The challenge to social reproduction in times of crisis: tensions between generations in southern Europe

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Social reproduction in times of crisis

Social reproduction can be defined as a form of continuity linking generations around household projects of making a living and enhancing future opportunity. It can also be defined as the continuity of social organization that distributes power and assets unequally. This chapter is about these two aspects of social reproduction and their articulation. In the process, inter-generational forms of care overlap with conflict and resentment at different scales, with obligations of solidarity that weave everyday actions of support around parents and children confronted at a larger societal scale by discourses of privilege in accessing resources such as stable jobs, assets (home ownership) and income (retirement pensions). This configures a complex and contradictory map of responsibilities, and ultimately poses the question of the sustainability of the social system.

The economic crisis in Europe has created new practices and understandings of generational inter-dependencies reaching beyond family and household reproduction to the reproduction of society as a whole. Central within these reconfigurations are pension systems and the crystallization of savings into home ownership for the older generation. Younger generations working precarious jobs and unable to make ends meet must often return to their parental homes, relying on the savings, pension income and care work of older kin. At the same time, austerity governments and the media proclaim pensions to be "unsustainable"[1] and "unfair"—as a kind of privilege of the older generation.

The cases of Italy and Spain that we compare in this chapter have many similarities. Both countries began overhauling their pension systems in the 1990s, following EU recommendations to meet the public deficit criteria enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty. While the early reforms were controversial, those implemented following the 2008 financial crisis in a period of high youth unemployment and precarity highlighted the importance of pensioners' incomes for the welfare of many extended households. At the same time, the alleged financial unsustainability of public pension schemes seemed to place younger and older generations in competition for scarce public funds.

The current crises point to an epochal breakdown of inter- and intra-generational expectations and strategies for making a living. At the micro level, investments in younger generations are being reconsidered as the labor market grows more fragmented, flexible and precarious. Mobility strategies, such as migration, often reveal increased dependency rather than autonomy between generations, while expectations of downward mobility for the young and longer lifespans for the elderly produce new anxieties and tensions within families as moral obligations unavoidably change. At the macro level, transformations in the political economic structure of capitalist societies over the last half century, including the neo-liberal turn and the fall of the "socialist" model after 1989, have acquired a "generational" aspect that often substitutes for the previous "class" aspect of inequalities. This is an important cultural shift that presents inequalities in terms of moral responsibilities, i.e. a "moral economy," rather than in terms of the larger social structure of unequal distribution (Narotzky 2016).

[1]. This concerns the fiscal crisis of the state, largely due to the abandoning of Keynesian welfare systems of progressive taxation, the reduction of corporate taxation, and the dismantling of job security and wages through global outsourcing.

Our case studies show how the transition from dependency to autonomy that framed the expectations of personal "growth," sustained transfers of income, and work and care practices under Fordism are now being overturned. Today's domestic moral economies entail prolonging the dependence of young adults, especially through their increased reliance on their parents' savings, care work and public pensions. At the same time, post-2008 structural adjustment policies and the alleged un-sustainability of the public pension system in the European social market model are expressed in policy documents as an unfair bargain between the baby boom generation and their children. This inequity allegedly requires the radical transformation of intergenerational models of solidarity at the state level.

For younger generations, the shame of "depending" on older generations for such necessities as income, housing and child care is compounded by the perplexity of being taxed to pay for the pensions of this older generation; at the same time, they are told by experts and policy-makers that nothing similar awaits them in the future. The younger generations' failure to achieve recognition as autonomous adults and their inability to meet solidarity obligations through existing "pay-as-you-go" public pension systems predicated on continuous cycles of generalized reciprocity fuels the breakdown of expectations. In the meantime, the individually capitalized pension funds proposed by experts and policy-makers as the solution for a sustainable pension system assume a growing economy, continuous employment and decent salaries. Indeed, the proposed pension schemes penalize precarious employment, which for many members of the younger generation is the only kind available. Short and long-term interests as well as domestic and civic moralities thus become highly ambivalent and often contradictory.

Gender inequalities are also salient as women and men have different opportunities to access resources and channel them across and within generations. Care—where the tension between love and money is always present—becomes a key resource for precariously employed young parents, with inter-generational claims and practices of care increasingly central to making a living (see Matos in this volume). Changing care practices within households and across generations are also informed by the insufficient or declining provision of care facilities and services by the state and their substitution by market services that result in care-giving and care-receiving processes of differentiation (Hochschild 2003; Yeates 2004; Parreñas 2001; Razavi 2007; Weber et al. 2003). At the same time, the inadequacy of many pensions and the life-cycle gaps between pre-retirement unemployment and the ability to claim a retirement pension present an altogether different picture of generational stress on the older—here mostly male—cohorts. We will address these transformations in the current economic and institutional crisis through a framework that views the moral aspects of economies as integral to the political economies of an industrial town in Spain and in a mid-size services and industrial town in southern Italy (see Pusceddu in this volume).

Moral economy, political economy and generations

The "moral economy" and "political economy" frameworks are often seen as mutually exclusive, with one historically following upon the other. The moral economy framework seeks to understand the mutual obligations and responsibilities that render differences acceptable and enable social continuity in a particular historical conjuncture (Moore 1978; Scott 1976; Thompson 1971, 1993). The political economy framework seeks to understand the structural processes that produce political and economic differentiation (Wolf 1982; Harvey 2003). By applying both to our ethnographic cases, we aim to point to the ambiguous logic that sustains economic practice.[2]

In Thompson's original work (1971, 1993) the emergence of the "moral economy" is tied to a particular conjuncture of the expansion of market relations: "The breakthrough of the

[2]. See Sayer (2000) for another attempt to articulate radical political economy and moral economy.

new political economy of the free market was also the breakdown of the old moral economy of provision" (Thompson 1971: 136). The analytical concept[3] of moral economy thus cannot be separated from its concrete emergence as the expression of a clash of material forces and cultural constructs at a particular historical conjuncture of primitive accumulation. Today, the resurgence of the moral economy discourse in academic analyses parallels what some scholars have underscored as a new process of primitive accumulation (De Angelis 2007) with accumulation through dispossession recognized as central to capitalism (Harvey 2005). The "moral" aspect thus re-emerges in the concrete conjuncture of neoliberal capitalism, one that has shattered the moral economy framework based on Keynesian redistribution. Moral economy perspectives today stress how moral values, affects and emotions channel economic and political behavior (Edelman 2005; Brown 2009; Robbins 2009; Fassin 2009, 2012; Hann 2010; Sayer 2000; Fontaine 2008). Their particular force rests on the articulation of moral values and obligations with material provisioning and resource allocation.

