against the spurious accusations?**

BSS asked the CES Board to give him access to the statements made to the IC by the denouncers who had broken their anonymity. The Board

refused. Instead, it opened an investigation by a group of lawyers it had hired for that purpose. BSS had a meeting with these lawyers on 29 July. He had hoped that after 16 months of public lynching, the complaints would be sent to him in writing so that he could defend himself effectively. The lawyers, certainly following terms of reference that no one in CES or outside it knows about, refused to provide the complaints in writing. As the Board had wanted since it was elected, its intention of not giving BSS the conditions to defend himself effectively was consummated.

The fact that BSS was never formally accused in a context in which he could defend himself was essential for arriving at the point where he found himself twenty months after the defamation began: the “civil death” of a person who gave his life for the essential values that constitute the pillars of democracy. Why was this done against the Director Emeritus of CES and one of the world's most cited social scientists in the field of social sciences? As a social scientist, BSS was among the 2% of the “World's Top scientists 2022” released by the Elsevier publishing group, a list containing 200,000 scientists, and also on the Stanford University list released in October 2023 and was considered the “Top scientist” at the University of Coimbra in 2024 [1]. This situation continues today (2025), despite the terrible smear campaign that BSS has been the victim of. [2]

### **Legal action against the alleged victims**

The exceptional nature of the accusations of harassment (sexual, workplace, moral) against BSS is the fact that these formalized and documented complaints were never made available to him in any context in which he could defend himself. They were never made available to him at CES, the University Ethics Committee or the Public Prosecutor's Office. His lynching took place only in the media war and social networks, in other

words, in contexts where he could not defend himself. In light of this, BSS has filed a civil lawsuit against the thirteen signatories of the aforementioned letter with the aim of defending his honor. He also asked the Public Prosecutor's Office to make him a defendant, i.e. to be investigated, something that is unprecedented in Portugal. So far, the Public Prosecutor's Office has found no reason to make him an accused.

### **Trying to understand-1: everyone knew what?**

The group of investigators who managed to impose the narrative that the chapter told the truth about CES – and that “everyone knew” – never clarified what “everyone knew”. Judging by what came to light, they were referring to irregular behavior involving BSS and some of the researchers who worked most closely with him. Specifically with regard to BSS, they “knew” that a certain cult of personality had been created around him and that closeness to him could occur by means that had nothing to do with scientific criteria. Nothing could be further from the truth. BSS had always been a *caput scholae*, a scientific leader whose work attracted students and young researchers from different countries and that this was positive for CES, since when they arrived at CES, they found that, in addition to BSS, there were many more interesting people with innovative ideas with whom many would end up working on their doctoral projects or post-doctoral internships.

### **Trying to understand-2: External factors**

#### *The politics of the right*

In the realm of political reasons, it is possible to imagine that by targeting BSS the intention was as well to target CES as a whole, a center in

general characterized by privileging critical thinking about the unjust and discriminatory society in which we live. BSS is a public intellectual, with many interventions in the press, and his positions are characterized by independent left-wing critical thinking that is not inclined to bow to party loyalties or the common sense produced by published opinion. Over the years BSS has received several attacks, but none on the scale of this latest one. In 2022, he was heavily criticized by certain press and on social media for his critical stance on the continuation of the war in Ukraine. From the outset, he considered Russia's invasion of Ukraine illegal, but he criticized the continuation of the war, especially after the opposition of the UK and the US to the peace negotiations promoted by Turkey shortly after the war began. His was almost the only critical voice and there was an interest in silencing it. To substantiate this idea, look at two highly defamatory editorials against him, written in the same year by the same journalist, Manuel Carvalho, from the newspaper *Público*. The first, when this journalist was director of *Público*, is from 11 March 2022, the day after the publication of an article by BSS in the same newspaper on the war in Ukraine [3]. The second is dated 13 April 2023 and refers to the media case built on the defamatory chapter. [4] As mentioned above, although this publication accuses several CES researchers, BSS was the only target of the media war.

