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Youth transitions and generations: examining change between *baby-boomers* and *millennials*

1. Introduction

The youth transitions paradigm is a very useful conceptual tool to observe and understand social change in late modern western societies. However, there is a common tendency to 'pack' youth transitions from education to work in a single interpretative fashion – from the smooth and quick transitions of the *baby-boomers* to the long and graduated transitions of the *millennials* – independently of strategic structural factors emerging from context and time.

This text aims to analyse the pattern of change in youth transitions in Portugal, a country whose contemporary history is clearly detached from the path threaded by the majority of its partner-States in Western Europe, due to an extraordinary long autocratic rule, a fragile economy and a limited Welfare State, especially in respect of public policies and benefits relevant for young people. However, the significantly different evolution of Portuguese economy and society does not mean that the pattern of change in youth transitions since the seventies has been substantially different. Nevertheless, country specific economic and social characteristics have played a significant part, namely in hardening and prolonging the already difficult transitions of young people, especially when facing a deep economic and social crisis such as the one started in 2007.

Youth transitions changed in Portugal throughout the national construction of a European-like democracy and market economy. This process will be observed in this chapter through the analysis of a set of historical statistical series concerning several relevant indicators for youth transitions in the age group 15 to 29: namely a series of employment/unemployment indicators, followed by the analysis of the most significant indicators on the pace of youth transitions from school to work (education attainment and activity status) and finally from financial dependency to financial autonomy and civil status. This quantitative account will be complemented by the presentation of a number of cases where the transitional process is in focus. This set of cases does not aim to be representative of the diversity of transition paths among the Portuguese youth, consisting of a qualitative account of diverse trajectories which reveal novel generational challenges in respect to income, education, labour relations and other personal circumstances. This selection was drawn from a set of 56 interviews undertaken during the peak of the financial and economic crisis in Portugal, between 2012 and 2013.

2. Changing transitions through time and place

The youth transitions paradigm has been a decisive tool to describe, analyse and understand social change among the succession of generations in late modern western societies (Furlong & Cartmel 1997; 2007, Wyn and White 1997, Furlong & Kelly 2005, Wyn & Woodman 2007). This *transition process* involves a series of biographical status changes that young people go through immediately after leaving education: from students to workers and ultimately to

spouses and parents. The narrative popularised in late modern western societies states that this transitional process occurred quickly and smoothly (although modulated by class and gender) in the golden years after the Second World War, a golden period that started to change in the seventies, along with the economic changes of the globalised late capitalism in the transition from the twentieth to the twenty first century.

This *smooth transitions model* has been challenged by a number of authors stating that even in this period transitions were far more complex and intricate than we currently take it for (Goodwin & O'Connor 2005, Vickerstaff 2003). However, in general we may assume that youth transitions have become longer and less standardised, meaning that they took more time to accomplish and were less orderly systematic in the progression through the stages: education lasted longer due to the massification of Higher Education in exchange for the shortening demand of young labour; the integration in a stable position in the labour market took more time to achieve because of the deregulation of the labour market and growth of atypical contracts, characteristic of a flourishing service sector; residential autonomy meant going through more steps (co-residence with friends or partner before the constitution of a new family), linked experimentation but also extensive constraint. The order by which these steps are taken has also turned less straightforwardly unidirectional, with a growing proportion of returns to education due to the instability of employment or change of family statuses/emotional arrangements. The coincidence of these changes generated a more unstandardized transition process for young people, characterised by a more individualised negotiation between choices and constraints, establishing riskier paths into adulthood (Beck 1992; Roberts 1997).

2.1. Classes and context

This narrative of changing youth transitions in the late modern capitalist societies must not be independent of classes and context, however. If transitions have become longer and less standardised for the mainstream young people – the missing middle (Roberts 2011) –, they may have remained largely unchanged in the reproductive patterns of the wealthier or poorer. As the more well-off may easily provide a smooth transition to their descendants through a privileged education and mobilisation of social capital to obtain a satisfactory position, the children of the worse-off may still follow their parents' path into early drop-out of education and immediate integration in the minimum-wage services and blue-collar positions still available. However, if social inequalities still have a determinant role in the modulation of young people's transitions, what can be said about context, and more specifically about the country and time where transitions occur? Each country's structural features (economic, regulatory, social and cultural) also play a significant role in the modulation of youth transitions and this process must be accounted for when we reflect generally and specifically about the overall pattern of change on youth transitions throughout western societies (Nilsen & Brannen 2014). These general trends will be explored in the next sections, including an account of the influence of diverse class contexts on the transition processes of young people in the last part of the chapter, based on the exploration of new qualitative data.

2.2. The singularity of Portuguese contemporary history

Portugal is a very interesting laboratory for the study of the impacts of context on youth transitions, and more specifically on the articulation of these particularities with the general Central and Western Europe's flow of change in this process. The country did not enjoy the golden post-second world war period of economic development and social progress obtained

through the institutionalisation of Welfare that the most part of Central and Western Europe went through in this period. Current youth transitions are usefully understood against this historical backdrop.

2.2.1. The dictatorship period

The second half of the Portuguese twentieth century was characterised by a long-lasting dictatorship with a conservative and backward mind-set which idealised the country as a traditional catholic society with an agriculture-based economy. This stance was fostered and protected through an isolationist posture in the international arena and a strict dependence on very close political, economic and demographical relations with the African colonies fiercely maintained until 1974. The country was concentrated on guaranteeing its self-sufficiency, first on the agricultural field and later on the industrial side with the aim of protecting the national production and substitution of imported goods. These objectives were also guaranteed by conditioning the opening of new businesses to the government's authorization, limiting internal free competition and protecting national business conglomerates close to the regime. The country was politically organised in a corporatist fashion, and the labour market between guilds of employers and the workers in (national) trade unions controlled by the government. Strikes were forbidden and wages strictly controlled at a low level to prevent inflation. Education was highly selective and literacy rates substantially low, reaching 62 % in 1960 (Lains et al 2013: 290) and clearly uneven between gender. In fact, women were unequally considered throughout the whole life of the dictatorship: in 1960 39% of women were illiterate against 27% of the male population, they represented 19% of the employed population and earned an average of 22% less than men in 1985 (GEP/MTSS 1985). Income inequalities were endemic during the dictatorship period: based on the calculations made by Pereirinha on a series of different family expenses and budget surveys, the Gini coefficient changed from 0.45 in 1967/1968 to 0.44 in 1973/74 and finally to 0.38 in 1981 (Pereirinha 1998: 254), a figure reduced to 0.34 in 2015 (Eurostat 2016) but still significantly high when compared to other European countries.

The last 13 years of the Empire were marked by a Colonial War fought in three different territories – Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau – thousands of miles away from the mainland. This historical event changed the country deeply and ultimately brought the end of the regime in April 1974. The emergence of the Colonial Wars fostered a massive move of Portuguese young nationals, either to fight in the colonial wars (if they were male); to exile in order to avoid combat in Africa and/or to political exile; or, finally, to emigrate to central Europe (mainly to France, Germany or Switzerland) in order to be able to make a living, especially if they came from the deprived countryside. Estimations of the emigration numbers during the dictatorship vary but it seems likely over 1 million people emigrated between 1960 and 1974 (Carrilho 1991, Baganha 2003).