In Chris Gregory's (2009) concept of "domestic moral economy," domestic provisioning and moral economy appear as articulated dimensions that re-configure the concept of "householding" as a general process straddling the market/non-market divide and tied to diverse dimensions of value. As feminist voices have long emphasized (Elson 2001; Nelson 2006; Benería 2003; McDowell 2004; Razavi 2007; Lawson 2007), unpaid work and an ethics of care are key elements for understanding economic processes beyond their mainstream definition as the self-interested individual maximization of utility through rational choice. Diverse forms of providing support—often glossed over as "care"[4]—tend to fall outside of the range of recognized economic transactions. They nevertheless constitute non-marketable values crucial to the social reproduction of households and of the larger

[3]. We do not refer to the interest in morality present in many historical works on economic activities, but to the emergence of an analytical concept that has become a synthetic tool for understanding conflicts around the distribution of resources.

[4]. Care in practice and as a domain of observation straddles domestic, market, state and voluntary sectors in what has been defined as the "care diamond" (Razavi 2007).

society (Picchio 1992). In contrast to the imagined autonomy of the individual in rational actor theory, relations of personal dependency and emotional value in this perspective are central to the capacity of the entire economic and political system to endure.

Household members for their maintenance also depend on income earned from formal or informal[5] market activities and relations, and on benefits or subsidies claimed from the state as citizenship entitlements. From a social reproduction perspective, market and non-market, private and public dimensions come together in the everyday practices and values that enable the continuity of social life. In turn, these practices and values contribute to create particular social relations and produce specific forms of life in common. In this process, relations and material transfers between generations, both at the intimate and institutional levels, become the site of the reconfiguration of economic, political and moral obligations. The transformation of the channels of social reproduction becomes particularly visible and acute in the inter-generational arena, a site of solidarities, tensions and struggles. In the current climate of economic uncertainty for the young, the position and value of older generations, both male and female, have been radically transformed (Narotzky 2011; Pine 2007, 2009). On the one hand, the elderly are unable to pass on much in the way of either skills or assets, as their longevity devalues their knowledge and diminishes their savings. On the other hand, they often become the refuge of last resort for the young when employment, housing and income are scarce or volatile. But the old are also vulnerable as their health fails in the face of reduced institutional care, minimal pensions or delayed access to them, while real estate speculators prey on them by offering reverse mortgages that will provide lifetime income against the sale of the home. As precarity reconfigures relational aspects of personhood and social worth, examining political economy and moral economy in tandem is useful for understanding how material changes in the systems of inter- and intra-generation

[5]. We use the formal / informal divide because the pressure of regulatory frameworks creates real differences in labor market opportunities. These concepts do not describe a bounded reality but an entangled continuum of differently regulated labor relations.

transmission transform the field of moral obligation, both at the household and at larger political scales.

The transformation of political landscapes in Spain and Italy

Spain

Ferrol is an industrial town of some 70,000 inhabitants on the northwest coast of Spain. In the 1960s, two shipyards—one public (Bazán), one private (Astano)—provided living wages for almost every household. By the 1970s, some 20,000 people were working in the main shipyards or in auxiliary companies. The shipyard had a tradition of strong trade unions; employment stability and decent wages defined the employees as "privileged." Gendered responsibilities rendered the men the income providers; women were homemakers and mostly cared for the very young and old. Some women also worked in fish freezing factories; others were shopkeepers or sewed garments informally at home. Domestic responsibilities were structured around the expectation of job and income stability for adult men and care work for adult women. The expectation was that working adult households would be autonomous.

Following Spain's transition to democracy (1975-82), its first elected governments began restructuring all state industries, allegedly to prepare the country for its entry into the European Economic Community and the free market's "challenge of competitiveness." Complying with demands from Brussels, the shipyards were brutally downsized. From 1984 to 1987, thousands of jobs were lost; unemployment and early retirement became a generalized feature of the region. Although labor conflict increased during these years, the trade union leadership generally accepted the "need" to restructure what was admittedly an inefficient industrial system hindered by state intervention. Workers opposed the downsizing while simultaneously requesting better conditions for early retirement, retraining schemes and unemployment coverage as well as guarantees that new industries would be developed in the old industrial areas—requests that were supported by the availability of targeted EEC funds. The need to avoid confrontation in a fragile democracy and the fact that European institutions provided funds for restructuring led to many early-retired shipyard workers in Ferrol. This trend has continued until the present, through various moments of restructuring and job loss in the 1990s and 2000s, thereby increasing the importance of retirement pension income for many households. By 2009, the shipyard industry had both downsized and become extremely flexible, relying on a network of subcontracted auxiliary firms.

Parallel to this, small and medium enterprises sprang up mostly in apparel, logistics and services in the new industrial parks surrounding the town, providing volatile and unprotected jobs for women and younger people. Given the dearth of unionization in these sectors, individual strategizing and networking were the main instruments of social mobility. For most people, job precariousness and career instability rendered making projects for the future very difficult. Moreover, the acquisition of housing and increased consumption that accompanied the early 2000s expansionary moment fueled by easy credit in the wake of the Euro led to a heavily indebted younger generation. With the setting in of the crisis after 2008, precarity, unemployment and indebtedness made younger adults increasingly dependent on their parents, a generation that benefited from the early retirement subsidies of the restructuring years. Migration to national or international destinations has soared for young people in this region in recent years as they attempt to find better jobs elsewhere.