The double standards in this area are nothing short of scandalous. The journalist who stood out in the media war against BSS at the time, Fernanda Cândia (*Diário de Notícias*), attributing crimes to him and making serious accusations based on vague allegations made in anonymous graffiti, is the same journalist who, regarding alleged accusations against a Portuguese actor, wrote on Facebook that “what applies to everyone publicly accused of a crime should apply to that actor: presumption of innocence”.

In the following months, several cases of sexual harassment in various institutions were announced without names or photos being published. On December 7, *Diário de Notícias* announced “University of Lisbon professor convicted of stealing natural gas” without a name or photo. Still on the political front, mention should be made of the attacks on the BSS Wikipedia page by people linked to the Portuguese ultra-right.

### *The politics of the Left*

It is more difficult to understand the attitude of a certain faction of the extreme left, ostensibly in favor of human rights, but which has also rushed to condemn BSS on the basis of slanderous accusations and without proof. As a left-wing intellectual and activist, BSS never joined any party, giving priority to his work with social movements where party sensitivities are always varied. Over the years he has been critically supportive of the Left Bloc and the Socialist Party. He felt closer to the former than to the latter, especially during the time when Miguel Portas' current had some relevance. As well as having extraordinary human qualities, Miguel Portas was the most innovative left-wing politician of the first decade of the millennium, a permanent brake on the sectarian temptations of the extreme left. His premature death in 2012 opened the door to the sectarianism and divisiveness that have come to dominate the Left Bloc, the results of which are plain to see. BSS was a vehement critic of this policy and those who felt affected by it took advantage of the slander against him to further discredit his voice, which caused them so much discomfort.

### *The #MeToo*

Another factor external to the CES was the amplification of the chapter's allegations by certain feminist sectors identified with the #MeToo

movement. Why? BSS has always supported feminist struggles and has often worked with indigenous and black women's movements. He has been criticized by more orthodox Marxists for considering, in his theoretical work, that modern Eurocentric domination is not based solely on capitalist exploitation, but rather on an articulation between three main forms of domination: capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. Moreover, this intense feminist mobilization contrasted with the news of sexual abuse in other institutions, where the names of potential abusers were never mentioned.

### *Scientific rivalries with other research centers?*

As far as external factors are concerned, we should also mention a sector of social scientists in Lisbon who, in the 1990s, questioned the scientific credentials of the BSS and, above all, its epistemological proposal in *Um Discurso Sobre as Ciências* (a small book, widely used in secondary education, which had many editions both in Portugal and Brazil and was published in *Review* of the Fernand Braudel Center of the University of New York-Binghamton). This sector included, among others, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The latter published a book in December 2023, in which she repeats her insults against BSS, entitled *Sócrates and Boaventura*, of which the publisher gives the following description: *By choosing José Sócrates, a predator, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, a preacher, the author sought to talk about a country, like ours, following the paths of a politician who did everything to escape justice and a sociologist who has very little of a social scientist.* One cannot help but think that this date was not a coincidence. It took place before the evaluation of the research centers by The Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and before the IC's Report, which was then scheduled for the end of December 2023.

### **Trying to understand-3: Internal factors**

#### *The consequences of the CES coup d'état*

As for the internal factors, the behavior of the CES management structures during this period is shocking and surprising.

How is it possible that a researcher with so much responsibility, Marta Araújo, Vice-President of the Scientific Council, boasted to her colleagues (there are witnesses) that she was the anonymous source of the *Diário de Notícias* journalist who insistently insulted her colleagues and CES? It should be noted that Marta Araújo was one of the PhD co-supervisors of one of the authors of the defamatory chapter (Miye Nadya Tom). How can this be explained if not as a state of total disorientation, intense resentment and an uncontrolled thirst for revenge? The new Board, elected in the meantime, never brought disciplinary proceedings against her. Despite having been the founder of CES and its Director for four decades, BSS does not recognize himself in the institution's procedures during this last period.

Many serious measures were taken for the people involved and for the institution itself, with total disregard for elementary rules of democratic coexistence and violation of human rights (and, in the case of two researchers, violation of labor rights, and it should be noted that both are people of color, a Cape Verdean and a Mozambican), a fact all the more serious as it occurred in an institution known for its commitment to citizen science, human rights and the rule of law, and post-colonialism.

