

The Internationalization of Portuguese Historiography: Basic Data and Educated Guesses

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My discussion of the proposed topic will rest on two assumptions.

First: historiography is about the writing of History; internationalization is about the boundaries of its writing, of its reading and of its usefulness. So, whatever other dimensions one may discuss of the internationalization of Portuguese historians or institutions, they should be seen as a means to an ultimate end, that of placing historical research carried out by Portuguese institutions under the gaze and in the minds of the international scholarly community. No amount of networking, project sharing and conference attending will do the trick unless it translates to frequent publications by Portuguese-based authors in widely accessible international scholarly media. Nor will (self) complacent remarks about the international quality of Portuguese historians, as long as we remain protected from international scrutiny behind the national and linguistic borders of the media that convey our writings.

Second: historiography is a collective and a cumulative endeavour. The core issue is not about the personal experience of a few people or the ability of a few institutions to engage in the international game. This is not to deny their importance as parts of the collective effort (which certainly can use spearheads), only to give the question a precise meaning: whether there are collective results to speak of, whether in the end of the day there is evidence of collective effort in that direction. In a nutshell, I assume that aggregate outcomes, their institutional settings and the social incentive systems that inform the actors' decisions are the stuff of our discussion.

The only readily available indicator for disciplinary internationalisation in the above sense is the number of publications in international academic journals by authors affiliated to Portuguese institutions. By international journals I mean those included in international academic reference databases. By this standard, a Portuguese journal may be international, while a journal published abroad may not.

I have used three kinds of international reference databases. One is the National Citation Report for Portugal provided by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), based on the relevant Citation Indexes compiling the publications in thousands of science and humanities journals worldwide (<http://www.isinet.com>). The basic statistics are published by the OCES (Observatory for Science and Higher Education) at

<http://www.oces.mces.pt/en/documentos/navigator.jsp?action=opendoc&pkid=10>.

ISI's Science Citation Index has long asserted itself as the international standard reference database for the exact, natural and engineering sciences. Its companion indexes, the *Social Science Citation Index* (SSCI) and the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index* (AHCI) are the relevant ones here.

These are less comprehensive and are often criticised by experts for insufficient coverage, due to disciplinary fragmentation of nation and region-specific subject matters and academic traditions, and to the alleged Anglophone bias in journal selection in disciplines whose expression remains strongly rooted in national languages. However, they do cover a wide variety of important journals from most countries in the world (not from Portugal, though), including several French, German, Italian and Spanish-speaking journals, and for the present purpose they allow a comparison of publication numbers between History and other disciplines of the Social Sciences and Humanities, across the most selective compilation of publications.

The second kind of reference databases is composed of other general coverage databases and discipline-specific compilations of international standing. Each of them covers a wider range of journals in the respective discipline than ISI, including a few Portuguese ones. Although they are not devised for bibliometrics, it is possible to perform basic counts from *Portuguese Scientific Production in the Social and Human Sciences 1989-2001* (PSPSHS), an ongoing synthetic database made available by the OCES that gleans Portuguese authored articles from the most important of those collections (www.oces.mces.pt/bds/prod/csh/index.jsp). Besides the SSCI and the AHCI, it incorporates the articles indexed in *Econlit* (Economics), *Psyclit* (Psychology), *Sociological Abstracts*, *MLA International Bibliography* (Linguistics and Literature), *ERIC* (Education Sciences), *Historical Abstracts*, *International Index to Music Periodicals*, *Lisa* (Document Sciences) and a few more generic reference databases (*Wilson Art Abstracts*, *Wilson Humanities Abstracts* and *Wilson Social Sciences Abstracts*), along with a Portuguese-specific one.

The latter, the *Inventory of Portuguese Journals* (IPJ), is the third and most inclusive database resource on Portuguese publications. It includes articles published in Portuguese journals admitted on minimal scholarly quality requirements, chiefly that of having an academic scientific committee steering a publication policy, or being owned or sponsored by an academic or research institution, and maintaining regular publication of the periodical. Most of them do not comply with international standards of academic publication, namely peer review, and are not indexed in any international reference database (see <http://www.oces.mces.pt/bds/prod/csh/introducao.jsp>, unfortunately not available in English, for further information concerning PSPSHS and IPJ).