A major consequence of the crisis and subsequent structural adjustment measures in Spain was astronomical unemployment, which reached 23.9%, the highest in the EU after Greece. Among youth under 25, unemployment reached 53.5%, the highest in the EU.[6] By

[6]. In 2017, total unemployment was 16.7% and youth unemployment 38.2%. Spain continues to have the highest unemployment rates in Europe after Greece (Eurostat news release, 30 November 2017). We use 2015 statistics as they refer to our period of fieldwork (2012-2015). Eurostat news release, 7 January 2015: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6454659/3-07012015-AP-EN.pdf> (last accessed March 2015).

2014, 62.7% of households in Galicia had at least one income coming from retirement or other state subsidies (mostly unemployment) while 61.3% of those under 34 lived with their parents, although 38.4% of them earned some kind of income from work. In Ferrol, subsidies provided more than two-thirds of the total income for 44.3% of households.[7] [8] Industrial restructuring and early retirement created a long-term pattern of households dependent on subsidies, mostly retirement pensions. These pensions are now increasingly used to support young people, whether they are unemployed or work in precarious jobs, are single or have families, are resident or non-resident in their parents' households. As a result, forms of moral obligation have been transformed as older retired parents continue to feel materially responsible for the well-being of their children well into adulthood, increasingly providing shelter, food and money and taking care of the grandchildren.

Italy

Brindisi, a port city on the Adriatic Sea with 88,000 inhabitants, owes much of its historical development to its strategic geographical position. Since the late nineteenth century, the port, railways and later the airport have played central roles in the capitalist development of inland agriculture (especially wine production) and petty industrialization.

In Italy, the post-World War Two industrial boom was also linked to the state's institutional regulation of macro-regional differences through labor movement regulations,

[7]. Instituto Galego de Estadística <http://www.ige.eu/web/mostrar_actividade_estatistica.jsp?idioma=gl&codigo=0205002&num_pag=5>
<http://www.ige.eu/estatico/estat.jsp?ruta=html/gl/DatosBasicos/DB_Benestar.html>
<http://www.ige.eu/igebdt/esqv.jsp?ruta=verTabla.jsp?OP=1&B=1&M=&COD=2661&R=2[0:1];1[all]&C=0[all]&F=&S=&SCF=#>
<http://www.ige.eu/igebdt/esqv.jsp?ruta=verTabla.jsp?OP=1&B=1&M=&COD=3456&R=3[0:1];2[all]&C=1[all];0[all]&F=&S=&SCF=#> (last accessed June 2016).

[8]. For 2016, the last year for which figures are available, 63.8% of people under 34 lived with their parents. 26.9% of those 25-34 and 56.5% of those 18-24 had no income. 35.8% of households in Galicia receive more than 75% of their income from benefits. In Ferrol, 43.4% of household income comes from benefits. Instituto Galego de Estadística:
<https://www.ige.eu/estatico/estat.jsp?ruta=html/gl/ecv/ECV_ResumoResultados_Xeral.html> (last accessed July 2018).

salary zones and plans to industrialize the South. In the 1960s, Brindisi, like other southern areas, was targeted by a state-driven process of heavy oil-based industrialization through a "growth pole" strategy which—according to the trickle-down logic—was supposed to spark the socio-economic transformation of the wider region (Ginsborg 1990: 229-231).

North-South dualism represents a long-standing and constitutive aspect of Italian history (Schneider 1998). Regional differentiation in Italy has often been explained through the role of the family in the country's uneven economic and social development. The "strong family" thus acquired different, even opposite, meanings depending on the region: "amoral familism" in the "backward" South (Banfield 1958) and a motor of entrepreneurial dynamism in the bustling economic development of SME economies in the central and northern parts of the country, the "Third Italy" (see Loperfido in this volume). The northern "family" with its cooperative virtues was the engine of prosperity and affluence; the southern "family" and its "self-interest" impeded cooperation beyond the family circle, thus preventing action for the common good (Gribaudi 1993).

On a more general level, "autonomy" (coupled with entrepreneurialism) and "dependence" (coupled with parasitism) remain the lens through which North-South dualism is perceived in "common sense." Although stereotypical to the extreme, these representations have penetrated the self-representation of southern "common sense" itself. Along these lines, the old story of the South "depending on the state" has been reframed within neoliberal discourses that celebrate the entrepreneurial value of individuals while holding them responsible for their economic and social failures. People must cope with this hegemonic discourse while struggling with the material constraints of their social reproduction. Household responsibilities have been structured around various sources of mostly male income provisioning and on the expectations of hard work, thriftiness and a life of sacrifice leading to household autonomy in one's adult years.

Neoliberal restructuring unfolded through the massive reorganization of industrial production with labor-saving technologies and corporate strategies of de-localization, resulting in the rapid decline of industrial employment. The rise of the service sector and the informalization of labor (Mingione 1983) were among its relevant effects, which also included the incipient networked structure of small and medium enterprises (ISTAT 2015). In a way, southern cities such as Brindisi leaped from a semi-rural to a post-industrial economy without fully developing the social and productive forces of an industrial economy. While a complex system of "complementary allocations" addressed deindustrialization in the South—introducing direct monetary transfers (e.g. disability pensions) to families, providing the basis for a "social income" dispensed through the logic of welfare clientelism (Vercellone 1996)—this began to unravel in the 1990s when policies to curb public debt led to nation-wide public expenditure cuts and the definitive end of "special policies" for Italy's southern regions.

Despite its industrial history tied to the public petro-chemical energy complex, industrial employment itself only accounted for a modest share of the occupational structure, with the rapid expansion of the service sector creating largely precarious and low-skilled jobs (cf. Mingione 1988).[9] Nowadays, despite the presence of extremely profitable capital intensive and manufacturing industries from chemicals to aeronautics—the peripheral articulations of multinational corporations—Brindisi faces gradual but steady deindustrialization and the legacy of industrial wastelands and social impoverishment.[10]

[9]. In 1961, workers in the industrial sector (including construction) accounted for 31% of the employed population. This peaked at 34.1% in 1971 and has since been declining (29.5% in 1981 and 23.2% in the last national census (ISTAT). The service sector has been growing steadily, accounting for 42.7% of the employed population in 1961, 58.7% in 1981, and 70.1% in 2011. Whereas service sector growth is in line with national and international trends, in Brindisi it is more linked to the expansion of services in the public administration than to the growth of high-tech services—a common feature in southern Italy. The latter reflects the peripheral and subordinate position of Brindisian plants in the broader geography of corporate strategies and interests. For regional comparison, see Pasetto et al. 2002.