2.2.2. The post-revolutionary period

The change of the political, social and economic profile of the country was dramatic since the end of the dictatorship. The non-competitive environment that a few national conglomerates enjoyed during the dictatorship ended, leaving an outdated productive system specialized in substandard products, operated by a low-skilled labour force and a low-profile consumer society based on low wages and economic scarcity. The (one year) revolutionary process subsequent to the downfall of the dictatorship did not contribute to turn the country's

economic prospects better. The nationalisation of the strategic sectors of the economy (Banking and Insurance, Transportation, Energy, Construction, Media and others), designed to prevent the massive transfer of capital to other countries, not only disorganised the economy and markets but also contributed to start a significant period of social unrest, contemporary of the emergence of numerous left wing parties and of the organisation of the labour movement into competing trade unions. The economic changes and social and political pressure to raise wages and build a European-like Welfare State led to imbalance in the economy and stretched the State's budget to a level that led to the first intervention of the International Monetary Fund in 1977 and the second in 1983, aimed to correct the unbalance of the economy and the dramatic budget deficit created.

The post-revolutionary decades were dedicated to the construction of a European-like liberal democracy, a Welfare-state, a universal education system and to the modernization of the economy, at a time when some of these features were already being challenged by neo-liberal visions of the economy, the society and the State. Helped by European structural funds and regulation after the integration in the European Economic Communities in 1986, the country was able to create and maintain some European-like economic and social features.

Portugal has made significant progress from the seventies to the present, both in economic and in social terms, although still showing some evident signs of fragility in both domains when compared with the European averages (Machado & Costa 1998). This path of progress was severely hindered by the financial, economic and social crisis that started in 2008. The massive reduction of the gross domestic product and rampant rise of the public and private debt (precipitating a painful third intervention of the International Monetary Fund in 2011) had severe implications for public spending, and the austerity program that followed (with social services budget cuts, raising taxes and reduced wages and pensions) hit the most fragile sectors of the Portuguese society: the poorer, the elder and the younger.

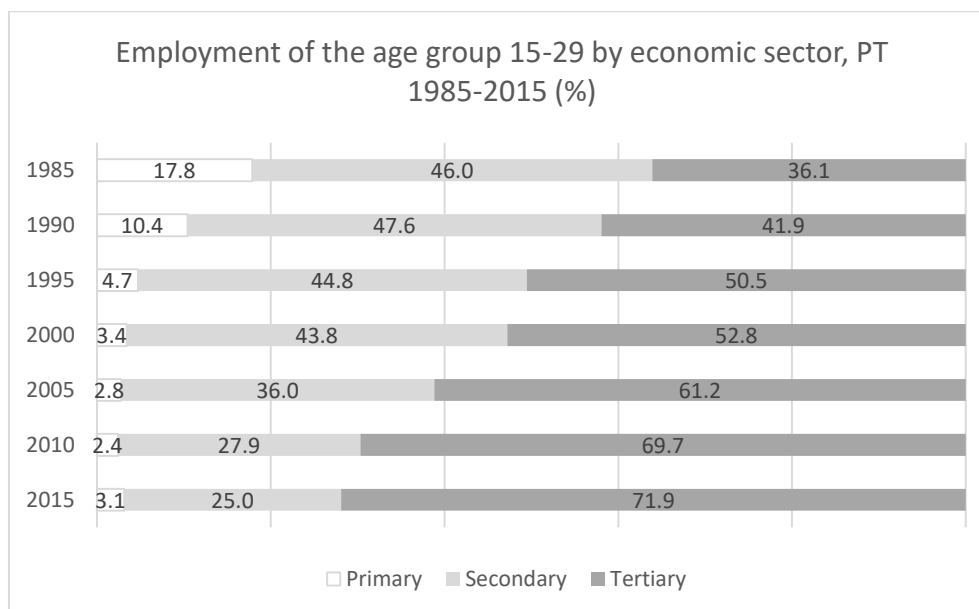
This historical account depicts the recent evolution of the Portuguese society with a very different path than the one threaded by others in the golden days of western Europe economic and social development. However, youth transitions from education to the labour market may be considered as relatively smooth. Compulsory education was finished at 10, or 15 if families could afford vocational training. The integration in the labour market was swift as an apprentice or a junior clerk. Work was underpaid but secure, fostered by a labour intensive and archaic production system, complemented by a massive emigration of young workers that acted as a safety valve of the system. The after-revolutionary period modernised the economy and subjected businesses to globalisation, pushed education close to European standards and changed the labour market regulation, fostering flexibility and adaptation to current economic conditions. How have these changes turned out to young people?

3. Young people and the changing labour market

The Portuguese economy and labour market have changed substantially along the last decades, in line with the political, economic, regulatory and cultural structural changes operated in the country. The structure of the Portuguese economy changed deeply, with the emergence of the services sector as the most prominent in the distribution of employment, to young people as to the total population. Employment turned significantly more segmented, between secure tenured jobs and diverse formulas of precarious work. Both changes had a significant impact on the occupational prospects of young people.

3.1. Restructuration of the economy and emergence of precariousness

One of the most significant changes with impact on the quality of employment available to young people was the restructuration of economic sectors shown on Figure 1. The tertiary sector has grown to absorb almost three quarters of the young people's employment.



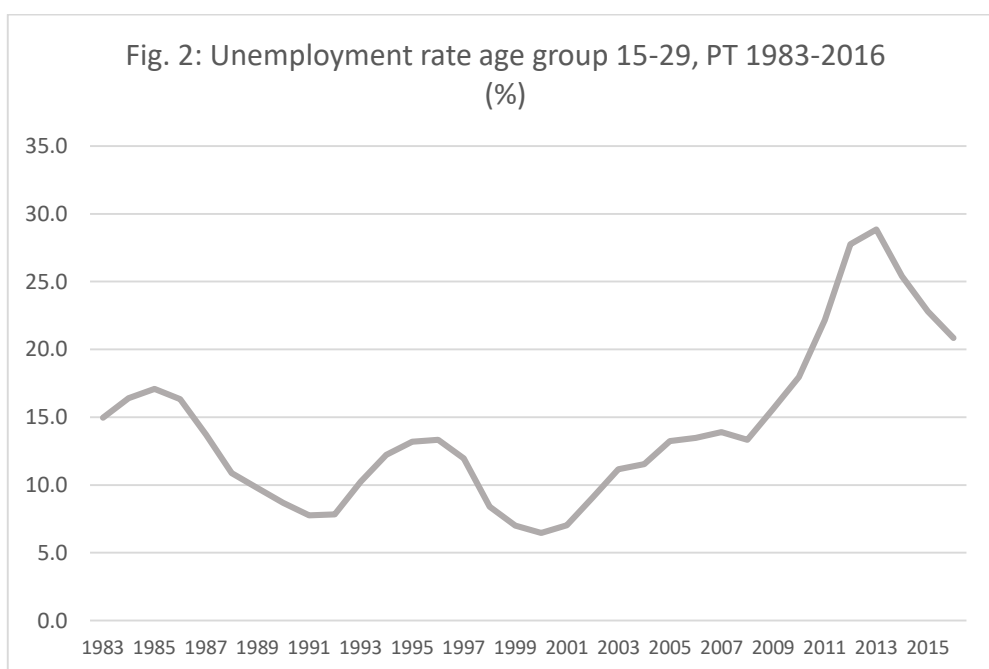
Source: INE, Labour Force Survey 1985-2015