From these sources I took simple series of yearly publication statistics. For a clearer view of the trends, all serial data below are presented as three-years moving averages plotted on the third year.

I admit that this type of indicators does not capture international publications in an exhaustive way. Publication of books, book chapters and papers in conference proceedings may be important as well. But publication in academic journals is generally acknowledged as the best single measure of the pulse of academic productivity. Even if the number of articles in journals were only the tip of the iceberg, one might assume that there is some relationship between the tip and the base – apart from the fact that they are supposed to be the *base* of the iceberg in the first place.

[Chart 1](#) shows the number of publications authored by Portuguese institutions in History journals indexed in the AHCI, comparing it with those in Psychology, Economics, and Sociology & Anthropology in the SSCI. It should be noted that in cases where the same journal is counted in more than one discipline, the articles are counted repeatedly in all categories. These series can be compared across disciplines, but not added up.

One important point is that the four disciplines started from very similar levels in the first half of the eighties, and only later diverged into two very different trends. Psychology and

Economics' growth trend picked up slowly in the second half of the decade and intensified from the early nineties. History and Sociology & Anthropology fell very much behind, in near stagnant trajectories, which only seemed to pick up a consistent albeit moderate increase after 1996-1997. Arguably this late and limited growth may be related to the international evaluation procedures introduced by FCT, along with the opening of R&D funding programs to the Social Sciences and the Humanities, as pointed out by António Costa Pinto. If this is the case, however, History's reaction has been rather numb, even by the standards of the slower and later trend it shares with Sociology & Anthropology.

This laggardness is not related to the volume of research. Assuming that the investment in doctoral and post-doctoral research and the number of new PhDs can be used as proxies for this variable, I first plotted the number of doctoral and post-doctoral scholarships granted by the main funding programs since 1990 in each of the above disciplines, according to whether the scholarship took place exclusively in Portuguese institutions, or at least a part of it took place abroad ([chart 2](#)). The results show that Economics clearly benefited from a head start for being included in the priority criteria that shaped the CIENCIA program (1990-93). Doctoral research in Economics was targeted by public policy a few years before that in the other fields. Economics was also more oriented from the very start to international training: unlike any of the other fields, over 80% of doctoral and post-doctoral scholarships in Economics took place at least in part in foreign institutions. This cannot but reflect in opportunities for collaborative research and exposure to international evaluation standards that in turn favour publication in international journals. However, although these differences apply to Economics, they cannot explain the dynamics of Psychology, which only differs from History and Sociology & Anthropology in that the internationalization of its scholarships was even lower, below 50% overall. Publication in SSCI Psychology journals may have had an "invisible" marginal head start through research in the Health Sciences and maybe in the Life Sciences, via publications in Clinical Psychology and Neuropsychiatry journals, but this remains an untested hypothesis. On these input data, History only compares unfavourably to Economics, and certainly not to Sociology & Anthropology which, however, seem to have taken more advantage in terms of the growth of publications in mainstream journals from the second half of the nineties.

Doctoral research is supposed to produce original knowledge of publishable quality, and is usually one of the most dynamic contributors to academic publications. History has hardly been at a disadvantage in this respect as well ([chart 3](#)). It was by far the fastest growing category in new doctorates, consistently outgrowing all other fields in the sample since the early nineties and for the rest of the decade. Somehow this was not channelled in significant proportions into the admittedly rarefied and biased mainstream of the AHCI. Where has it gone to and to what extent it was disseminated through other international journals are the next logical questions to ask.

To answer those questions we have to look at the more general journal publication patterns of the History research community, compared to those of the other disciplines. For that effect, I will now explore the data in the OCES 1989-2001 PSPSHS database. Because of the burdensome process of semi-manual counts in the online database, I will restrict the sample to two disciplines, besides History (which here includes Archaeology): Economics and Sociology.