[10]. "The labour market situation in Puglia is currently rather sluggish. The average unemployment rate stands at 19.3% (in the 18-32 age group it exceeds 45.5%, while female unemployment stands at 52.1%). People in employment are mostly men and aged over 30. The out-migration flow is growing significantly, and concerns all groups. … [T]he region's employment is mainly in services, including public employment, which accounts for 66% of workers, while the numbers are lower for industry (25.4%) and agriculture (8.5%). About 19% of work is irregular" (EURES brief for 2018). <<https://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?

Unemployment in Brindisi is among the highest in Italy, while internal migration to Italy's northern regions continues apace (Biagi et al. 2011).

The domestic moral economy of precarity: changing expectations and obligations

Spain

It was a hot afternoon in May 2012 and Susana had been invited to a meeting of a women's group, part of a self-defined socialist cultural association. The conversation almost immediately turned to "the crisis" and to the anxieties pervading the everyday lives of young people, their inability to forge autonomous lives and support their new families, their feelings of impotence and lack of instruments for struggle. The older women extended this anxiety to their own situations, revealing the transformation of life-cycle expectations in the present conjuncture.

Carmen, a woman in her early sixties married to a retired shipyard worker and union activist, compared the present situation to the restructuring struggles of the 1980s that led to the loss of thousands of shipyard jobs. Those were hard times: her husband lost his job, people were destroyed, marriages ended, drugs came in. Carmen's nuclear family managed thanks to her parents' help until her husband found another job. Now she thinks this past experience helps her deal with the present without panicking. In her view, inter-generational solidarity is crucial and *the older generation has to support the younger generation*. Now, after a decade of being independent, her 36 year-old unemployed son has returned home; Carmen and her husband also help their daughter who works as a supermarket cashier. Transfers of money and care are continuous, draining their pension and strength. Three years later, in 2015, Carmen pointed to the constant conflicts created by cohabitation with her adult son: conflicts around household chores, autonomy, sexuality, pocket money, idleness. She

countryId=IT&acro=lmi&showRegion=true&lang=en&mode=text&regionId=IT0&nuts2Code=%20&nuts3-Code=null&catId=401> (last accessed July 2019).

added: “Nobody is happy with the situation, he is no longer happy living with us and we are no longer happy having him here. He suffers when he asks, and suffers when we give, knowing that we deprive ourselves on his behalf.” With austerity pension cuts, resources are scarce; they also financially support their daughter who now has a small child. But mostly, Carmen is exhausted and anxious about the future, about what will happen to their son when they are no longer around to help. She imagines him homeless and relying on charity.

Today’s domestic moral economy frames transfers between generations as a continuing gift of income and care between older and younger generations, transfers that reproduce dependency beyond what would have been expected in a functioning liberal economy. Parents feel the continuing responsibility of supporting their adult children and grandchildren, forgoing the disengagement that should come with adult children earning their own income. Moreover, the ability to take on this unexpected responsibility is mediated by the state through the public “pension” that expresses past work and collective intergenerational solidarity as an instituted right. But as the experience of the breakdown during the restructuring years reminds these older women, the current situation which inverts the expected cycle of domestic responsibilities is not altogether new.

Nevertheless, there is widespread uneasiness with the awkward inversion of the general life-cycle of responsibilities that were previously the norm in the domestic moral economies of a stable industrial environment: adults in their prime can no longer support their families and elderly parents or fight for their rights because they are afraid to lose their precarious jobs; retired people cannot rest and enjoy their pension but must keep struggling for a generation that has become permanently dependent on them and incapable of assuming full adult autonomy. In the past, transfers and obligations within the household and kinship networks were highly gendered, established around the long term conjuncture (1950-1980) of stable, male industrial work providing income and the right to a contributive pension after retirement. Moreover, economic and demographic parameters favored a particular cycle of income transfer and care: the proportion of the active to the retired population was higher, unemployment was low, and life expectancy shorter. Obligations were also established around the housewife who took care successively or simultaneously of her husband, her children, and later in life, her parents or her husband's parents. The household and life-cycles then were tied to the transfers and moral obligations of money and care. Employed children residing in their parents' homes generally gave part of their wages to their mothers as a contribution to household expenses and kept another part as savings towards their future household or for pocket money. Likewise, the pensions of older parents were used to cover household expenses when they co-resided. The stable occupational structure also enabled this generation to transform part of their income into homeownership.

The stability of male industrial employment that contributed to this domestic moral economy began to break down in the mid-1980s with the first restructuring and job losses in the shipyards. Male unemployment and early retirement became widespread, forcing the reconfiguration of previous moral obligations within households. Income provisioning—although still strongly gendered as it depended on previous industrial employment—became increasingly tied to state subsidies—unemployment and retirement pensions—as well as to female wages in the service sector and other precarious employment. For the younger generation, the horizon of permanent restructuring to increase competitiveness became their only expectation.

Gendered patterns of work were transformed with the demise of local industry. Women entered the labor force for multiple reasons in the late 1980s and 1990s (aspirations of autonomy, new consumption patterns, improving household economies), but mostly because the labor market had transformed, closing industrial opportunities for male workers and opening opportunities for female jobs in the service sector and garment manufacturing. The latter were mostly unskilled and lower income occupations, often with temporary contracts. While their parents were reaching forced retirement at an early age, younger couples were captured in an unstable labor environment that favored female income opportunities. In any case, care obligations were redefined not only between couples—nominally, growing male responsibilities—but between generations, with grandparents increasingly taking care of grandchildren, often before switching to caring for their elderly parents. Although these continued to be mostly women's responsibilities, early retired men often participated in caring and housework tasks.