Agriculture was a still significant sector in terms of manpower in the beginning of the eighties (18% among young people), although this high proportion may be explained by the traditional and manual intensive character of this sector in Portugal due to the smallness of the agricultural estates and consequent low level of mechanisation. During the period observed, the Portuguese agriculture slowly changes its main features into more modernised and knowledge intensive sector, at the expense of the reduction of manpower (3% of young people in 2016) and area explored. The secondary sector was the largest employer in the early 1980s partly due to limited automation of the production and specialisation on low value-added products (textiles, shoes, timber, cork, paper, food and non-metallic minerals) (Pontes 1982: 222). The manufacture maintains its prominence until the end of the century, with almost half of the young people's employment, but by the end of the period, the secondary sector recruited one quarter of young people, due to the demise of the traditional Portuguese manufacture businesses (including the previously referred and others such as the production and assemblage of transportation vehicles, construction and others). The Portuguese tertiary sector accounted for almost three quarters of the young people's employment showing convergence to the European average distribution of economic sectors (Eurostat 2016).

The most part of the employment available to young people in the service sector are located in retail (supermarkets, international retail chains present in the high streets and shopping malls) and personal services (restaurants, cafés, call centres, etc.). These kind of unskilled positions are usually payed at the minimum wage level (557 euros before taxes in 2017, approximately 3.2 euros per hour) and include a non-negligible proportion of part-time work. Beyond these uninteresting features, the majority of these service positions are extremely individualised in job content and labour relations, leading to an extremely low level of unionisation, features

that leave young employees at the mercy of the will of employers or supervisors. In the opinion of several authors, the huge progression of service jobs in association with the deregulation of labour was the most significant source for the emergence and widening of employment precarity among young people, in Portugal (Alves et al 2011, Carmo et al 2014, Cairns et al 2014 and 2016, Nico and Alves 2017) as in the most part of the Western World (Furlong and Kelly 2005).

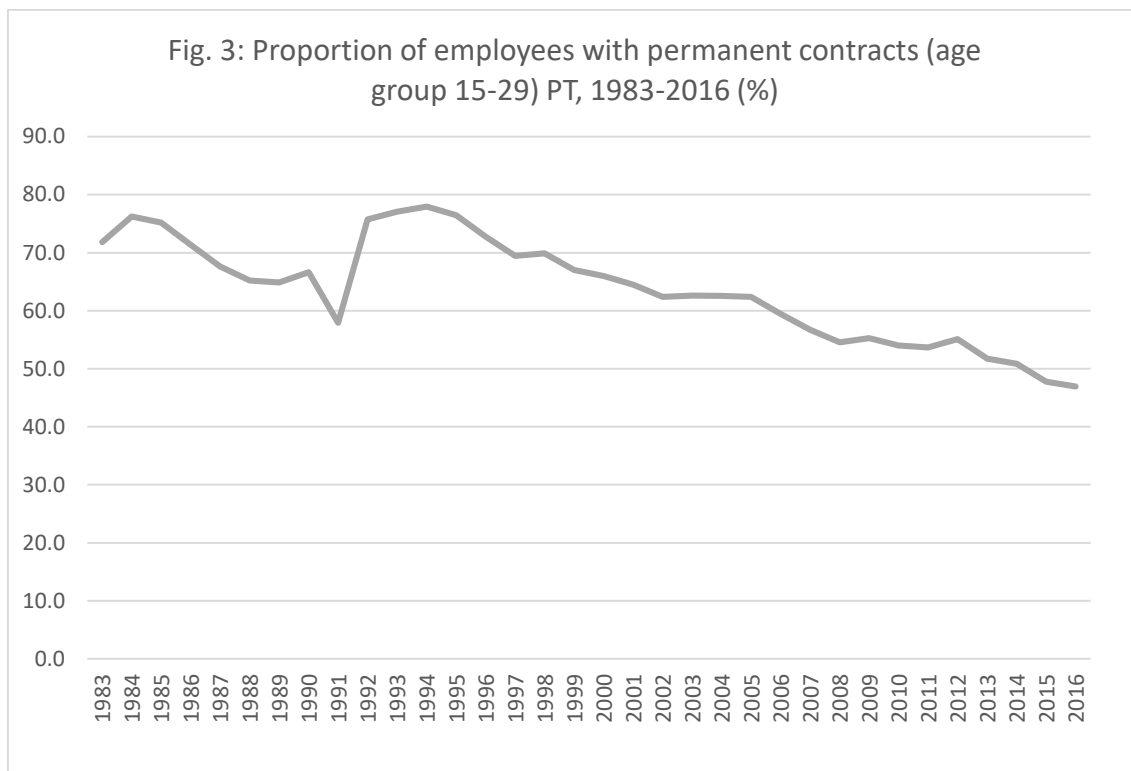
Unemployment is heavily reactive to economic cycles, although more quick to raise in the downturn phase than to decline in the upward stage. Young people are the most immediate victims of unemployment: usually the last to be hired but the first to get fired in the coming of a crisis. Figure 2 shows unemployment rates from 1983 to 2015, with the last peak linked to the world financial crisis in 2008. It is quite common for unemployment figures for young people to be double the general population rates, however this exceptionally high rate of unemployment reinforced the increasing precariousness of youth employment, acting as a sort of reserve industrial army (to use the Marxian expression) in order to press down wages, working hours, contractual conditions and statutory benefits. (Antunes 2013)



Source: INE, Labour Force Survey 1983-2016

One other factor of precariousness of the young people's employment in Portugal is the changing incidence of permanent and temporary work. The proportion of permanent contracts was about 75% in the eighties (Figure 3) and decreased to 48% by 2015¹. This means that Portuguese employers prefer to hire young people temporarily, sometimes with very short cycles of 15 days, a week or even one day even when the positions for which the (young) people are hired are of a permanent nature (Alves *et al* 2011).

¹ Although there is a bizarre behaviour of the series between 1989 and 1991, attributable to the coincidence of a significant cyclical crisis with a break in series, the downward performance of the curve is very consistent.



Source: INE, Labour Force Survey 1983-2016

Longer educational trajectories and current employment conditions offered to young people seem to push their already deferred transitions significantly further. After leaving secondary or tertiary education the usual work trajectory is alternating between short term jobs, internships, scholarships², periods of unemployment and short term jobs again. In addition, the most probable situation is that this trajectory is performed with absence of labour rights such as social security (fundamental to gain access to statutory entitlements such as unemployment benefits, illness or maternity leaves or to a pension in case of early involuntary retirement) and vacation and Christmas bonus wages. These employment conditions open space to the extension of precariousness to all the other dimensions of young peoples' lives (Alves et al 2011, Carmo et al 2014), namely the initiatives to find and maintain residence autonomy (either alone, with friends or with a partner) or even to form a family.

The statistical indicators analysed show evidence of a structural change in some of the fundamental dimensions relevant for the young People's transitions into adulthood in Portugal. The changes in education and employment have turned these transitions into a longer and more tortuous path than the one threaded by previous generations.