The top lines in [chart 4](#) display the total of articles indexed in the PSPSHS for the three disciplines. Contrary to the previous data, History presents a clear lead in total publications, almost three times those of either Sociology or Economics. But the lines at the bottom of the chart, the

numbers of publications in *international* journals (all those indexed in the international reference databases, including the Portuguese ones) and in international journals *abroad* (international journals minus the Portuguese ones) show that the outlet for the bulk of publications in History is that of purely *national* journals, those that are *only* indexed in IPJ. A closer look at the data for international publications ([chart 5](#)) shows that History took the lead in absolute numbers both of international publications and of publications abroad in the early nineties. It was first outnumbered in publications abroad by Economics in 1993, and was so for most years until the end of the series. Still in absolute numbers of publications abroad, History kept ahead of Sociology. Their modest growth was almost parallel until 1999, but then History lost some ground (and apparently momentum) in the last years of the series. In what concerns the absolute numbers of publication in international journals, History dropped sharply and lost its lead in the second half of the nineties.

Historical publication became more and more confined to purely national journals in the second half of the nineties. In this respect, there is a sharp contrast with Sociology, whose international publications grew dramatically after 1992, fed by the policy of the major Portuguese journals in the field that invested in international indexation and generally kept it. In contrast, most of the more reputed Portuguese History journals never got indexed during this period while some of the older ones lost their indexation, presumably because they failed to keep up with publication standards. For this reason, the large output of Portuguese historical research dispersed across a vast number of discipline-specific and generalist journals that are virtually invisible to the international community. One telling comparison is that of the sheer number of Portuguese journals indexed to each discipline in the IPJ: 41 in History & Archaeology, versus 10 in Economics and 7 in Sociology, besides 42 generalist Social Sciences and Humanities journals. Only a small fraction was ever indexed in any of the international databases.

[Chart 6](#) shows the ratios of international publications and of publications abroad to total publications for the three disciplines, measuring how much of the total publication effort has been channelled to internationally referenced articles. Not surprisingly, Economics is by far the more oriented to international publication. Both Charts 5 and 6 place it above History and Sociology. International journals published abroad are becoming ever more important in internationalizing Portuguese research in Economics. History is right at the other end. Its ratio abroad was the lowest across most of the decade, having definitively lost ground to Sociology since 1994, and proceeded at a nearly stagnant pace, while Sociology's modest ratio grew a little more consistently and apparently picked up momentum since 2000. History's international ratio, which was higher than that of Sociology until 1991, actually *decreased* on average for most of the decade, especially since 1996, while Sociology's grew consistently after 1992, as a result of the developments summarized in the paragraph above. Looking at the disciplinary endeavours as aggregate results, it is clear that the equation of opportunities and incentives, when it comes down to the average historian's decision of where to publish her/his results, has been particularly unfavourable to the internationalization of Portuguese historiography.

One can therefore conclude that although historical research and total publications grew in absolute terms above those of related disciplines, its dissemination in international journals published abroad remains very limited and has grown at a comparatively modest pace. On the other hand, the kind of international publication over which the national research community has more control and to which it has easier access – that of Portuguese journals indexed in international reference databases

– even decreased, partly because some journals seem to have lost that status, partly because most journals did not see international indexation as a goal worth striving for. This alone is a direct indicator that History journals have been under little pressure to internationalize from their authors (who choose where to publish on the basis of future reputation assessments), from their users (who rank their reading and citing priorities according to journals' and authors' reputation), from academic institutions (who assess researchers' reputations mainly according to their publications) and from public institutions (who evaluate projects and research institutions on the basis of published research results, and who fund most journals). To the extent that any academic community's status allocation system balances general and local hierarchy criteria, Portuguese History's seems to be mostly defined by the latter, and not to incorporate international standards in the former in any decisive way. Only recently, as A. Costa Pinto points out, have a few journals upgraded their publishing standards by introducing peer-review and improving regularity of publication, and some got indexed anew in international databases as a consequence. Too recently to be visible in the series above, and maybe too few as yet to have a large aggregate impact, but one can expect that as the databases are updated they will display some upward inflection in trends similar to the one shown by Sociology.

L. Adão da Fonseca's opening questions and J.-F. Schaub's and A. Costa Pinto's reflections emphasize what might be named "supply side" arguments, according to which the means to transcend localism in research publication implies amplifying either subject scope – wider geographical boundaries, comparative studies – or theoretical breadth, making "local" data relevant for broader theoretical and methodological debates, and engaging in international collaborative research. I just beg to differ with A. Costa Pinto on one particular point: I do not think that this has to do with "narrative" versus "theoretical" and "comparative" history. Narrative historical research can be of comparative and theoretical significance ("thick narrative", adapting Geertz). The cornerstone is whether or not theoretical problems and empirical results are devised to relate, through theoretical discussion and comparative evidence, to international scholarly concerns. The main point seems indisputable, though. There is a direct relationship between the disciplines' theoretical ambitions, research in international collaboration and publications abroad.