During the housing-bubble upturn of the early 2000s, new employment opportunities led to double income households acquiring mortgages to buy homes and to consume household appliances, cars, and general leisure services on credit. But this was to be a short lived. The economic crisis that began in 2008 has yet again reconfigured the domestic moral economies in town. Unemployment, mortgage foreclosures, indebtedness and general lack of income opportunities for the younger generation have deprived them of the material possibilities to assume most of the obligations that once came with adulthood. It is in this conjuncture that many of these responsibilities for income provisioning and care have shifted to the older generations who have their pensions as a source of income, who were able to capitalize their wages in the form of homeownership (free of mortgage) and are in relative good health and autonomous. Filial obligation no longer follows the industrial model of life- and household cycles that previously distributed obligations among kinship networks and household members in light of their capacities during their active adulthood years. Instead, the precarity model of obligations that began in the 1990s has intensified, based on the older generation's provision of income, housing and care. Many young families now move to their parental homes when they can no longer meet their mortgage payments; their irregular working hours while job hopping and job seeking make caring for the children increasingly difficult. The current situation inverts the expectations of autonomy of active adults, prolonging their dependence on the previous generation whose members must maintain their positions of responsibility past their nominally active years.

Italy

During his fieldwork in 2015, Antonio joined a day trip to Bari organized by a group of parishioners from a peripheral neighborhood, built in the 1960s to accommodate the fast growing population of Brindisi. Among the organizers of the day trip were Elena (58) and Paolo (61), a leading couple in local charity activities.

Elena and Paolo are married and have three children. Their daughter, Silvia, lives near her parents' home with her partner—both have temporary jobs in a church-related high school—while their little child is cared for by Elena. Both sons, Daniele (30) and Mario (21), lack stable employment and live with their parents. Daniele had unsuccessfully tried searching for a job in northern Italy, where they have kin; his last temporary job was in a private cooperative contracted to provide catering services for the center for asylum seekers. His partner Laura, after losing her job as a shop assistant, applied to a national civil service scheme for "voluntary work," which provided her with a little stipend to work in a charity. Mario is also a casual worker, working as a waiter and in construction; he was planning to join a cousin in Australia. Daniele and Laura were also planning to search for jobs elsewhere, in northern Italy or perhaps abroad, to fulfill their project of a life together—something they cannot yet afford.

Paolo's career path was very different. He had been an apprentice in local workshops until he mastered the skills to set up a workshop with his brothers. But he gave up on self-employment when he obtained a position as a firefighter. After an initial period of living in a council house, and thanks to a public employees housing program, his family was entitled to rent a flat in a recently built apartment building on the outskirts of the neighborhood. They will have to vacate the flat when Paolo retires unless they are given the opportunity to buy it. In the meantime, they wonder whether it would be better to take a mortgage and buy a new house, even if this means slightly higher monthly installments than their current rent. While their life savings might enable them to do so, the unstable and precarious situation of their adult children hinders their investment decisions.

For the generation raised in the 1950s and 1960s, the lack of similar opportunities for their children fuels ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, they clearly acknowledge today's difficulties in making a living due to unemployment, low wages and the precarization of labor. On the other hand, they complain about the younger generation's lost work ethic and "spirit of sacrifice"—the "qualities" that sustained their own achievements. As a result, relations between parents and children who cannot become autonomous are marked by a mix of protection, disappointment and pressure that creates tensions, tempered nonetheless by a strong sense of parental responsibility.

Although they are well aware of the difficulties experienced by their children and the necessity of their material support, Paolo and Elena proudly claim to have taught their children the proper work ethic—to never give up searching for whatever job is available and to persevere with dignity. The moralization that suffuses discourses of one's work ethic as fundamental to achieving autonomy may prod children towards the only realistic option they can foresee: emigration. But migration of the younger generation is also the result of individual and household social mobility projects that make heavy demands on family budgets, often with uncertain success, when higher education is pursued far from home in distant and expensive places. At the same time, the financial commitment of the household can generate disquieting feelings. The lifelong project of responsible care-giving and resource allocation to the younger generation can fail, and parents are aware of the class-related differences underlying the value of an education as an investment for the future. The majority of those who leave for higher education never return—although this does not mean the project of social mobility has succeeded.

Despite parents' awareness (and hidden desire) that their sons would not return to Brindisi—as they understood that their goals could only be achieved by being away from the city—the phenomenon of return has recently grown. Nichi Vendola's leftwing government in Puglia (2005-2015) called for the return of highly educated young people and raised expectations and, overall, provided resources (from EU funds) either for further training or for small entrepreneurial activities. Many of the young returnee migrants Antonio met had decided "to bet" (*scommettere*) on trying to make a living at home. But if the regional government's call created the climate and provided the resources for returning, the real personal reasons often had to do with the astronomical rents and cost of living in cities such as Milan while working in precarious and casual jobs. Some also saw their return as temporary and were ready to depart again; having long-term expectations would be too painful if unfulfilled.

The above cases show how parental household resources support the next generation. Especially the new patterns of migration from southern Italy reveal important inversions in terms of relations of dependency and support. Young emigrants no longer provide economic benefits to their hometowns or families through remittances or investments in local real-estate. Instead, they drain local resources (mostly that of their families) invested elsewhere (mostly in central-northern Italy), underscoring the spatial dimension of household aspirations of upward mobility. And when they return, it is often to remain dependent on their parents' resources, increasingly on their pensions.

The new patterns of moral obligation that we have presented for Spain and Italy are based on material premises that make their long-term viability very uncertain. First, demographic and economic forecasts for Europe, alongside the fiscal practices of structural adjustment, underline the unsustainability of present distributive public pension systems (Van Parijs 1996; Artus and Virard 2006; for a critique, see Navarro and Torres López 2013; Etzexarreta et al. 2010). Many of the provisions being instituted in one European country after another—Spain and Italy have been trying to introduce changes since 1996 but especially since 2011—require longer contribution periods (from 35 to 37 years) and are indexed to a "sustainability factor" that controls for life expectancy at the time of official retirement. It is obvious to those working today in an increasingly precarious occupational environment that their pensions will pale in comparison to their parents' pensions and will be insufficient to support a similar precarity model of domestic moral economy. Second, precarity inhibits forms of asset capitalization such as home ownership. Finally, the increasing privatization of higher education with its exponentially higher fees renders investing in the human capital of children (something that the expansion of public higher education in the 1980s and 1990s enabled their parents to do) much more difficult. Indeed, obligations, transfers of income and care, and autonomy and dependency in the domestic moral economy are mediated by the structure of the labor market and by the welfare structure of the state.