4. Young people and sociodemographic change

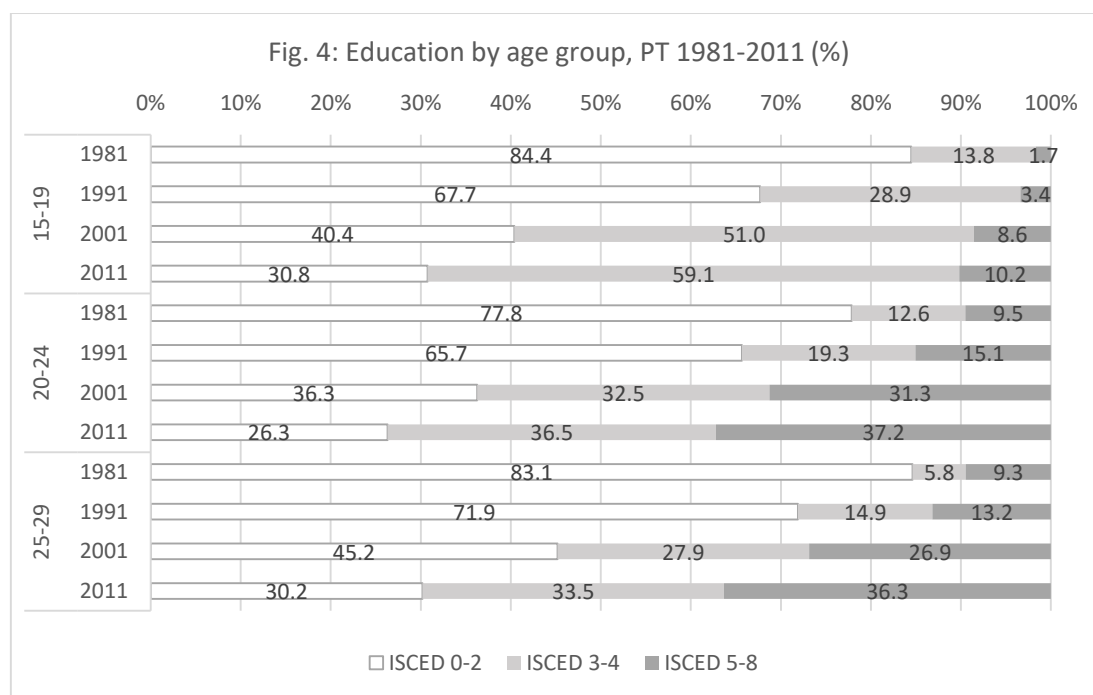
The emergence of labour precariousness constituted the last step on the process of the progressively protracted youth transitions in Portugal. However, before precariousness there were a series of social and demographic processes led by educational change that

² Very common in the academia in order to obtain cheap and docile labour that may be included in technical or menial position in scientific research or even in administrative tasks.

significantly contributed to delay other fundamental processes of youth transitions in a rapidly changing society such as the Portuguese in the last decades.

4.1. A significant progress on education

The educational status of the young people’s population was one of the most significant changes in Portugal in the last 30 years (Figure 4). The educational heritage of the dictatorship was a poor: the total enrolment in the children aged 6 to 9 in the four year of elementary education was obtained only in 1980 (INE/GEPE 2005: 65); the early leaving of secondary education was massive; and the higher education served basically for the reproduction of the educational/professional capital of the elites (Vieira 1995: 316-319).



Source: INE, Population Censuses 1981-2011

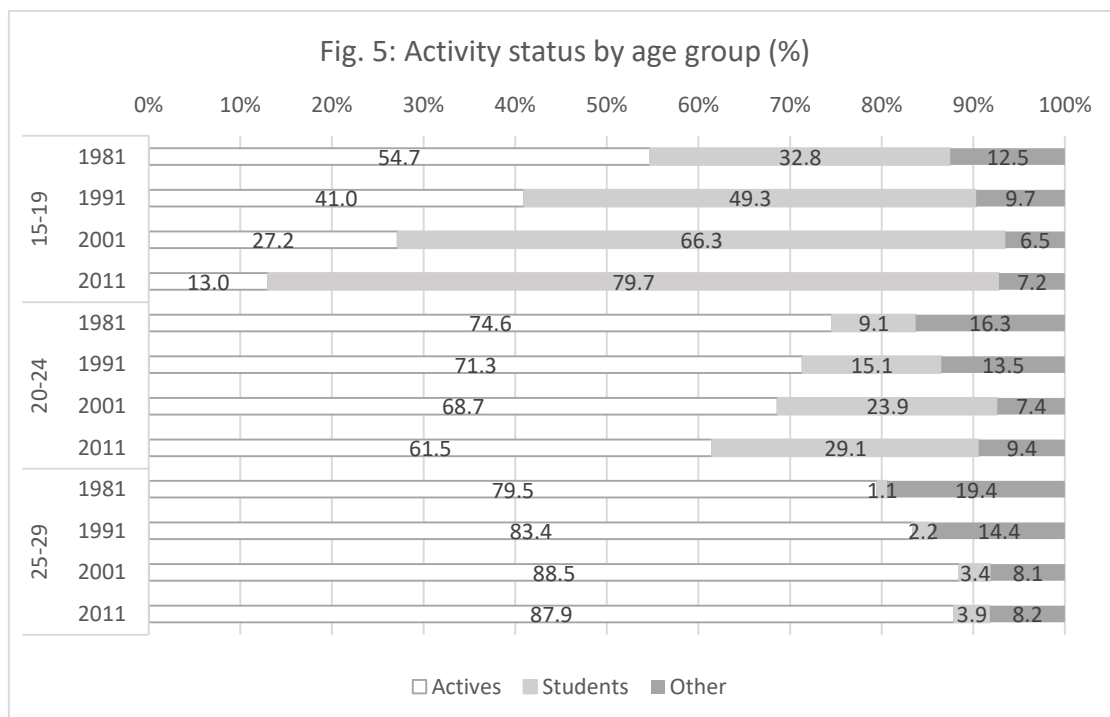
In 1981 the large majority of the population aged 15-19 did not reach further than elementary education (ISCED 0-2); secondary and tertiary education were scarcely distributed, being the former essentially a means of access to higher education and the later an almost secure passage way to a secure and qualified job and consequently a better life. In 2011 the numbers changed substantially: the proportion of young people that did not reach higher than the elementary level of schooling was significantly reduced to less than one third of the population of the three age groups (and this number is still being reduced with the policies to tackle early school leaving); secondary education grew to about one third in older age groups and 60% in the younger group. the tertiary education grew to numbers closer to the European average.

4.2. A delayed transition from education to work

The young people that used to leave school immediately after completing elementary education or even before finishing compulsory education did it because of the number of low-skilled blue-collar or service jobs available in a less modernized economy such as the

Portuguese at that time, which could turn on a first step for financial autonomy. The massive mobilization of young people into further education in this period has had the expected effect of delaying youth transitions into adulthood along with the other European countries (Furlong and Cartmel 1997 and 2007). This substantial change in the educational status of the younger population in the last decades resulted from the efforts made not only by the fragile post-revolutionary Portuguese Welfare State in order to improve the educational records of its citizenry but also by the families that continuously considered tertiary educational credentials as a decisive factor for social mobility (Machado et al 2003).

