



Aroldi, P., & Ponte. C. (2012). Adolescents of the 1960s and 1970s: An Italian-Portuguese comparison between two generations of audiences. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 6(2), article 3. doi: 10.5817/CP2012-2-3

Adolescents of the 1960s and 1970s: An Italian-Portuguese comparison between two generations of audiences

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Abstract

This article explores how far the media technologies, contents and habits experienced in the years of youth contribute to the shaping of collective identities, which are shared by all the members of a generation. On the basis of two sets of empirical research developed in Italy and Portugal according to a life-story approach, it compares the self accounts and media memories of two generations of audiences living their youth in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970s. The relevance of national and international media systems as a part of the "structure of opportunity" that contributes to the forming of generational identities was identified as framed by other structural constraints on political, socioeconomic, educational and cultural levels. In each country, attitudes toward technological innovation and media domestication lived in their years of youth also affected the first contact of people belonging to these generations with ICTs and new media in the 1980s and 1990s.

Keywords: generations; media memory; qualitative research; life-story approach

doi: 10.5817/CP2012-2-3

Generations and media research

The cross-national approach of this study, originated in the authors' collaboration in the COST Action IS0906 *Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies*, is rooted in a theoretical framework that proposes the analytical category of the *generation* as capable of encompassing and describing those social dynamics that, albeit in different conditions and ways, are present and recognizable in the history of both the Portuguese and Italian societies and audiences.

The category of the generation has made a long journey through the sociological tradition and can be traced back to Mannheim - if not even earlier - and his essay on the *Problem of the generations* (1952); on the other hand, it has undergone a recent revival, both in political sciences (Edmunds & Turner, 2002 and 2005) and in disciplines close to sociology, such as marketing (Smith & Clurman, 1997), education (Prensky, 2001a and 2001b; Tapscott, 1998 and 2008), family studies (Bertaux & Thompson, 2005; Donati, 2001), childhood studies (Alanen, 1988; Mayall & Zeiher, 2003; Qvortrup, 1994) and culture and media studies (Aroldi & Colombo, 2007; Corsten, 1999).

In this tradition, some authors proposed a multi-dimensional conceptualization of the notion *generation* that this article assumes as a key category. In a such perspective a "generation" is "an age cohort that comes to have social significance by virtue of constituting itself as cultural identity" (Edmunds & Turner, 2002, p. 7), where biographical traits shall coexist alongside historical and cultural characteristics, and where one's belonging to an age group is connected to specific historical experiences, to the development of particular consumption habits or to the occupation of certain positions in the family chain (Bertaux & Thompson, 2005). The members of the audiences, in fact, cannot be reduced to either individual socio-demographic traits (such as age, gender, education, job position) or to the corresponding life styles (such as those codified by marketing), but must rather be strictly related to several simultaneous factors, effectively summarized by generational belonging. These factors are one's position in the life-cycle, media biography, contexts provided by families and friendship networks as environments for the elaboration of media experience, the belonging to a world of values shared with other members of the same generation, the historical development of the media system, the different phases of technological innovation, the processes of mastering and assimilating technologies and media products, as well as the wider structural changes affecting the social and cultural system.

In the frame of a such multi-dimensional category, therefore, people who belong to the same generation are -at the same time- people who: a) were born in the same round of years and spent their youth in similar historical, social, cultural and political contexts, therefore sharing a common "structure of opportunity" and world of past, formative (sometimes traumatic) experiences (Mannheim, 1952); b) consequently, have nowadays (more or less) the same age and probably

are (more or less) in the same life-cycle position; c) share a particular “generational semantic” (Corsten, 1999). A generation, in fact, recognizes itself as such when it is able to produce a dominant order of meanings that is continuously empowered through discourse practices and meaningful rituals among the members of the generation itself: in other words, a collection of themes, interpretative models, evaluation principles and linguistic devices through which shared experience is transformed into discourse within the forms of daily interaction; d) share a generational “we-sense”, a reflexive attitude that contributes to the making of a generation because a generation is formed exactly “by the sense that the members of a generation have of the criteria for belonging” (Corsten, 1999, p. 258); or, to quote Corsten again (1999, p. 258), “they do not only have something in common, they have also a (common) sense for the fact that they have something in common”; (e) share a sort of “*habitus* which have been produced by different modes of generation, that is, by conditions of existence which, in imposing different definitions of the impossible, the possible and the probable, cause one group to experience as natural or reasonable practices or aspirations which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous, and vice versa” (Bourdieu, 1972, p. 78). It is a system of enduring dispositions that permits one to act and to choose – while not strictly prescribed by formal rules –, for example in the field of civic participation, of material and cultural consumption, of leisure: a sort of “collection of practices through which generational experiences are manifest” (Edmunds & Turner, 2002, p. 16); f) finally, share a certain set of choices that probably depends more on a sense of generational belonging than on simple socio-demographic attributes, and marks the “distinction” (Bourdieu, 1979) between different generations.