Sustainable pensions: the argument of inter-generational (in)equity

Following the European Commission (2010, 2012), the Spanish and Italian governments have been warning about the unsustainability of their public pension schemes. They cite the growing population of people aged above 65, increased life expectancy, and declining contributions to the social security pension fund due to the economic crisis and unemployment (Hernández de Cos et al. 2017). But unsustainability is also very much related to the growth of unstable forms of employment, to the extension of education and training periods for the young, and lower wages and thus social security contributions from younger workers. Moreover, growing unemployment means that social benefits for working age people compete with benefits for the retired generation, including those provided through the public health care system. This, compounded by structural adjustment measures responding to the fiscal crisis of the state, has produced a discourse warning against unsustainable distributive public pension schemes and the "inequitable" (i.e. unfair) aspects of the system.[11] In policy and expert papers, inter-generational equity is defined by an actuarial approach to the state's pension obligations in terms such as these:

> Intergenerational equity is attained when the total expendable income per retiree (resulting from public pension schemes, from private pension funds, from personal savings) and the total expendable income per active person are comparable, including leisure utility (the absence of work) for the retiree and the length of the periods of work and retirement (Artus and Virard 2006: 40).

Although the insurance approach to social security has been part of the European tradition, especially in Germany (Van Parijs 1996), recent policies have privileged the individualizing of investments and risks rather than the social pooling of resources geared to resolving intra- and inter-generational downturns in livelihood, an approach that was hegemonic in the interwar and immediate postwar period (Beveridge 1942). The current approach differs from the classic definition of intergenerational equity developed at the turn of the twentieth century. As it was defined then (and this was the model set in place after World War Two in most of Europe) intergenerational equity was not seen as a competition for scarce resources

[11]. Although the public pension fund in Spain is part of that for social security, a reserve pension fund was created in 1995 to protect pensions from possible deficits. These protected funds, popularly known as the "pension's piggy bank," have been depleted since 2012. Cinco Días: <https://cincodias.elpais.com/cincodias/2015/08/07/economia/1438971113_586899.html> El Diario.es: <https://www.eldiario.es/economia/pensiones_0_713928942.html> (last accessed June 2018).

among contemporary age cohorts, but as a continuous chain of dependencies linking generations through time to the social reproduction of a particular collective community. In the French version—which became the model for welfare obligations in the European social market system—the state's role was seen as institutionalizing "natural solidarity." In this model, every individual was tied in a "quasi-contract" to all past and present generations that had enabled the continuing existence of society (Bourgeois 1896). Although this was a legal fiction enabling transfers between individuals in society, what is relevant here is the moral argument the quasi-contract sustained: that of a social debt endlessly reproduced through the individual use of collectively produced assets which needs to be endlessly cancelled, an obligation that the state must regulate: "[T]he only proposition that we need to establish here is the following: positive law can secure through imperative sanctions the cancelling of the social debt, the fulfillment of the obligation that results for every human being from his condition of debtor to all" (Bourgeois 1896: 57).

This argument sets the framework for an idea where solidarity is the basis for social continuity, the consequence of collective interactions resulting in a social good, the nation, with the state as the guarantor of its continuity. This idea can be observed as it develops in various European countries through their social security systems after World War Two. Even in a dictatorship such as Francoist Spain, the piecemeal consolidation of the social security system was based on an idea of "national" solidarity, here with emphasis on the corporative nature of the nation.

The present day injunctions of experts and policy-makers have a completely different ring to them, based as they are on neo-liberal individualized tenets of life-long self-responsibility and the economistic accounting of obligations between generations. It is ironic that the term "sustainable" is used in this context to refer to a financial balance of accounts instead of its original reference to humanity's commitment to social reproduction, an injunction to ensure "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland 1987). For the sustainability of public pension schemes, the actuarial perspective is framed in terms of financial accountability and viability, with the collective aspect being substituted by the aggregation of contributors and recipients in each age group. The state's moral responsibility as guarantor of the social reproduction of the nation, a transcendent and imagined community of citizens (Anderson 1991), is replaced by the managerial task of accounting that transfers the entire responsibility for social reproduction to each individual person. This can be seen in European governments favoring pension funds capitalized throughout individual careers, tied to investment in financial assets and to self-responsibility for future individual well-being (Devesa et al. 2012a, 2012b). Solidarity public pension schemes that redistributed the national wealth produced at any one time by active and passive generations are being transformed into "mixed-pillar" systems where individual savings in occupational and private pension plans are central and where financial and demographic "risks" are shared between the individual and the state (European Commission 2010; Eichhorst et al. 2011).

Spain

While the changes first implemented in the late 1990s were met with resistance, economists and government agents turned to the media to trumpet the alleged inequity of the existing distributive public pension system, entailing the "unfair" transfer of resources from an active age cohort to a numerically growing passive age cohort. It was argued that the older generation was dispossessing the younger one, while prospects for these transfers continuing into the future were bleak given demographic and economic realities. In 2011 an agreement was reached between the "social actors" (state, unions, business) that was later fixed in a legal decree (BOE 2-08-2011; Frades 2011) that progressively replaces the existing system with a structurally flexible system that stresses long careers and extends the wage basis for calculating the pension. Younger generations reportedly considered this agreement an attack on their future rights as it preserved the old system for those over 50, the larger portion of union membership. Given the increased precarity that the latest labor reform legislation supports (BOE 11-02-2012; Fundación 1º de Mayo 2012), young people are aware that they will probably not have the accumulated career years nor the cumulated wage levels to access adequate pensions. Neither will they have the resources to access private pension funds or other assets such as home equity. The reform of the pension system is presented in the media as the breakdown of intergenerational solidarity both because the "older" union-represented generation has sought to consolidate its present privileges, which the "younger" generation is paying for through their taxable income—thereby being deprived of its use—with no prospect for future reciprocity. A generational confrontation is represented at the level of the wider responsibilities of social reproduction of the entire national community, as it is mediated by institutional stakeholders—the state, the unions, and the business associations.[12] The 2013 reform of the public pension system de-linked pensions from the consumer price index, negatively affecting pensioners' purchasing power.[13] In September 2018, the new social democratic government returned to indexation, provoking severe admonitions from Brussels and conservative-liberal parties.[14]

