

# **REMOTE HOMELANDS**

*Nationality and regionality  
in voluntary associations of the  
Portuguese emigrant community  
in the United Kingdom*

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# INTRODUCTION

- I will analyse the contribution made by voluntary associations of Portuguese emigrants to build a **national and/or sub-national identity**; my aim is to map the *main mechanisms* underlying the development of a feeling of Portuguese nationality and the way that identity is influenced by or competes with elements of regional origin
- I will look at the significance of institutional relationships with the political authorities in the country of origin and in the host country in formulating this aspect of voluntary associations' activity programmes, and at how important they are in providing legitimacy for these associations as **mediators**, in conjunction with the nation-state and the countries of origin and destination

# BACKGROUND

## Arriving in an unknown, distant and democratic country

- Portuguese emigration to the UK **follows the major flows** of Portuguese migration to the more developed European countries in the *60s and 70s; however,*
- only in the *mid-1990s* was a significant **decade-long growth**
- *today= 250,000 to 300,000* Portuguese emigrants there (estimate), making it one of the most significant foreign communities in the UK

# TABLE 1

## Estimates of the Portuguese community in the UK (1951-2006)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Total of Portuguese emigrants</b>
<b>1951</b>	<b>1,350</b> individuals
<b>1961</b>	<b>2,918</b> individuals (excludes entry via N. Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man)
<b>1969</b>	<b>c.18,000</b> individuals
<b>1970</b>	<b>5,418</b> registered at Aliens Office (excluding minors aged 15 and persons with official duties)
<b>1962-70</b>	<b>12,022</b> residence permits (for 3 to 12 months, renewable for up to 4 years*)
<b>1972</b>	<b>10-15,000</b> individuals (the official estimate is closer to 15,000, with 70 to 80% of these living in London and its suburbs)
<b>1973</b>	<b>15-30,000</b> individuals (mostly in London, 1,000 in Jersey)
<b>1981</b>	<b>27,000</b> individuals
<b>1986</b>	<b>30,000</b> individuals
<b>1988</b>	<b>40,000</b> individuals
<b>1993/4</b>	<b>50,000</b> individuals
<b>1997</b>	<b>60,000</b> individuals
<b>1999</b>	<b>120,000</b> individuals (of which c. 80,000 in London)
<b>2006</b>	<b>250-300,000</b> individuals (the majority in London)

Sources: DGACCP (for 1961-72: in The Portuguese Consulate in London, except 1969, in CPL circular 22, March 1969; for 1973: in SNE), "Comunidade..", 1986 (for 1951 and 1986); bibliography (Garcia, 2000: 154 for 1988, 1993/4 and 1997; Silva, 2003 for 1999), interviews (for 2006). N.B. \*after four years of residence permits the emigrant was entitled to reside freely in the UK and was no longer required to register with the Aliens Office or with the police (at least for the period 1961 to 1972).

## CONTEXT

- Over this period of almost 5 decades inter-related changes have taken place:
  - political and social acclimatization used to be more difficult and to take longer than it currently does, on account of the **culture shock** involved in moving to a distant country which had greater literacy, different cultural and political habits (a long tradition of democracy),
  - and was somewhat **inexperienced in dealing with immigrant communities** [the local authorities], despite promoting multiculturalism and being quick to grant work permits
  - **social integration and adjusting to local cultural habits** were, for that reason, the Portuguese community's **priorities**

## PORTUGUESE VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS IN THE UK: THE FIRST ONES

- it was in this context that the first Portuguese community voluntary Associations appeared in the **1970s**,  
most of them aimed at:
  - 1) **helping immigrants to adjust to their new society *and* to provide mutual contacts, and another, smaller part,**
  - 2) **organised by the *Estado Novo* to monitor the local community.**