The general profile of what happened in the immediate aftermath shows, at first, a state of panic on the part of the then Director-coordinator and the Chair of the Scientific Council, and the consequent use of some sectors of CES to carry out what can be analogously characterized as a coup

d'état to change the CES scientific policy and to settle scores of poorly digested personal and scientific rivalries. The speed of the condemnatory actions, the active collaboration with journalists committed to denigrating the image of BSS and CES and the *fait accompli* produced without any prior process only make sense if you consider that, in the midst of the general lack of control, some sectors took advantage of this to assert scientific policy points of view that apparently they had not been able to implement at CES before. If this was the case, why were these sectors unable to impose their positions?

### *Epistemologies of the South*

In one of *Público's* commentaries, “anonymous” sources are interviewed. [5] CES researchers making anonymous statements is, in itself, a reprehensible act in a context in which the institution is under media attack. These anonymous sources, considered to be the “old guard of CES”, claim as a problem that the theoretical option of BSS had become hegemonic at CES and that this had conditioned the development of CES. This option must refer to the Epistemologies of the South, which took the name of CES far and wide and attracted hundreds of foreign and national students to its doctoral programs. In the same vein, Ana Cordeiro Santos, then and now president of the Scientific Council, said more or less verbatim to a qualified witness that “the Epistemologies of the South were to end when Bonaventura died”.

This means that there was a scientific rivalry at CES that BSS hadn't be aware of. When CES was created, its interests were centered on Portuguese society, which had just emerged from 48 years of dictatorship. Sociology had been virtually banned throughout that period. BSS is member number 3 of the Portuguese Sociological Association. These studies focused

on characterizing Portuguese society in the modern world system, with a strong leaning towards the study of political economy. As a result of BSS's basic training (law degree from the University of Coimbra, doctorate in sociology of law from Yale University), he developed a keen interest in the justice system at CES, which led, a few years later, to the creation of the Permanent Observatory of Justice, of which BSS was Scientific Director (1996-2023).

For his doctoral work in Law at Yale University, BSS carried out research in the Jacarezinho favela in Rio de Janeiro. His thesis was published in 1974 in CIDOC (Centro Intercultural de Desarrollo, Mexico) under the title *Law against Law: Legal Reasoning in Pasárgada* (vol. no. 87). It would appear years later (2014), revised and entitled *The Right of the Oppressed*, in the first volume of “Obras de Boaventura de Sousa Santos” by Editora Almedina.

Following on from this first work, in 1984-85 BSS carried out a study on the area courts in Cape Verde. In the 1990s, with funding from the US MacArthur Foundation, BSS carried out his first major research project, studying several non-European countries from a post-colonial perspective. The countries included were Portugal, South Africa, Mozambique, Brazil, Colombia and India. This interest was significantly deepened by BSS's very active participation in the World Social Forum, which was held for the first time in Porto Alegre (Brazil) in 2001. Because of all this, and also because Portugal had more and longer contacts with more countries outside Europe due to the length and breadth of its colonial empire, BSS saw CES as a privileged bridge between Europe and Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

It was from this interest of BSS (and CES as he conceived of it) in post-colonial themes that the Epistemologies of the South were born. In the meantime, CES became an Associated Laboratory (2002) with the

possibility of hiring researchers who were not part of the University and began offering doctoral programs in partnership with the Faculty of Economics. CES's post-colonial themes attracted the attention of foreign colleagues, especially from the global South (Brazilians, Mozambicans, Chileans, Mexicans, Cape Verdeans, etc.) and this is how CES began to receive dozens of foreign PhD students (especially Brazilians, who for a few years were the largest contingent of students). Ten years later, this interest in the global South was given an extraordinary boost when the European Research Council approved the ALICE project, which BSS directed between 2011 and 2016. Funded with 2,4000,000 euros (the respective overheads were then a real oxygen balloon for CES), ALICE allowed BSS to set up a vast research team that would later expand Epistemologies of the South. The countries included in this project were: Bolivia, Ecuador, Italy, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Mozambique, India, Portugal, France, Colombia, Brazil and Spain.