However, I think the supply-side approach somewhat begs the question. Granted that those are the means to achieve internationalization of Portuguese historians, the question remains about their preference formation. Why would Portuguese historians *want* to become more internationalized in the first place? What is the marginal profit of publishing in an international journal in terms of a scholar's reputation and career opportunities, as compared to publishing in a non-refereed Portuguese journal, in the proceedings of a (sometimes literally) parochial meeting, a chapter in an unedited book, or a whole book for that matter? How does it compare with the marginal cost of conducting extensive international literature review, writing or getting translated in a foreign language, reshaping theoretical problems to connect with those of the international community and submitting to the recommendations of a peer review? Are rewards worth the bother? To put it bluntly, is there an institutional effective demand for international publications in History?

This "demand side" approach assumes that institutions and their practices shape the only effective demand for international publication. It is they who perform reputation assessments and allocate opportunities according to their evaluation standards and to their constraints. The statement that internationalization is a prized target remains rhetorical if it is not turned to effective demand, that is, the willingness to allocate specific rewards to international publications in curricular

assessments, in the opening and filling of new career opportunities, in the evaluation and funding of Portuguese journals. This of course varies according to evaluation contexts and to institutions.

The Gordian knot, as stated in one way or the other by all my fellow discussants, lies on the combination of inbreeding, lack of mobility opportunities and of effective external competition in research institutions, and proliferation of local or network-based journals not evaluated by any external, let alone international standards. In the absence of generalized hierarchical criteria, like those that prevail in other areas, each parochial journal is by local definition among the best, and publishing there is a locally valued sign of institutional or network allegiance. Editorial comments, if any, are purely endogenous. This configuration puts a high opportunity cost on publishing in independently peer-reviewed journals. And we do tend to behave as rational actors after all (myself included)! From what information I have, leading faculties in Economics begun to sever this knot years ago.

Demand for international publications has become more explicit in public evaluations of research institutions, although uncertainty remains in the community about the hierarchy of publication media. Only too often reputed researchers express the view that such requirements "do not apply to our areas". Evaluation of journals that are granted public funding, however, never did set clear standards for a hierarchy of Portuguese journals that matches the requirements made by the international evaluation of output, in spite of some attempts initiated in later years that hopefully will be carried on. The evaluation-based identification of Portuguese journals to be considered of international level by the evaluating panels, the incentive for the best journals to upgrade their standards, to sustain indexation in international databases and to publish more often in languages other than Portuguese, might be quite effective in fostering internationally visible Portuguese journals and in setting internal publication standards closer to those of mainstream journals abroad. This e-J project itself intends to be a step in that direction.

In a broader perspective, institutional demand for international publications should also become effective through investment in framework conditions such as the wide-based subscription to international journals. International mainstream journals will generally not accept an article without a consistent literature review framing research problems and data discussion; comparative research by definition requires a good command of literature about relevant cases. Needless to say that such requirements can only be met at much higher costs by the average Portuguese researcher than by her/his counterpart in countries where universities and research centres currently subscribe to large online journal databases or to major publishers' electronic editions. Make no mistake, I do not just mean the US and Northern Europe. Spain, Greece and Turkey have got there as well.

I would not want to oppose this "demand side approach", which emphasizes constraints and incentives in the institutional opportunity structure, to the voluntarism of the "supply side approach". Purposeful action can shape institutions and aggregate outcomes; it is clear that there are individual and institutional players in the field whose stakes and values transcend the average, forced to conform by the internal opportunity structure, who have been willing to face the opportunity costs of internationalization, and that in consequence the rules of the game are slowly, almost willy-nilly, changing. But I do believe that unless structural constraints are clearly identified and dealt with within institutional practices, these examples will for a long time remain a slow-growing minority, and the effective internationalization of Portuguese historiography will not experience any significant leaps.