The change from precocious integration into the labour market to persistence in education by young people, particularly among the ones integrating the youngest group, is clearly demonstrated by the figure 5.

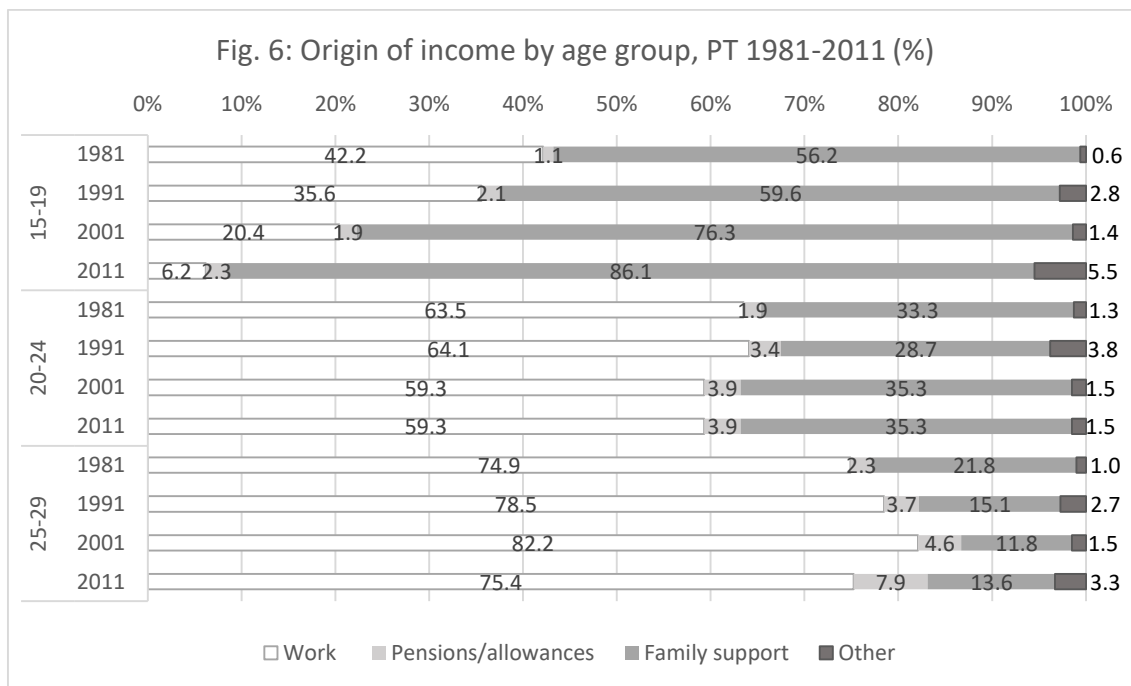


Source: INE, Population Censuses 1981-2011

The transition into the labour market is made significantly later in consequence of a reinforced permanence in education and even the residual category “others” is significantly reduced, mainly through the severe reduction of women home-makers (still rather frequent in the eighties even in the younger age groups but severely shortened in the last censuses).

4.3. A protracted financial autonomy

The progressively delayed entrance of the Portuguese young people in the labour market is also clearly visible with the analysis of the indicator ‘origin of income’ (Figure 6). In 1981 about 42% of the population between 15 and 19 already earned a living based on paid work; on the opposite side, 56% of this age group still depended on their families.



Source: INE, Population Censuses 1981-2011

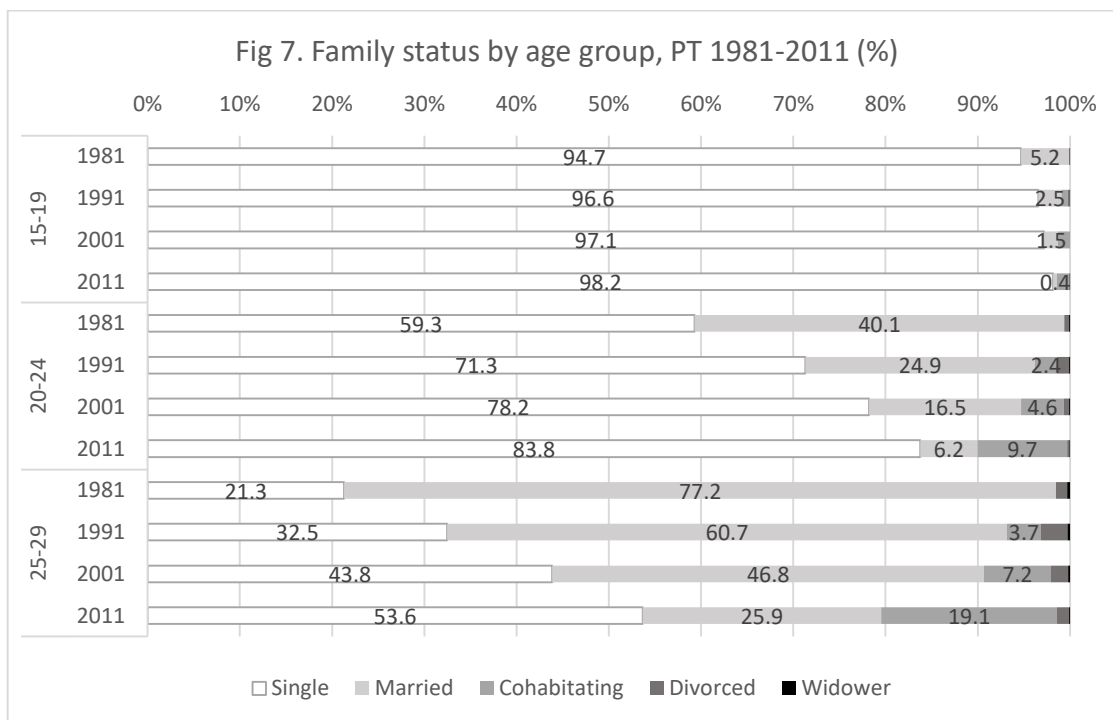
This balance will be seriously challenged in the following censuses with the proportion of workers decreasing until a residual percentage of 6% in 2011 and the segment of young people depending on their families reaching 86%. The older age groups are much more balanced: in the 20-24 the proportion of young people living on their wages reaches almost two thirds in 1981 and 1991 and then slightly decreases to 59% in 2011. The proportion of young people depending on their families is rather stable, around one third of the age group in the four censuses observed. The 25-29 age group shows a higher dependence on work for living arrangements, between three quarters and 82% in 2001 with a correspondingly smaller proportion of young people dependent on their families (between 21 and 12%). In this age group the ‘pensions and allowances’ category turned more visible (especially in 2011) due to the peak of the financial and economic crisis, where the unemployment benefits rose substantially and helped young people to live through the crisis.

4.4. Postponing the new family

Longer educational paths and delayed entrances in the labour market were two factors affecting smooth transitions into adulthood that occurred in Portugal in parallel with other European and western countries. Other is related to young people’s residential arrangements and the formation of a new family. There isn’t much data available to cover the first of these themes, but the censuses that have been analysed here contain the necessary information to characterize the change of the Portuguese young people’s family statuses in the last decades (Figure 7).