The failure of the system of social reproduction is acutely felt by downwardly mobile households where pensions often support extended family networks. It explains the growing

[12]. "Percepciones sobre el futuro de las pensiones: un experimento toledano," Antonio Baylos, Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas de Toledo, n.d.

[13]. Cinco Días: <https://cincodias.elpais.com/cincodias/2013/12/12/economia/1386840999_548351.html> (last accessed June 2018).

[14] <https://www.efe.com/efe/espana/economia/el-pacto-de-toledo-vuelve-a-indexar-las-pensiones-al-ipc-tras-siete-anos/10003-3762174>
<https://www.expansion.com/economia/2018/03/08/5aa0efe6268e3e27728b4663.html> (last accessed July 2019).

mobilization (since 2013, and especially in 2016 and 2017) of pensioners in defense of the public pension system and against austerity cuts to pensions. In response to the accusation that they are defending their own selfish interests, they answer: “To defend pensions today is to defend our children and our grandchildren’s future.”

Italy

The history of pension reform in Italy is chronologically similar to Spain and most European pension system reforms. The first important reforms were implemented in 1992-93 (*Riforma Amato*) and 1995 (*Riforma Dini*). The *Riforma Amato* sought to reduce the public deficit in order to fulfill the Maastricht criteria.[15] Both reforms introduced important changes which were gradually developed in subsequent reforms until the apex of the Fornero reform in 2011, including the “three pillars system” that added private “defined contributions” supplementary schemes to the public “defined benefit” ones. In addition to reducing public expenditures, these reforms transformed the public pension system into a notional defined contribution (NDC) system.[16] Actuarial logics were introduced for the calculation of pension benefits for all categories of workers while the age of retirement was set between 57 and 65 years (depending on years of contribution). The introduction of the NDC system was negotiated with the union confederations, which initially protected the older generation of

[15]. “Convergence criteria (or "Maastricht criteria") are criteria, based on economic indicators, that European Union (EU) member states must fulfil to enter the euro zone. These criteria were established during the Maastricht treaty, and were signed by the members of the European Union on 7 February 1992. The four criteria are defined in article 121 of the treaty establishing the European Community. They impose control over inflation, public debt and the public deficit, exchange rate stability and the convergence of interest rates. (…) The annual government deficit must not exceed 3% of GDP [and] Government debt must not exceed 60% of GDP.” INSEE: <https://www.insee.fr/en/metadonnees/definition/c1348> (last accessed July 2019).

[16]. “Like traditional social insurance schemes, they are publicly provided. However, the pension formula differs somewhat from the ‘traditional’ earnings related model, with the benefit based on the accumulation in one’s account at the time of retirement. Pension accounts in this system are called ‘notional’ because there is no pot of pension fund money, just a series of individual claims on the future public budget. They are pay-as-you-go financed—current contributions pay for current benefits—just like most defined-benefit public schemes. … Linking individual pension benefits more closely with individual contributions is a central motivation for reforms based on notional accounts. This enhances the ‘actuarial fairness’ of pay-as-you-go pension systems.” <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPENSIONS/Resources/395443-1121194657824/PRPNoteNotionalAccts.pdf> (last accessed July 2019).

workers, defined as "guaranteed workers," from the new system. Workers who had contributed for 18 years in 1995 were exempted; their pensions continued to be calculated under the old system, on the basis of their earnings over the last ten years.

Reforms of the Italian pension system accelerated following the 2008 crisis, with the technocratic Monti government extending the NDC system to those workers who had been exempted in 1995. The age of retirement was pushed up to 67 with immediate effect for men (starting in 2021 for women) and certain categories of workers (e.g. the self-employed) who saw their contributions go up. The pension reform was part of a broader decree emphatically called "Safe Italy" (*Decreto Salva Italia*) that proclaimed the "unsustainable" pension system required urgent and immediate action. The Fornero labor reform included in this decree caused a great deal of trouble for workers who had negotiated with their employers to retire before 67 and who now found themselves in limbo: without a job and unable to claim retirement until they reached 67 (these were the famous *esodati*). Although this was a transitional problem only affecting those who had made pre-agreements before the Fornero law, many older people descended into poverty. To remedy the situation, subsequent governments in 2017 and 2019 introduced measures to allow workers to retire *before* the age set by the Fornero reform. The 2017 *Anticipo Pensionistico* enabled affected workers to access a public loan to pay their interim contributions, to be repaid later with the pension benefit.[17] The Fornero reform was also unpopular because it de-linked pensions from the consumer price index, affecting the purchasing power of pensioners.

Conflicts over pension reforms—especially the first reforms in the 1990s—were shaped by the official argument of "intergenerational inequity" where unions were blamed for protecting the older generation of "guaranteed" workers at the expense of younger generations of precarious workers. The generational dimension of the *precari vs. garantiti*

[17]. The current Salvini government has introduced a further measure (Quota 100) that should allow workers with at least 38 years of contribution and who are at least 62 years old to apply for early retirement under certain conditions.

argument was instrumentally mobilized by technocratic elites and political reformers alike to lambast the never-ending reforms to the Italian pension system. Compared to earlier reforms, the Fornero reform of 2011 was considered more impartial as it treated all workers equally under the austerity premise that cuts will eventually result in general economic improvement.