Charts

Chart 1

Title: Number of Portuguese publications in journals in History, Economics, Psychology, and Sociology & Anthropology in the Social Sciences Citation Index and the Arts and Humanities Citation Index, 1981-2001

Source: Observatory of Science and Higher Education

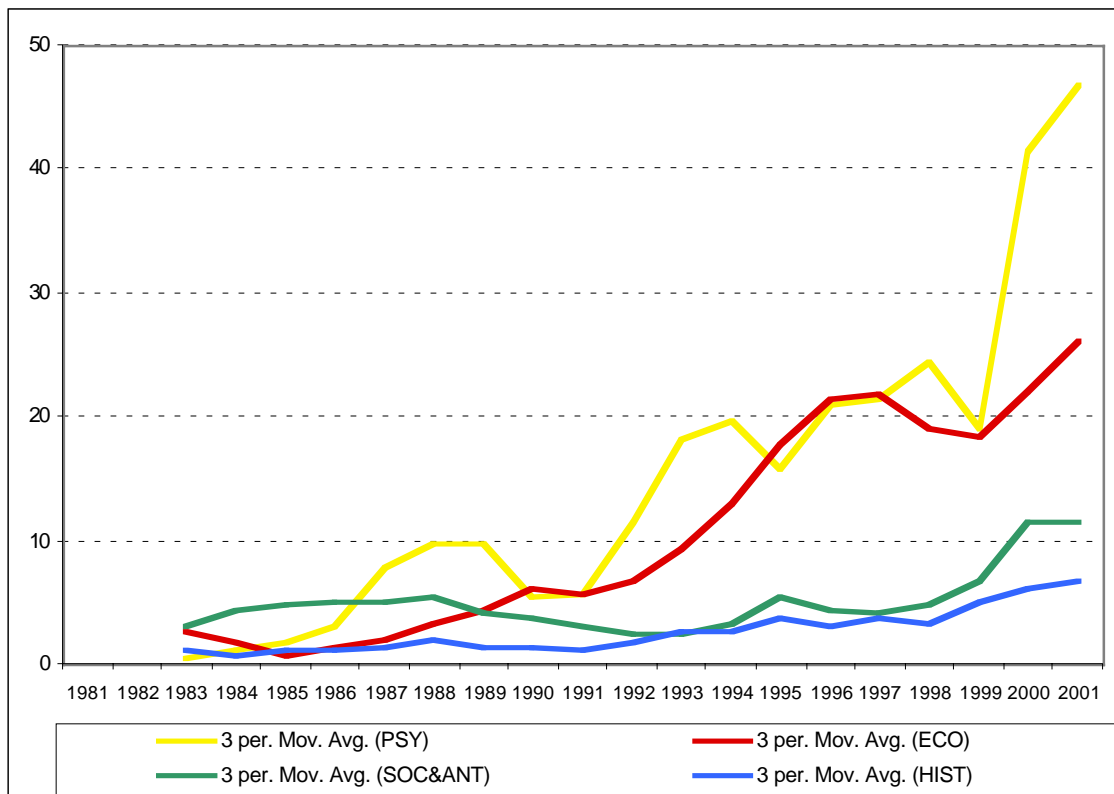


Chart 2

Title: Number of doctoral and post-doctoral scholarships granted in History & Archaeology, Economics, Psychology, and Sociology & Anthropology by main funding programs, 1990-2002
Source: Observatory of Science and Higher Education