*Scientific hegemony or lack of initiative and ill-digested rivalries?*

Epistemologies of the South, however, have always been a theme alongside others at CES. It's clear that BSS's dedication to this project, which required more and more extended stays abroad, meant that he wasn't as involved with other themes and the colleagues who pursued them. But why should he, more than twenty years after founding the CES? His colleagues had the same sources of internal and external funding to carry out projects and build an international curriculum. In view of what has happened in recent months, it seems that BSS has been the subject of ill-conceived rivalries.

*CES evaluations, the ALICE project, frustrations, resentments*

It has to be acknowledged that, according to the evaluation criteria based on academic production, CES has been an institution of excellence due to the efforts of a minority of researchers, responsible for the vast majority of scientific production. No lecturer from the Faculty of Economics or the Faculty of Letters of the University of Coimbra has ever had a project approved by the European Research Council (ERC), a highly competitive institution. The only exception so far is BSS and the ALICE project. And the truth is that CES has had several projects approved by ERC, led by researchers from the Associated Laboratory. As a large-scale project, the ALICE project aroused the desire of many researchers to join it, and junior researchers (doctoral and post-doctoral students), faced with the delicate issue of the growing precariousness of scientific employment in Portugal, legitimately saw ALICE as a stepping stone to future scientific employment at CES. Such expectations, unfulfilled, led to great frustration, which later fueled behaviors typical of resentment.

What's even stranger is that researchers with good scientific standing resorted to less than commendable means to deal with the rivalries aroused by the success of researchers who worked more closely with BSS. As people in a Lisbon impoverished neighborhood where ALICE worked (Cova da Moura) can testify, some researchers made absurd and unfounded slanderous claims, such as that the ALICE project was funded by the CIA, and that BSS's books were written by his assistants, the only explanation for why he published so many books. This last insult is included in the defamatory chapter, which shows that its authors didn't make up everything they wrote. Around this time, rumors also began to emerge about how the researchers for the ALICE project were chosen: a rumor was created by the researchers who had been passed over, and therefore resented, that some of the choices, particularly that of Maria Paula Meneses, were not due to their CVs or merit.

*Insiders, outsiders, and privileges*

At the end of the 1990s, Maria Paula Meneses' professional activity was centered on the archaeology and anthropology department at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo and also at the country's Ministry of Science and Higher Education. At the end of the 1990s, MPM had a conflict with the then rector of the university, which led her to seek a career outside the country. Given her qualifications (a master's degree from the University of St. Petersburg, USSR, and a PhD from Rutgers, USA), MPM had several job offers in Europe and the USA. Having heard about CES and the scientific direction it was taking, she decided to apply for a job there. He joined CES through an international competition in 2003, when it became an Associated Laboratory. MPM matched the profile that CES had defined for the Portuguese university's relations with intellectuals from the new countries freed from Portuguese colonialism. Her appointment gave a new impetus to the research carried out at CES, since Mozambique and Africa in general was her research topic. It quickly became apparent, however, that her hiring created resentment among some CES researchers. One of the reasons was that MPM was an outsider, not belonging to the small Coimbra university community that had gathered around BSS to create CES, a researcher whose work was unknown and strange to the vast majority of researchers and who brought to CES scientific interests other than those that had dominated the first period of CES (political economy, semi-peripheral society, law and the judicial system, and literary humanities). Coming from a family that had fought for Mozambique's independence and having been politically very active in her country's early years, MPM experienced very intensely what she considered to be colonialist and racist prejudice in the way some colleagues at CES related to her. One of them, annoyed by MPM's

critical spirit, even insulted her in public: “Why don't you go back to your country?”

In fact, the resentment extended to some students. The “ex-international PhD student”, Miye Nadya Tom, co-author of the slanderous chapter, once said in Cova da Moura that Maria Paula Meneses couldn't do work on colonialism because she was mixed race, not black.