Neoliberal reforms in Italy have been supported by a discourse highlighting the "privileges" of certain categories of workers while insisting on "equal" opportunities for all as individuals, a discourse that consistently hides the class dimension and insists on the relevance of individual merit (*meritocrazia*), something that our interlocutors were skeptical of. In the case of pensions, the "privilege" of the older generation was presented as responsible for the grim prospects of future generations. The previous distributive pension system was based on a life-cycle "solidarity" principle where younger workers' contributions paid for retirement pensions in a generalized reciprocity of inter-generational responsibilities. In contrast, the new system made providing for one's old age an individual responsibility, increasingly shifting from public, *defined benefit* pensions to *defined contribution* pension funds, whether public or private. This was described in actuarial terms as more just as precarious young workers were not obliged to pay for privileged old pensioners, but could now "invest" *in their own* pensions. Young and old were thus placed in a "competitive" struggle for the distribution of benefits and pensions from a state budget under austerity. At the same time, allegedly "privileged" pensioners have been taking over responsibilities for the informal welfare (e.g. childcare, housing and provisioning) necessary for social reproduction.

Moral economies between household and state

We highlight two main issues in our concluding remarks. The first is the tension between dependence and autonomy that the breakdown of expectations has brought to active adult cohorts. The second is the contradiction between the transformations in the everyday domestic moral economy and the political economic changes affecting the larger responsibilities of the state towards social reproduction. Structurally related, they fuel ambivalence and anxiety in people's everyday lives.

Younger generations who must depend on their retired parents for income, housing and care[18] are barred from what was previously expected to be the road to autonomy in adult life, where being employed and raising a family created new responsibilities detached from one's family of origin, with men mostly being the providers and women the care-givers. This reversed their expected position in the flow of transfers from recipients to givers where to achieve adult personhood was to achieve autonomy from the previous generation, the main watershed in one's life-cycle.

The new situation makes these obligations increasingly difficult to fulfill, for men and women alike. Conversely, retired persons expected their obligations to diminish and to eventually be taken care of by their children. Instead they see their filial obligations continue for as long as they can physically bear them. For these older generations, the new domestic moral economy of precarity appears as an extension of their initial obligations of caring for the next generations; for the younger generations, it is a complete reversal of their expectations of adult responsibility. Although they may have their own families, and possibly some kind of employment and income, they must now depend on their parents' care, assets and pensions. This creates an ambivalent situation and a permanent feeling of inadequacy towards their domestic obligations and towards their personal worth. And while society increasingly privileges individualized forms of autonomy, expressed through consumption, over family-centered versions of independence, the young active generation is unable to achieve it.

[18]. For Spain, see Pérez-Diaz and Rodríguez 2007.

The result is various forms of anxiety that produce intimate forms of conflict. While young adults may be grateful to their parents for supporting them, they are reluctant to be dependent on them. For the national economy, the prolonged dependence of active generations on state subsidies—often on the pensions of their retired parents—enables "internal devaluation," i.e. the reduction of labor costs, the objective of southern European governments to enhance competitiveness in the Euro crisis conjuncture. This largely represents a form of transfer from labor to capital through the mediation of the state.

Recent structural adjustment policies in Europe, as they affect public pension schemes, underscore a different set of issues. Here, the state's reconfiguration of its moral responsibility towards the nation's social reproduction into a form of actuarial management of risk and accounting has resulted in a trade-off between the pension rights of older and younger generations. This in turn has resulted in competition between generations at the abstract level of their entitlements as part of the national community. The expectation of a morality of solidarity and redistribution mediated by the state has broken down, and has been replaced by the neoliberal emphasis on individual responsibility for future welfare. But younger active adults perplexed by the older generation's self-centeredness—expressed in union support of the Italian 1995 Dini Reform or the Spanish 2011 Pension Agreement, abandoning the well-being of future generations for their own present gains—are hard pressed to square this with their lived experiences at home. While the willingness of parents to share their pensions and offer everyday support is a lifesaver, gratitude towards parents at home gets entangled with misgivings at what they see as an older generation's privileges on the level of policy. Nevertheless, their parents are also ready to struggle by their side in defense of a shared domestic morality of social reproduction. Although the discourse of sustainability (increasingly conceived in financial terms) that has replaced the discourse of solidarity at the level of the moral economy of the state is cloaked in the words of intergenerational equity, it has encouraged competition for scarce resources between generations. Here, the breakdown of the "national moral economy" underscores the transformation of political objectives for the "common good," which are now completely submissive to capital.

Spanish and Italian societies today have largely bought into the neo-liberal ideology that values individual autonomy, entrepreneurship, wealth and conspicuous consumption. Within this ideology, autonomy and responsibility are linked because freedom from obligation is the basis of individual contractual freedom, the foundation of law and of the citizen as a meaningful and entitled agent in a state-of-law. It is difficult, then, to be considered responsible without being recognized as an autonomous individual (Guyer 2012: 499; Hyland 2012: 19, 35-36). As detailed in this chapter, precarity keeps the young active adult generation in a position of prolonged dependency on their parents and state subsidies—an obstacle to the social recognition of their worth as responsible adults (through familial autonomy) and as successful individuals (through consumption). The recognition they receive, expressed through the transfers and care of kin and state, is a statement of their failure to achieve what is valued in this kind of society: freedom from dependency.

As feminists have repeatedly underlined, interdependency is always present as the shadow side of freedom. While nobody is free from social ties, some have the power to appear as free agents of their own will, able to enter freely into commitments and to respond to them, while others cannot emerge from the shadow side of dependency. The growing mismatch between precarious livelihoods, prolonged dependency and limited opportunities to realize self-worth on the one hand and the dominant neo-liberal ideology of individual autonomy and successful entrepreneurship on the other may help create a precarious working class devoid of self-respect and the capacity to struggle. Or it may create the basis for moral outrage at the terms being imposed for the social reproduction of a capitalist society

(Bourdieu 2003). The breakdown of social reproduction as it is expressed in the reconfigured obligations between generations in Spain and Italy points to the ambivalence of inter-generational solidarity at various scales and to the instability, anxiety and vulnerability of future generations.

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