# TABLE 2

## List of 51 Portuguese Associations in the UK (1971-2006)

Designação	Vigência temporal	Localidade	Datas extremas da doc. consultada e situação actual
Acção Sindicalista Portuguesa (ASP)	[1972-?]	Londres	[extinta]
A. C. D. Boaventura de Londres (ACDBL)		Londres	activa?
Aliança Portuguesa (AP)			activa
Anglo-Portuguese Society	[c.1981]-?	Londres	ap. Cons. Coms. Portug.
Assoc. Cultural e Desportiva Lusitana* (ACDL)	1997-?	Londres (Stockwell)	1999-2002; activa?
Assoc. de Portugueses do Norte de Inglaterra*			1994/5; desactivada
Assoc. Desportiva de Machico de Londres	1998-	Londres	
Assoc. Desportiva Portuguesa FC*			2003; activa?
Assoc. dos Emigrantes Portugueses em Gibraltar (AEPG)	[c.1981]-?	Gibraltar	
Assoc. dos Portugueses na Inglaterra* (API)	1972/3-1999	Londres	1973-99; extinta
Assoc. Grupo Desp.º de Mangualde em Londres (AGDML)		Londres	activa
Assoc. Lusitânia (AL)			activa
Assoc. META (AMETA)			activa
Assoc. Portuguesa de Bóston (APB)			activa
Assoc. Portuguesa de Guernsey* (APG)		Guernsey (ilha)	1980-98; activa
Assoc. Recreativa Portuguesa* (ARP)	1978-		1979-2003; activa
Assoc. The Best Way (ATBW)			activa
Association of Portuguese Workers* (APW)	2003-	Londres	
Boletim Luta Comum	[c.1981]-?	Londres	ap. Cons. Coms. Portug.
Bombarrelense Clube de Londres (BCL)	1989	Londres	
Capelana Portuguesa de Londres* (CaPL)	[1969]-c.81	Londres	1971-81; extinta
Centro Católico Português (depois CPL)	1961-66	Londres (Victoria, Westminster)	extinta
Centro Católico Português de Camden Town/ Missão Católica Portuguesa de Londres* (CCPC)	1971-	Londres (Camden)	1973-2004; activa
Centro Desportivo Cultural Português* (CDCP)	1982-	Londres (Stockwell)	1982-2003; activa
Centro dos Emigrantes Portugueses 25 de Abril (CEP25A, ou Portuguese Community Centre)*	IX/1975-194]	Londres (North Kensington transv. à Portobello Rd.)	1982-94; desactivada
Centro Português Alves Redol (CPAR)	[c.1976]-?	Berks (Cippenham)	
Centro Português de Londres* (ex-CCP)	1961-	Londres (Victoria, Westminster)	1971-2003; activa
Centri Studi Emigrazione London	[c.1981]-?	Londres	ap. Cons. Coms. Portug.
Círculo Social da Madeira*		Jersey (ilha)	1987-2003; activa?
Clube de Futebol de Jersey* (CFJ)	[c.1978]-	Jersey (ilha)	1978-93; activa
Clube Emigrante Português* (CEP)	1977-	Londres	1977-2003; activa
Clube Português «A Família»* (CPAF)	1978-	Londres	1978-2003; activa
Clube Santa Cruzense (CS)	1993-	Londres (Stockwell)	
Clube Tradicional		Londres	
Colectividade Portuguesa de Reading	[c.1976]-?	Reading	
Comissão Coordenadora dos Trabs. Ports. em Londres	[c.1981]-?	Londres	ap. Cons. Coms. Portug.
Comissão de Apoio às Organizações da Emigração (CAOE)/ Comissão de Apoio à Imigração Port.º em Ing.	1974-81	Londres	1974-81; extinta
Comissão dos Emigrantes Portugueses em Londres*	c.1974-81	Londres	1974-81; extinta
Comunidade Port.º de Saint Charles	[c.1981]-?	Londres	ap. Cons. Coms. Portug.
Council for Freedom in Portugal and Colonies	c.1963-?		[extinta]
F. C. Porto of London* (FCPL)		Londres	1989-2003; activa?
Grupo de Portugueses em Leeds*	1975-81	Leeds	1975-81; extinta
Lar Português	c.1990-?	Londres	
Leeds University Union Portuguese Society (ou Comissão Pró-assoc. de Leeds)	[c.1976]-?	Leeds	
Liga do Ensino e da Cultura Portuguesa (LECP)	1968-198?	Londres	extinta
Lusitanos F. C.	1997-	Londres	
Madeira Centro Football Club*		Londres	1986-2003; extinta, só pub
Mid-Norfolk Association (MA)			activa
Secção dos Trabalhadores Portugueses (no sind.º brit.º Transport & General Worker's Union)	[1972-]	Londres	activa
Sport London e Benfica (SLB, tb London Lisboa e Benfica)	[c.1983]-	Londres	activa
Sporting Clube de Londres (SCL)		Londres	activa

# EVOLUTION

- *1974 Portuguese revolution*: gave an **added boost** to local association movements, **politicizing** them still more and **reinforcing their social and cultural aspects**
- *counter-revolutionary backlash, 1975-80s*: **sport and tourism** took on greater importance, and the community spread itself wider in geographical terms as the **regional and regionalist components achieved greater visibility**
- *1990s*: **institutional crisis**, as community leaders began to tire and no new younger generations were appearing, & there continued to be **political mistrust** & some **excessive political activism** by some leadership
- *2000s*: voluntary association movement persisted as a **pillar of certain community activities in London** life; it was successful in ensuring the survival of the **Portugal Day festival**, taking on the full responsibility for organizing it (since 2003)

