

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINANTS OF BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES

Habilitation thesis

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ABSTRACT

I present in my habilitation thesis mainly the achievements in my areas of competence and interest from 1998 (the year in which I obtained the doctoral degree in Psychology) until today.

My two important fields of interest and competence are social psychology (with the subfields of social influence or social norms, interpersonal relationships and processes, social cognition, negotiation, educational dynamics) and environmental psychology (with the subfield of environmental education). Of course, over time interests fluctuated and I had to change the fields in which I was active according to the pressures of the moment, but in general, my contributions did not go beyond the mentioned subfields. The thesis is a brief review of each subfield.

The intention to capture the impact of social norms on behaviors has always been the fundamental concern for me as I have always held the belief that social norms are the key to the social existence of individuals. Basically, the norms are the main means of pressure on the individual, a means that society and the group have and which ensures the uniformity of behavior that we observe everywhere around.

I dealt therefore with norms in the first chapter of the habilitation thesis, in particular with the way in which I sought to deepen the theoretical analysis of tolerated deviance. The whole approach of the doctoral thesis, defended in 1998, was based on the idea of social norm. I showed how the concept of tolerated deviance, an innovative concept proposed in the doctoral thesis, was developed and refined through subsequent theoretical and empirical efforts. I highlighted the importance of the social norm for whistleblower status and conclude the chapter

by recalling contributions to norms important for health-promoting behaviors and to social norms in adoption.

Researchers familiar with social psychology are, implicitly, familiar with interpersonal processes and interpersonal relationships. Indeed, relationships gradually became an independent theoretical field, but it is hard to build a discourse on the social without a good knowledge of the types of relationships between people. I reviewed some of my achievements in this field.

Among interpersonal processes, negotiation is very important. The field of interpersonal conflict, negotiation and mediation piqued my interest when I discovered the impressive amount of American research. I understood that there are some of the most interesting psychic dynamics in this area of cognitions, emotions and behaviors. In 2006, I published a book on negotiation (republished in 2018) and proposed a negotiation course at one of the Faculty's master's programmes.

Naturally, I also approached the educational field from the perspective of social psychology. After 2020, environmental education became a topic of interest for me, in good measure because of the difficulties noted by both psychologists and pedagogues active in the field. New methods, focused on current technologies, such as computer games and mobile phone applications, may prove to be solutions worthy of consideration, especially when it comes to educating teenagers and young adults.

Social cognition forms an important part of social psychology, or rather corresponds to the form social psychology has taken since the 1990s. It means a focus on cognitive processes in social interactions. Several of my studies included cognitive variables, and in 2019 I co-edited a textbook on everyday thinking.

From a didactic point of view, environmental psychology began to form an object of interest for me in 2004. A very important achievement in this field of work was the participation, starting in 2020, in the implementation of the Horizon 2020 project, entitled ENTRANCES - ENergyTRANSitions from Coal and Carbon: Effects on Societies.

Obviously, my concerns for social psychology are older than my interest in environmental psychology, and therefore more consistent. Especially in the 1990s, my interest in social psychology took a very broad shape and included questions about the history and epistemological status of social psychology. A final chapter dedicated to scientific and professional contributions refers precisely to these matters.

Regarding the career development project, I anticipate three important directions for my future research activity: environmental psychology, with an emphasis on the use of video games and Android applications in environmental education, the psychological dynamics of tolerated deviance and emotional reactions to dissection.

My plans to improve my teaching activity include introducing new topics in older courses, publishing textbooks, starting a new elective course, using my own research in teaching, using teaching methods based on new technologies, and stimulating creativity and critical thinking in students.

In either area of interest, my contributions were mostly didactic, even when I came up with new ideas and tried to test them. Throughout my career, concerns for comprehensible and attractive teaching, for students' rigorous mastery of the subject matter, and for the relevance of the knowledge taught to young people's in line with their future professions took precedence over concerns for empirical research endeavours. Most of the time, I preferred to examine the new ideas I had with students in seminars and lectures, and to publish works in which I shared with students the innovative ideas and themes in social psychology.