### *The management of the Alice project and of CES in general*

The researchers paid by the ALICE project were hired through an international competition. ALICE had two coordinating bodies to which, due to the absences required by his scientific role, BSS delegated: executive coordination (Jose Luis Exeni, Élide Lauris and Sara Araújo) and scientific coordination (João Arriscado Nunes, Maria Paula Meneses, José Manuel Mendes and, in the final part, Bruno Sena Martins). The importance of ALICE at CES during its lifetime is undeniable. It is true, however, that diversity and epistemological and theoretical pluralism continued to be very present at CES. You only have to look at the themes and courses of the 12 doctoral programmes organized by CES in partnership with the Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Letters and Institute of Interdisciplinary Research of the University of Coimbra, as well as with other institutions. The fact that in recent years CES has been responsible for 17% of the doctorates awarded by the University of Coimbra should be a source of collective pride at CES. This success was not, moreover, the sole merit of the researchers. It was also the merit of an excellent administrative team led for many years by [REDACTED] Executive Director for 10 years and now a researcher at the Associated Laboratory.

### *Silencing?*

Both in the defamatory chapter and in the discussions that took place at CES after the crisis erupted, as well as in the media, the idea that there was a culture of “silencing” often emerged. In an institution that had elected collegiate bodies whose meetings published minutes, an institution that organized strategic meetings, plenary meetings and general assemblies, it is hard to believe that there is talk of silencing. But if it's being talked about so insistently, we have to look for an explanation. The most reasonable one seems to be that many colleagues have turned their ignorance into silence. The fact that CES is based in a building far from FEUC, to which a significant part of the research staff belonged for a long time, and with parking difficulties, meant that many researchers rarely visited the CES premises, especially when they weren't in managerial positions. In the seminars held at the CES headquarters at the University's Polo I, the participation of FEUC colleagues was very rare, and it can't even be said that this was due to their lack of interest in the topics covered. These absences turned into distancing and kept them away from the internal life of CES. They were therefore unaware.

### *Transparency*

In a moment of institutional panic, they turned this into a culture of silencing. An eloquent example of this was the transparency with which CES dealt with the issue of the anonymous graffiti. The transcript of BSS's meeting with around 50 students and researchers in January 2019, after his meetings with all his colleagues specializing in feminist issues, clearly shows a concern to openly discuss a topic that was disturbing. BSS also said that he would report on the meeting at the next CC meeting, as indeed he did. Minutes were taken of the meeting, which probably nobody bothered to read.

This is how ignorance turned into silence. Why did this happen? Why, especially in the case of colleagues who had managerial responsibilities, did they not have the courage to deal with any misconduct of which they were made aware in the appropriate place? The truth is that in no other institution has there been as much transparency and democratic experience as at CES.

### *The problematic growth of CES*

It is true that the circulation of internal knowledge within large institutions is a serious problem. This problem became particularly acute when CES grew from a few dozen researchers to 151 researchers in the short space of 10 years (between 2010 and 2020). This was not organic growth. It was the result of a government policy that forced centers to aggregate in order to gain a “European dimension”. Given CES's scientific strength, dozens of new researchers joined CES from the Department of Architecture and the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences. CES's internal heterogeneity and lack of knowledge increased exponentially. Soon afterwards, calls for temporary contracts (6 years) from the FCT began, which brought new researchers to CES. In addition, through the so-called transitional rule, some post-doctoral students became researchers. In a short time, CES became a medium-sized institution, made up of many researchers who knew little or nothing about CES, its history and its vocation.

The idea of the CES school that had been built up over the years was diluted until it virtually disappeared. It should be noted that several of the researchers who joined under the new scientific employment rules had not been pre-selected through previous contacts with CES. CES agreed to be the host institution and it often happened that those who gained access were the ones of less interest to CES, but who corresponded to the underlying interests of the Foundation for Science and Technology. Before long, CES became a

complex archipelago of small islands (some of a single person), with a lot of ignorance and very little contact between them. Everyone started fighting for their own publications and projects. It should also be borne in mind that this huge increase in scientific staff, which was externally induced, has not eliminated the huge imbalances and asymmetries in scientific production. Of the 150 researchers, until recently no more than 50 regularly submitted projects for funding.