# PORTUGUESE VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS IN THE UK: TOTAL OF UNITS

- **50-60** specific formal and informal **Associations** existed in the period studied (estimate), a part of them with some **hundreds of members**
- sample of **10** of these **associations** in order to study its activity & to study the relationships between the **national & regional aspects of belonging** in the voluntary associations context)

## RELATIONSHIP OF THE VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS WITH THE PORTUGUESE STATE: *a vicious circle*

- the Portuguese state is a **closed state** which mistrusts its citizens, and by so make a lot of demands: **legislation, articles, an office, a minimum number of activities** (not clearly defined) & the **regular submission of correspondence** in order to be able to disburse some material support, *whereas* what the associations really need is **support at the beginning** so that they can find an office and develop their activities
- this *vicious circle* has significantly ***undermined the potential for expansion and consolidation of the movement***
- main cause of this *blockage*: associations are **not a political priority** for the Portuguese state (except in some crucial countries for Portuguese diplomacy, like Belgium & France)

## THE RESULTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP, NONETHELESS...

- after the 1974 revolution, the Portuguese state offers the *subscription* of major **national newspapers** (*DN, JN, O Jornal, Expresso, O Tempo, etc.*) & **international journals** (the Diaspora weekly *O Emigrante*) to some associations, in addition to **sporting and/or regional papers** (which were a special exception here, see *O Madeirense*, offered to the CFJ in 1978)
- these papers **reinforced national and nationalist ties**, because the Portuguese press disseminated a certain type of “**banal nationalism**” (and still does), i.e. “*ideological habits which enable established Western states to reproduce themselves*”, which are *disseminated in the daily life of the life of peoples and whose resulting “feeling of national belonging” is formed as much by the “political speeches” of these nations’ leaders as by its “cultural production” & the “shape of the press”* (Michael Billig)
- the Portuguese state also started its own **regular information and training publications**

# PORTUGUESE OFFICIAL POLICY: MATERIAL (NATIONAL) GOODS

- official policy after 1982: limiting official support to providing **material (national) goods**, only exceptionally providing financial grants (for major cultural or training events, on a *case by case basis*);
- *examples:*
  - **Portuguese-language newspapers**
  - **Portuguese-language book collections** (as well as Portuguese-English dictionaries), mostly dealing with **Portuguese national life**
  - collections of records and cassettes of **Portuguese music**
  - **football gear** (Portugal's national sport, sometimes in the **colours of Portuguese clubs**, as requested, it should be noted, by the associations themselves)
  - **national flags** (large and small) & **national pennants**, to be put in offices and brought out at public festivals & events
  - **nationalised regional costumes** for associations' folklore dance groups (i.e. those which, despite being provincial, had established themselves under the *Estado Novo* as being stereotypes of costumes which represented the nation)

## NATIONAL/ REGIONAL TENSIONS: THE MADEIRAN EXAMPLE

- **tensions** between the Portuguese central state *and* the Madeira Autonomous Region are based to a great extent on **provocative Madeiran political regionalism** (and regionality), which extends to Madeiran communities abroad
- in the UK this is much **more noticeable**, *since* the Madeiran community accounts for the majority of Portuguese there (some **three-quarters of the total**) and is the most influential; this is also a taboo subject for all involved, both state agents & members of the associations

## WORK DONE BY SOME REPRESENTATIVE VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS (MAIN AREAS)

- mainly in **social & cultural domains** (in a broad sense)
- to *help Portuguese to integrate* into the host community & *to share in a set of social exchanges & representations* which provided stronger connections to the home country, & thereby perpetuated a **feeling of belonging**
- examples of **social events**: masses, festivals, anniversaries, events, excursions, etc.
- **cultural dissemination** exceeded cultural production, & is supported in part by certain Portuguese musicians (& actors & comedians) *touring* the Diaspora
- high costs of **educational initiatives** meant that this area is a more difficult one
- **mass sport** (which is less expensive and more attractive) started to take on greater significance from the 80s onwards