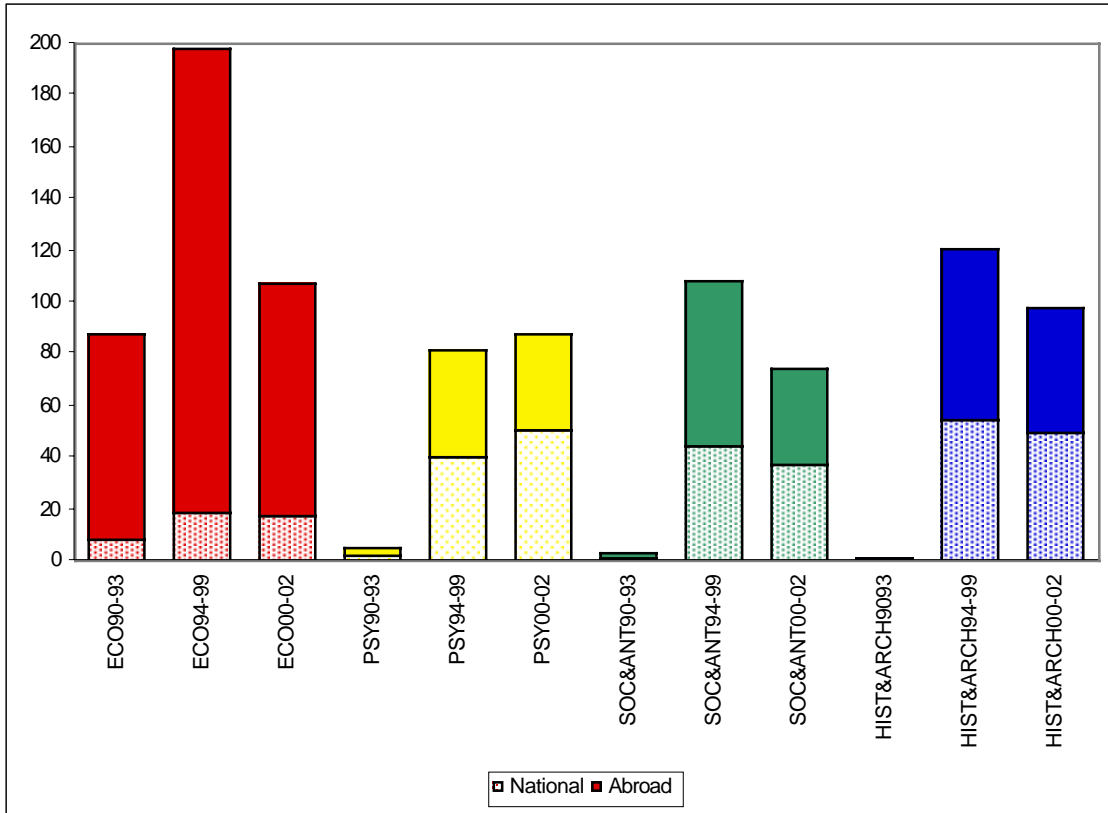


Chart 3

Title: Number of new doctorates awarded or recognized by Portuguese Universities in History & Archaeology, Economics, Psychology, and Sociology & Anthropology, 1981-2002