### *The absences of BSS*

While it was easy to reconcile BSS's long stays abroad with the relatively close, even if only scientific, management of CES when there were 40 or 50 researchers, this was no longer possible when the number of CES researchers rose to 150. BSS's official absences abroad meant that he couldn't keep abreast of everything that was going on. Between 2014 and 2019, BSS spent an average of four months a year in Portugal, due to regular stays at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (35 years, where he taught during #MeToo without ever being accused of any irregular behavior) and the trips required by the ALICE project. Even so, in three important moments of crisis, CES needed its effective intervention: a serious case of sexual harassment, a conflict in the MEMOIRS project, and in the Lieselotte Viaene case.

It is also true that the economic crisis of 2011 and the FCT's less than positive assessment of the CES in 2015 (Very Good instead of Excellent) forced BSS to remain on the Board at the insistence of colleagues he held in high esteem, even though he could not renounce his international commitments. Contrary to what his detractors say, it wasn't his overly strong presence at CES that contributed to some of the problems CES has faced. On the contrary, it was his too weak presence.

*The lynching of BSS begins within CES itself*

The virulence of the “sixth letter” demanded BSS's expulsion. The current Board of the CES hastened to act with all due diligence. In November 2024, a letter was sent to BSS, signed by the Director, [REDACTED], the other two research members of the Board, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], and the Executive Director, [REDACTED] (who, strictly speaking, was not entitled to signing it). The letter quoted part of the report by the team of lawyers hired to investigate what the IC had already investigated, which reads as follows:

The report now delivered to the Board of Directors by the instructors concludes that “[i]n view of all that has been exposed, and as a result of the facts invoked and the indicative evidence produced in relation to them, the instructors consider that there are relevant indications of the commission of acts likely to constitute the practice of sexual and moral harassment of the Complainants listed in II.(iv) above.”

It should be noted that this conclusion is the result of testimonies from the alleged victims, who supposedly do not lie, and without BSS ever having been heard. In this way, a nefarious post-truth environment has been deliberately created at CES.

The letter also stated that the Board had asked the Rector to convene a General Assembly to “exclude the member” BSS.

**Resignation**

Faced with the fact that he had never been able to confront formal documented accusations, faced with the accumulation of so much intrigue, mediocrity, malevolence and illegality in power, faced with such a link between this internal coup d'état and the media war interested in destroying

his reputation, BSS decided not to go along with such conduct and, on 26 November, 2024, with great sorrow but without hesitation, he resigned from CES, the institution he had founded in 1978 and to which he had dedicated the best of his life.

Immediately afterwards, disgusted at the outrageous behavior of the CES management, at the illegalities committed by them and the bad faith underlying their movements all along, five senior researchers resigned as well, in total solidarity with BSS.

[1] (<https://noticias.uc.pt/artigos/universidade-de-coimbra-tem-55-cientistas-na-lista-worlds-top-2-scientists-2022-do-grupo-editorial-elsevier/>; <https://www.google.pt/search?q=PortugalTopUniversities2024>)

[2] ([https://www.adscientificindex.com/top-100-scientist/?tit=Social Sciences and Humanities&con=Europe&country\\_code=en](https://www.adscientificindex.com/top-100-scientist/?tit=Social%20Sciences%20and%20Humanities&con=Europe&country_code=en))

[3]  
file:///E:/Copia%20BSS%20WORKING%201Jan2015/general%202020/Li  
nchamento/Manuel%20Carvalho/A%20mis%C3%A9ria%20moral%20da  
%20esquerda%20iliberal\_ManuelCarvalho\_11Mar%C3%A7o2022.pdf

[4]  
file:///E:/Copia%20BSS%20WORKING%201Jan2015/general%202020/Li  
nchamento/Manuel%20Carvalho/O%20Portugal%20das%20trevas\_Manue  
lCarvalho\_13Abril2023.pdf

[5] <https://www.publico.pt/2023/04/15/sociedade/noticia/messias-centro-culto-tornou-ces-2046173>