The youngest age group has not changed in the last 30 years. In the intermediate age group, the proportion of single young people rose from 59% in 1981 to 84% in 2011, meaning that the early marriages/cohabitations and following situations are reduced to a very small proportion (16%). It is also interesting that the proportion of cohabitations starts to be very frequent among this age group: in 2011 the proportion of cohabitants was even higher than the one of

married young people. This means that the traditional (conservative/catholic) path from the family's home directly to marriage is losing practitioners, in favour of a more experimental approach of young people in respect to the development of new families and households (Guerreiro e Abrantes 2004). The older age group shows also important changes in respect to this indicator. The minority of single people between 25 and 29 in 1981 (21%) is transformed in a majority of 54% in 2011. The proportion of married young people (77%), which constituted the only alternative to being single, is reduced to a quarter of the age group and being clearly challenged by a growing cohabitating alternative (19%).

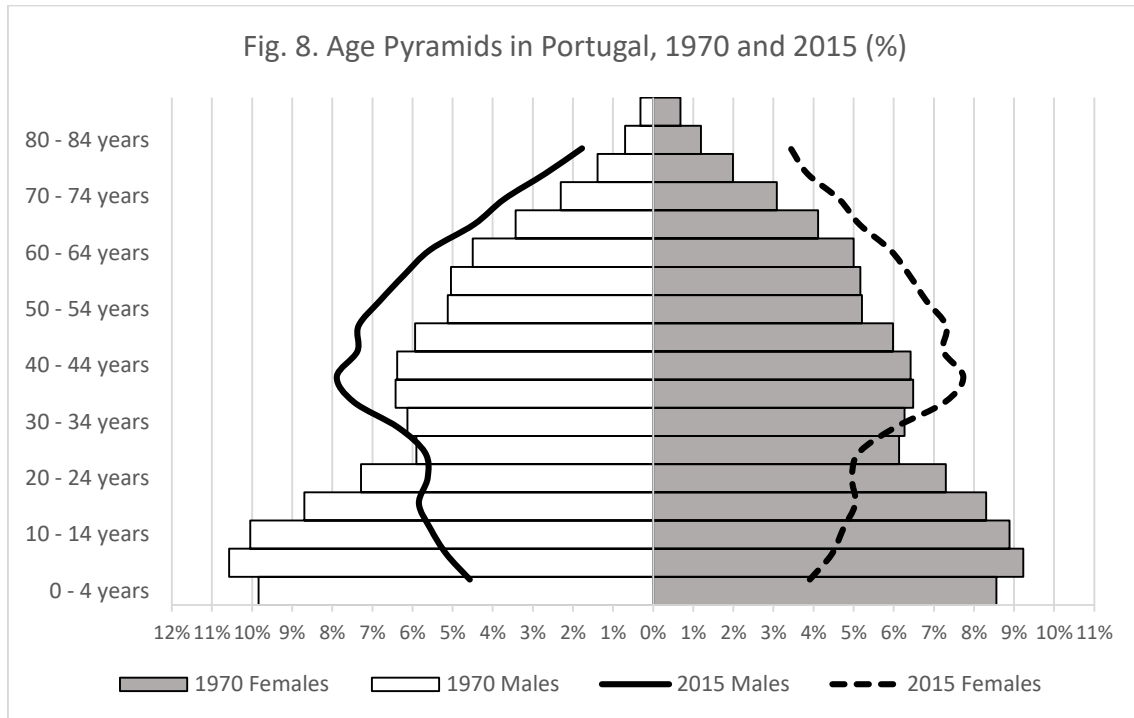


The immediate consequence of the way these indicators evolved in the last thirty years was also the postponement of motherhood/fatherhood. In the seventies, the average age of the mother at the birth of the first child was 24 and this persisted until the mid-eighties. After this period the average age at the birth of the first child has not stopped to grow until now (2016), at 30 (INE 2016). This numbers have significant impacts in other demographics such as fertility rates, aging of the population, and substitution of generations, labour force and welfare rights. The increased freedom of option for delaying marriage/partnership and having children in exchange for a more experimental way of constituting living arrangements and partnerships is also shaped by structural change in education, the labour market and housing access for young people. All these structural constraints impel young people for longer educational paths aimed to facilitate employment chances and more successful occupational careers that also take time to consolidate and provide the resources needed for other transitional steps (residential autonomy, partnerships, and children).

4.5. An ageing society

One of the most immediate consequences of these social processes is the demographical change of the Portuguese population, with a shrinking proportion of young people. The two age pyramids below (Figure 8) show quite eloquently the profound demographic change occurred in Portugal in the last decades, due to an important rise in the life-expectation at birth and to the massive reduction of the cohorts of young people, pointing the country as the

fifth country with the oldest population in 2015, with an average age of 44 years (UN 2015: 32). Younger cohorts (0-24) have been significantly reduced in numbers due to decades of systematic reduction of live births; young adults (25-34) are notably stable because these are the cohorts born during the last baby-boom in Portugal on the years after the revolution; from the 35 years on the cohorts are systematically more numerous with a little more prominence on the women side.



Source: INE, Population Estimates, 1970-2015

This clearly means that the young people’s population is decreasing and the total population is aging at a swift pace (the population between 15 and 29 dropt 28% in this last 30 years). The causes for this demographic accident are deeply rooted in Portuguese history and society. Since the end of the sixties that the number of live-births is decreasing, from an average of 180 thousand by year since the beginning of the century to the beginning of the sixties (Carrilho 1991: 36), culminating in an average of 87 thousand between 2011 and 2016 (INE 2016). This abrupt decrease in the number of live-births was firstly caused by the significant emigration of Portuguese young males between 1961 and 1973 already referred before, however the tendency of decreasing fertility as remained in the following decades and even turned worst, partly attributable to the protracted transitions to adulthood analysed above.

5. Generations and transitions

The protracted transitions into adulthood in Portugal are clearly visible in the quantitative data analysed until now, however, their causes and consequences are even more eloquently present in young people’s experiences and discourses. The crisis that hit the country in the last years has amplified the already evident problem, turning it into a daily discussion that clearly emerged in the set of interviews which constitutes the empirical basis of the following section.

These interviews³ were undertaken in 2012 and 2013, as a follow-up of a previous survey, and its main objective was to observe and detail the potential of political radicalization of the Portuguese young people. The material analysed here was collected from the answers given to the question “What is going on now that is really affecting people (and your family) in Portugal?”.

The data will be presented in a series of eight cases reasonably illustrative of the diversity of the interviewee’s backgrounds, educational patterns, employment situation or probable prospects and representations on the present and anticipation of the future. These cases were chosen with a set of different criteria, including location, social background, gender, age (the most unbalanced due to the initial stage in the transition process and lesser reflexivity of teenagers) and transition process. The order of presentation follows a scale of increasing difficulties to accomplish a smooth transition from education to work and further steps, with difficulties emerging from different sources: reduction of income, educational hurdles, precariousness and an articulation of these with other in the worst cases. These last hurdles are clearly related to the conjuncture these interviewees have gone through but these are also clearly articulated to structural factors such as social background and neighbourhood.

The two first cases illustrate young people barely affected by the crisis. Coming from privileged backgrounds, they managed to maintain their standards of living, holding to their academic trajectories and aiming to a bright future, helped by their respective nurtured networks.