Source: Observatory of Science and Higher Education

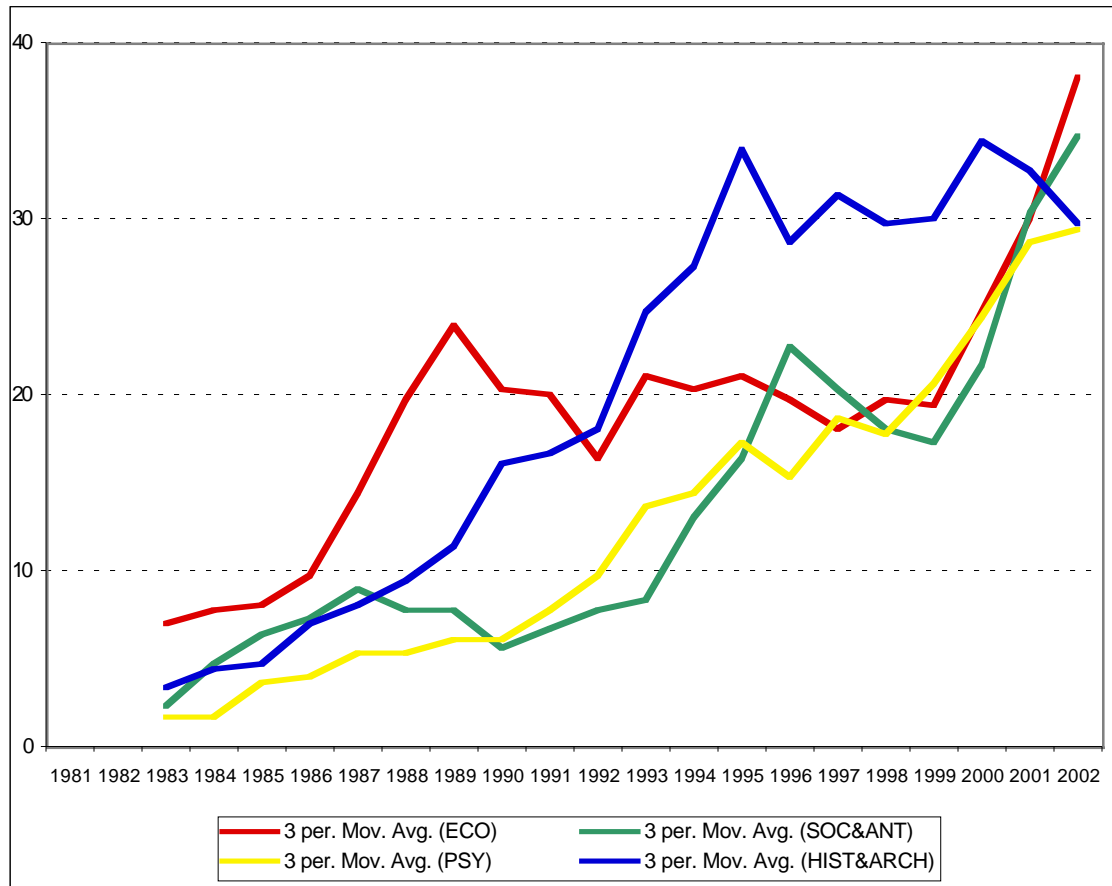


Chart 4

Title: Number of Portuguese publications in journals in History & Archaeology, Economics, and Sociology. From the Portuguese Scientific Production in the Social and Human Sciences database, 1981-2002