# TABLE 3

## Sample of activities and offerings of Portuguese associations in the UK (1961-2006)

Activity/ Association	API	CCPC	CDCP	CEP25A	CPAF	CPL	LECP
Help for hospital patients coming from Portugal (consultations, accommodation)					1979		
Banking on Saturdays				1989			
Job shop, with jobs wanted and jobs offered listings				1989			
Legal aid				1980			
Cultural activities					1979-84		
Library	1976-	1974-		1976-	1980-	1990	
Collection of Portuguese handicrafts				1976-			
Concert and participation in European Emigrant Song Festival					1982-83		
lectures/ presentations	1976	1974			1978-84		
Lectures on Portuguese culture	1977				1979-81		
Cassette/record collection				1976-	1981-	1990	
Shows with Portuguese comedians					1979-84,	1987-	1972
Shows with Portuguese musicians	1976-77			1987	1988	89	
Folklore shows		1974	1982-	1988			
Plays		1974			1979-84		
Films and theatre for kids			1989	1989			
Folklore group		1989	1982-				
Theatre group		1978-80			1979-84,	1988/9	
Slide show "Portugal, the land and its people"	1977						
Cultural meetings for workers.							1972
Sunday visits to museums and places of historical interest (w/teacher)	1977						
Amateur football team			1989			1973-80	
netball and snooker teams						1988	
snooker, darts, ping-pong, chess, dominoes and fishing			1989 (no fishing)	1989 (no dominoes)			
English lessons for Portuguese workers	1977,1980	1975,1980		1980,1989			
Portuguese lessons for children						1971	
Mass		1973-					
Journal		1980		1989	1979-84	1972	1973
Information service				1989			
Miscellaneous leisure activities		1975,1980		1980	1979-84		
Dances and parties	1976-77	1974	1982-		1979-84,	1980	
					1988		
Photo competition					1981		
Various competitions (beauty contest, dominoes, jokes, etc.)					1979-84,		
Saturday meets, cultural/leisure trips and excursions for older members				1989	1988		
Charity event	1981-84						
Parties and excursions	1976,1980		1989		1979-84		1973
Picnic					1988		
Café/bar			1982-	1989	1978-84,		
					1988		
Interpreting				1989	1979		
Get-togethers after mass		1974-					

Sources: Archive of DGACCP-MNE (individual association files); interviews; bibliography.

## UN EXAMPLE:

### the CENTRO DESPORTIVO E CULTURAL PORTUGUÊS/ *Portuguese Sports and Culture Centre*

- **Madeiran membership:** the CDCP emerged in 1982 as an association “made up mainly of Madeirans” (official document quotation); today some **80%** of the members are from Madeira (see Vieira, 2004)
- **main objectives:** “sport and social get-togethers” (official document quotation), and the ***promotion of the Madeiran folklore*** with a folklore group, formed in 1979 with **Madeiran costumes and repertoire** and drew its artistic inspiration from the pioneering *Casa do Povo da Camacha* folklore group (this one formed in 1948 at the instigation of a corporatist agency, the FNAT)

## THE FOLKLORE GROUP OF CDCP

- the folklore group & the club are given symbolic recognition through the **attendance** at their premises of the **leader of the Madeira regional government**, and by the **award of medals**
- in London, the group regularly puts on a **show** on **Madeira Day** (15th May), on **Portugal Day** (10th June, or the nearest weekend to it), on **All Saints' Day** and on the **feast of St. Martin**, the latter 2 in other associations (Silva, 2003: 549)
- the **group's lyrics** describe “daily life in Madeira and the life of the emigrant”, a sign of the **tradition's partial adjustment to its social context** (Silva, 2003: 551)

## FINAL REMARKS (1): PUBLIC SERVICE

- despite the lack of official support, the work of the Portuguese voluntary associations *left its mark* in a series of relevant, diversified and continuous social and cultural activities:
  - teaching of Portuguese
  - promotion of Portuguese culture in its national and regional aspects
  - legal aid
  - information services
  - sport & leisure
  - technical training
  - more in-depth education for reflection, etc.
  - these helped to integrate thousands of immigrant fellow-countrymen into society, to bring the community together, & to give it public visibility
  - the Portugal Day festivities are the most successful example of this: they are both the foundation for, and the vindication of joint voluntary association efforts

## FINAL REMARKS (2):

### CULTURAL IDENTITY & IDENTITY POLITICS

- The work of voluntary associations also has an impact on identity, in that it encourages feelings of both national and regional belonging.
- The drive for regional identity, above all Madeiran identity, was significant, specially when similar regional identity began to strengthen in Spain during the 80s
- This created some **tensions** even within communities and associations, but did not, until now, shut off the more open approaches to plural and democratic identities
- In this context, the CDCP is a good example of the **tension between cultural nationalism & regionalism** being carried over into the world of voluntary associations, largely as a result of the practice of identity politics in response to the political and symbolic pressure often used to seek advantageous negotiating positions vis-à-vis the Portuguese state (this applies above all to the sphere of regional autonomy and its supporters scattered throughout the Diaspora)

**END**

**Thank you**  
for your attention.