(Portuguese) living above their means

Paulo was born in Lisbon and is 23. He studied in a well-known private school and obtained a degree in Business Administration from the Catholic University in Lisbon. He is currently enrolled in a Masters in Marketing but had already some employment experience in the digitalization of architecture projects, where he had a chance to coordinate a small team. He considers that the trouble the country is going through emerges mainly from a crisis of values, because people are going only after material values and forget the well-being that surrounds them, a consideration that clearly comes from his conservative catholic upbringing. Paulo is firmly convinced that the Portuguese people in the last decades was used to an easy living, consuming whatever they wanted supported on credit, living well and retiring early. Today, with the globalization of the economy, with the cheap products coming from China and India this is no longer affordable. And people had to change drastically their expectations and blamed the government instead of blaming themselves. This vision of the Portuguese economic and social crisis was popularised by the neoliberal inspired government that ruled the country during the peak of the crisis (2011-2015). (Paulo, 23, male, Lumiar, higher education)

Looking at the bright side

Maria João is 21, lives in Lumiar with her family and she is a Nutrition Science undergraduate in a small private university across the river Tagus. Coming from an upper middle class background,

³ Were part of the fieldwork undertaken by the MYPLACE research project, financed by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission, coordinated by the Professor Hilary Pilkington of the University of Manchester. A total of 56 interviews held in two different locations in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area: Lumiar, a predominantly middle class newly constructed neighbourhood in the north-eastern part of Lisbon; and Barreiro, a post-industrial town largely inhabited by working class people in the south bank of the river Tagus, currently evolving into another suburban neighbourhood of Lisbon. The sample was rather even in terms of gender but unbalanced in respect to age and education. Lumiar: 15 male/12 female; age: 4 (16-19), 9 (20-22), 13 (23-25); 3 (ISCED 2), 24 (ISCED 3). Barreiro: 15 male/14 female; age: 12 (16-19); 7 (20-22); 7 (23-25). ISCED 3 reports mainly to interviewees that were enrolled in tertiary education at the time.

until now she has not been affected by the crisis. However, she is aware of its effects through her colleagues with unemployed parents who can hardly cope with higher education expenses. Although coming from a privileged background, Maria João is concerned with social and environmental matters and engages in some voluntary work and political demonstrations such as “Ocupar o Rossio” in a sort of Portuguese light version of Occupy Wall Street or Ocupar Puerta del Sol in Madrid. Although she acknowledges that young people are going through severe difficulties in Portugal, Joana is optimistic about the future and really believes that things are going to be better in the future, with more employment opportunities and better living prospects for all. (Maria João, 21, female, Lumiar, enrolled in higher education)

These are limited examples of young people untouched by the crisis. Their parents were highly educated and stably employed, being able to maintain their family’s standards of living. However, there is an important difference between them: Paulo is a neoliberal catholic that considers that the worst-off are being punished by their wrong doings while Maria João tries to appease her more progressive conscience with voluntary work.

The two following cases are also from Lumiar and introduce two young people going through higher education and living autonomously but whose families are going through economic difficulties with direct implications in their means of living. These are examples of the middle classes who were used to live comfortably until things went wrong (either because of unexpected unemployment, illness or wage cuts).

Searching for a brighter future

Fernando is 25 and has always lived in Lumiar, first with his parents and now with his girlfriend. He has studied Geography, holding a graduation and master’s degree in this field and now being a PhD student with a scholarship from the Portuguese Science Foundation. He is also very committed to his neighbourhood having belonged to the board of the Resident’s Association. Fernando’s closer family is all suffering from precariousness: his girlfriend has had a series of precarious jobs in the last few years and his sister and sister-in-law are in the same situation. He is really worried by this situation because his scholarship does not entitle him with illness or unemployment benefits, not being very different from other atypical temporary job. The employment precariousness and severe unemployment that drives Portuguese youth to emigration is demoralizing Fernando because he is investing in a career that he will certainly not be able to pursue in his country. The situation the Portuguese Youth is going through drives Fernando to think that there is a generational fracture going on in Portugal at this time. He thinks that the young people in Portugal are going through a double feeling of loss: “They are not going to have the future that was promised to them; but they are not going to have the quiet past their parents had, also. It is a loss of future and a loss of memory and this is very hard for us!” (Fernando, male, 25, Lumiar, higher education)

A girl with a plan: emigration

Daniela is 22, and lived in Oporto until coming to Lisbon three years ago to study Criminal Psychology in a local private university. She is living alone in Lisbon and all her family lives abroad due to recent emigration trajectories. Her father is in Brazil, her older brother in Norway, her mother and younger brother in the UK. Her family and herself were deeply affected by the crisis. Her mother was a retired teacher but the rise of taxes and pension cuts reduced her income to a level that she couldn’t cope with her expenses anymore. She moved to London with her youngest son to work as a cleaning lady in a hotel. Daniela used to live well in Lisbon just with her family’s allowance but the crisis reduced her income significantly, despite of this she never looked for a part-time to earn some money and reduce the burden on her family. With the crisis and all the problems of youth employment Daniela does not expect to find a job in Portugal after finishing university. But she already has a plan: first she is going to London in order to find an internship in

her area of expertise and improve her English and afterwards she will move to Brazil to live with her father and make a living (Daniela, 22, female, Lumiar, enrolled in higher education).

The cases are slightly different once one covers precariousness and the other cuts in pensions that pushed people to change their way of living to be able to cope with the reduction of income, signalling also that the crisis has affected not only young people but their parents as well. Fernando offers a comparison across generations and their different employment and transitional trajectories. Despite the difficulties of the past, the transition of the previous generation is considered smooth and unproblematic in comparison with the difficulties of the present. Both cases introduce the theme of emigration as the only way out for qualified young people due to the current situation of the labour market in the country, option made by 40 thousand of young Portuguese graduates between 2011 and 2013 (Gomes et al 2015).

The next four cases come from Barreiro, a post-industrial suburb of Lisbon. All interviewees have working class or low middle classes backgrounds. Three of them have gone through higher education, with only one completing a degree and the fourth still being a teenager. Despite these very different educational experiences their employment and life prospects do not differ significantly until now. This has made them consider the current value of higher education, particularly in the absence of a protective network that would cherish their prospects.

Coping with the present with no expectations for the future

Nélson is 23 and lives in Barreiro with his mother and younger brother. He was enrolled in higher education immediately after finishing-high-school but he drop-out for financial reasons. His mother's was the only revenue and simply wasn't enough. After leaving university he started to work as mechanic in his mother's shop, helping her in the driving-school she owns. Working for his mother was not at all his first option because work and family should not mix, in his opinion, but there wasn't another option available due to the crisis. The economic situation is also affecting the family business. In the last year they had to sell the house where they were living to keep the business alive. His grandfather, recently deceased, was an important reference to him, because he was a soldier who made several commissions in the Colonial Wars and then returned to Portugal and was involved in the revolution that brought democracy. In his talks to his grandfather Nelson started to grow an interest in politics that motivated him to have a role in student unions, in the youth branch of the Communist Party and later to be an active militant of the Portuguese Communist Party. The way the things have sorted out in his life and his political experience gave Nelson an acute perspective of the social inequalities in Portugal, in particular the difficulties that young people go through, almost leaving emigration as the only way out. In his perspective, young people's prospects in Portugal in these days are worst than the ones awaiting the previous generation, and this is not a bright perspective for the future. (Nélson, 23, male, Barreiro, higher education drop out)