Source: Observatory of Science and Higher Education

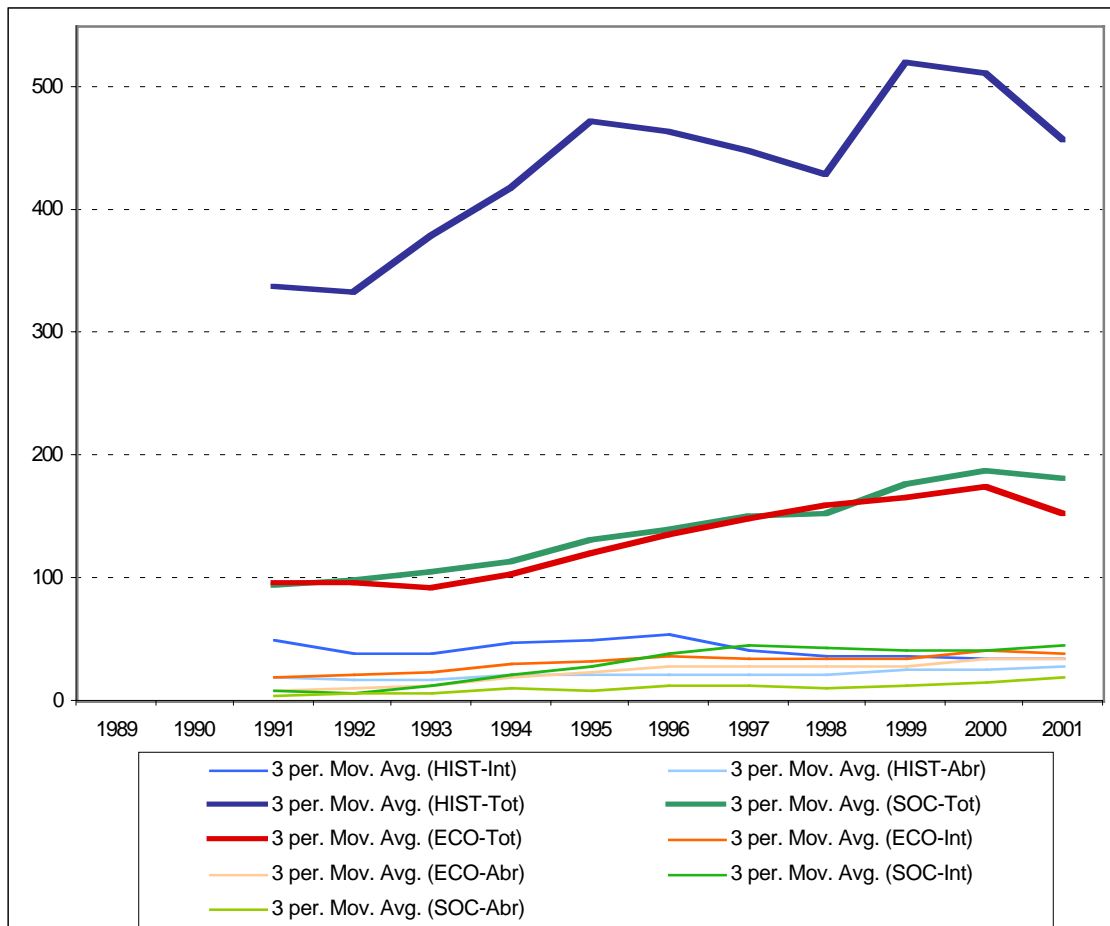


Chart 5

Title: Number of Portuguese publications in international journals in History & Archaeology, Economics, and Sociology. From the *Portuguese Scientific Production in the Social and Human Sciences* database, 1981-2002

Source: Observatory of Science and Higher Education

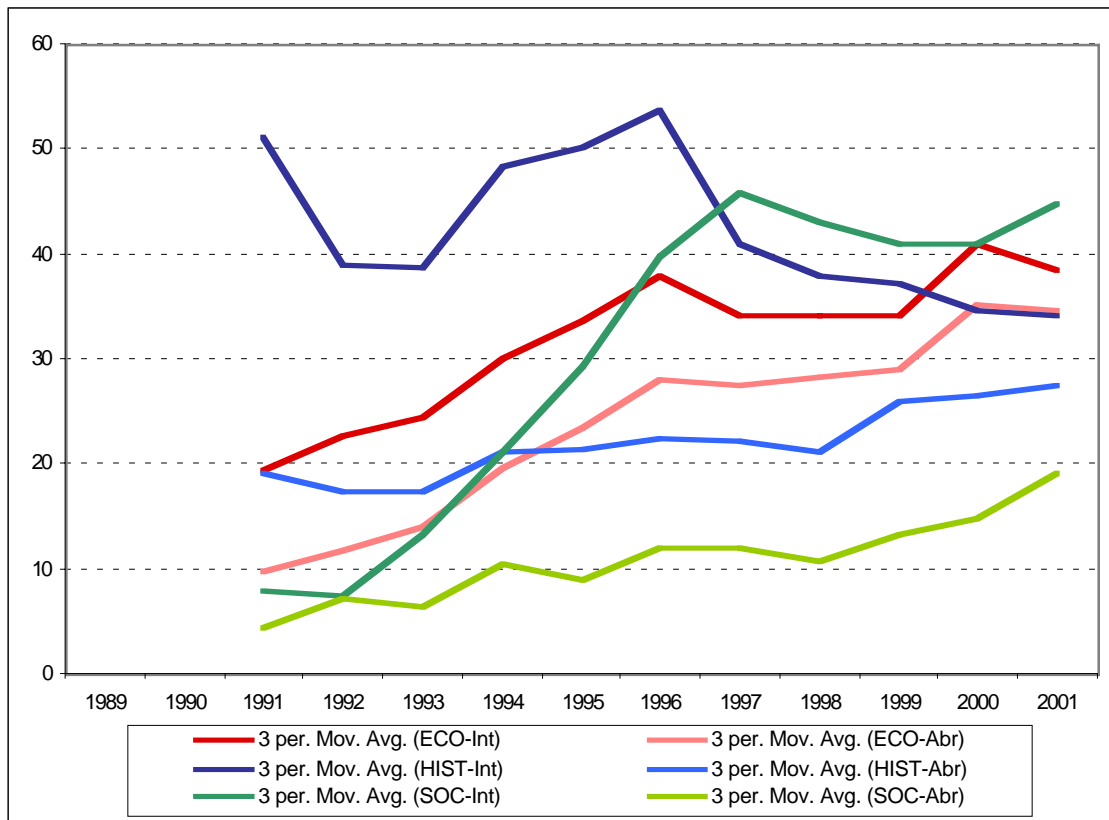


Chart 6

Title: Ratio of Portuguese publications in international journals to total publications in History & Archaeology, Economics, and Sociology. From the *Portuguese Scientific Production in the Social and Human Sciences* database, 1981-2002

Source: Observatory of Science and Higher Education