Fighting to survive the next month

Júlio is 25 and has always lived in Barreiro. He is a Sociology graduate, after having started his higher education in Communication and Culture. Júlio has finished his degree in 2010 and since then has been working in a call centre, first as a back-office operator and afterwards as the manager of the commercial department. He is not happy at all with his employment situation once it is a temporary job with no career perspectives, but a more attractive opportunity has still not showed up and Júlio needs his wage to keep up with his monthly responsibilities. In the crisis context the country is going through his only objective is to make ends meet. All the money he earns is aimed to survive for another month. Júlio firmly believes that he is now paying for a crisis that was caused by years of bad government, corruption and wrong options, a crisis he had no

responsibilities on but that will last for ten or more years, turning his generation into a lost generation. The crisis, the raising taxes and loss of income and the absence of good prospects is driving Júlio to hopelessness and depression. (Júlio, male, 25, Barreiro, higher education)

Nélson and Júlio both come from working class families and have always lived in Barreiro, a post-industrial suburb of Lisbon. Both circumstances gave these young men an acute conscience of the social inequalities they live through and the difficulties to overcome them, particularly in the depressive economic environment the country has gone through in the last years. They both have gone through higher education, although with different outcomes. However, until now this has not made a significant difference for their employment or life prospects. They are truly pessimistic about their futures, Júlio is deeply affected and demoralised by precariousness and Nelson by the lack of opportunities offered to his generation. Once more the comparison between generations is present here as well as the reference to emigration as the single way out for young people.

The last two cases refer to young people deeply scarred by the crisis and unemployment, either personal or from their parents. They both have their futures mildly compromised due to lack of funds to stay in education, although at least one of them is largely reticent of what kind of future education might bring.

Procrastinating through the crisis

Rui is 24 and lives in Barreiro. He started his education in Barreiro but changed to a vocational school in Lisbon in the secondary. After finishing the secondary education, he started a postsecondary course has a Show Business Technician while working for the Postal Services. He later dropped out the postsecondary course and enrolled in Science and Technology of Sound in a Lisbon private university. When the employment contract ended he was forced to drop out university because the fees were expensive and his family had no resources (his mother is a precarious high school teacher although holding a PhD graduation). His view of the future is rather pessimistic because the people of his age are finishing their university degrees and cannot find a job (something which also gives him an argument for justifying his drop out from university). And when they find one they are under-paid and cannot afford a house or having children. When he compares his parent's generation with his own he notices that at his age his parents had already moved from home and had children while he is still stuck in his parent's home. (Rui, 24, male, Barreiro, higher education dropout)

Living hand to mouth

Diana was born in Cape Verde, she is 16 and lives in Barreiro. Initially she lived with her mother in Lisbon but she moved to Barreiro three years ago. She is enrolled in the 10th grade and would like to go to the University to study Business Administration. The crisis forced the families that employed Diana's mother as a cleaning lady to reduce their expenses and since then they are both depending on the minimum guaranteed income to survive, a circumstance that affects almost the entire neighbourhood. The money is short but Diana is used to live on a limited budget and with modest expectations. (Diana, 16, female, Barreiro, enrolled in secondary education)

The two have suffered the loss of income generalised in Portugal during the crisis, a process that had more severe consequences in the lower middle classes and in the working class. Diana accumulates a series of inequality factors that are difficult to overcome. Rui is quite a different case. Coming from a highly educated background he seemed to have made a series of wrong choices in his educational path. With the present situation in the labour market he also has some difficulties to find and hold a secure job, leaving him with few perspectives for the

future. However, the labour market does not present better prospects for the ones with a degree, leaving Rui's conscience appeased in his sour grapes moment. The trouble of his generation with the labour market and other problematic steps into adulthood gives him the chance to make one more contribution to the comparison of transition processes between the interviewees' generation and the one of their parents.

Although socially diverse, this set of cases clearly illustrates the difficulties that the majority of Portuguese young people is going through when facing the major financial and economic crisis since the great depression of the twentieth century. They are simultaneously the better educationally qualified cohort Portugal as ever had and the one with less employment opportunities and future prospects. A significant part of them is deeply scarred by the crisis and reduction of income, by being constantly rejected or ignored by employers, or alternatively to be submitted to diverse forms of employment precariousness. Bearing with these conditions for such a long time and seeing no light at the end of the tunnel they are losing hope and the means to think positively about the future. The only solution available seems to be emigration, precisely the same one adopted by diverse generations of Portuguese citizens in the twentieth century end even before that.

Apart from the increasing troublesome transitions, the most curious fact emerging from these interviews, although not present in all the cases illustrated in this section, is the comparative posture this generation has with the previous one. Having this happened without a specific question or prompting by the interviewer, it would be interesting to identify the reasoning process that led to these rather frequent comparative intent. Was it an issue of debate among families? Was it something popularised in the media around the theme "This generation will be the first to have worst prospects of living than the previous one"? It is certainly something to keep as a focus of research.

Conclusion

Portugal has threaded a very different developmental path through the twentieth century when compared to its European counterparts, being characterized by a long lasting dictatorship and a closed and underdeveloped economy. Despite of that, youth transitions into adulthood were rather linear and short-termed, although fostered by a significant emigration of young people towards Europe and lower life expectations for the ones that remained. Along with other Southern European economies and societies, the definitive developmental step was the integration of the country in the European Economic Communities, a strategic decision that provided the economic, politic and regulatory framework that fostered the development of the country into a viable democracy and market driven economy.

During this last four decades the country has made a remarkable progress, with the development of strong and rooted democratic institutions and processes, a widely based although frail Welfare State and public provision of education and health services, and modern although severely European-dependent economy. This significant social change is also evident in respect to the Portuguese youth statistical indicators. Although shrinking in volume and proportion to the total population, Portuguese youngsters show similar records to their European counterparts. Their educational paths are longer and their first approach to the labour market made later in time and clearly more qualified than previous generations. Of

course that this longer period in education led to less autonomous lives: young Portuguese tend to stay at their parents' home and to be financial dependent from them until very late in life. When leaving the parental home, they tend to be more experimental in residential and emotional arrangements, changing the paradigm of leaving the parental home directly into marriage. On the less positive side, part of these changes may be also attributable to the dramatic change processed in the labour market. The neoliberal globalized economy, with its fierce fight for profits and deregulated *modus operandi* has been very important in shaping the prospects of recent cohorts of young adults. Qualified and well paid jobs are scarce and only available to the ones with the talent or the social capital needed to capture it; underpaid and unsecure tertiary jobs are the most widely available job opportunities for young people, opening the door to durable or indefinite periods of precarious work, eventually leading to a precarious life.

The global financial crisis started in 2008 had dramatic effects in the country. The rampant public debt contaminated the state's budget and all economic activity. Income has decreased and taxes increased exhausting the capacity of the economy to grow and create employment. High unemployment rates turned youth employment prospects even worse, boosting emigration as a viable solution. After 40 years of democracy and social change, young people were facing virtually the same problems with the same and only solution. The notion of continuous progress from one generation to the other was lost, based on the contrast between the constructed memory of the past and the bleakness of the future. This comparison process of past and current transitions made among young people was an interesting and unexpected outcome that emerged from the qualitative research used in this chapter.

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