Adopting this conceptualization of *generation*, and according to the Mannheim’s distinction between the generation as a “location or status”, “actuality” and “unit” (Mannheim, 1952), it is worth recalling that such a strong generational identity is more likely to be shared by those people belonging to the same “units”, for example, active members of a particular youth movement, like “hippies” or “left activists” (Corsten, 2011), but it can be detected also, in a more general way, in people associated with each other “as an actual generation in so far as they participate in the characteristic social and intellectual currents of their society and period, and in so far as they have an active or passive experience of the interactions of forces which made up the new situation” (Mannheim, 1952, p. 304).

What role do media play in such a process? The media, both as technologies that occupy the everyday life horizon as taken-for-granted tools, and as cultural institutions or communicative products, genres or texts (one-to-many or one-to-one), are in many ways a set of elements that contribute to the shaping of generational identities. Just think of the fortune of a category such as “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001a) to realize how the incorporation of a certain technology during their formative years makes it a *natural* resource for a generation or – vice versa – an insurmountable obstacle for another. Similarly, the advent of television and rock music have been described as factors which have radically contributed to the shaping of the experience of those generations born after the Second World War (Meyrowitz, 1985).

At the same time, the media also constitutes a sort of *public arena* in which different generational identities can express and question themselves, co-building each other through mutual representation and the production of social discourses that can be ritually celebrated (Edmunds & Turner, 2002) – both in front and on behalf of their peers – in terms of their collective identities. From this perspective, the media is simultaneously: a) a historical novelty that characterizes the everyday experience (Corsten, 2011); b) the source of common repertoires for narratives, characters, language and musical forms, stratified in the memory of members of a generation with a specificity shared only amongst its peers (Rossi & Stefanelli, 2012); c) a public space in which the awareness of belonging to a generation is fed, laying claim to its differences and identity (Aroldi, 2011; Colombo, 2011; Kortti, 2011).

In this framework, the globalization of the media system during the second half of the XX Century leads some authors to talk about the generation of the 1960s as an “international” or “global generation” (Edmunds & Turner, 2005), a trans-national cultural and political subjectivity whose awareness and expressiveness is sustained by the “new” electronic media that emerged in the formative years. It is “the first global generation because it had a common (either direct or indirect) experience of and orientation towards traumatic political events, consumerism, global music and communication systems” (Edmunds & Turner, 2005, p. 566)¹.

The global dimension of the media and communications technology, that contributed “in creating a global generational consciousness” (idem) in the ‘60s and ‘70s, allows therefore a cross-national and comparative perspective; it is not only whether and to what extent the media experiences contribute to shape the collective identity of a generation, but to compare collective identities developed by people who were born and grown in the same period of time, though in different national contexts. Italy and Portugal, from this point of view, offer a case study particularly interesting: while sharing similar cultural traditions, in fact, Italy and Portugal have experienced, during the twentieth century, very different historical and political events and – as discussed in more detail in section 3 – different socio-economic conditions. Nevertheless, some processes of socialization to the media, domestication of technologies and appropriation of cultural and media contents by young people during the ‘60s and ‘70s in Italy and Portugal seem quite similar, so to legitimate the following comparison between those who, at that moment, lived out their youth in the two countries.

Starting from the Italian generations, already conceptualized and described in previous studies (Aroldi & Colombo, 2003 and 2007), and using them just as a frame of reference for organizing similar cohorts in Portugal in order to see whether they correspond, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1: How did national structural constraints affect the interviewed members of the so-called “first international generation” in Italy and Portugal?

RQ2: How did the way in which Italian and Portuguese youth socialized to the media in the ‘60s and ‘70s contribute to the shaping of their generational identities and “we-sense”?

RQ3: How did the generational belonging influence the first impact of the interviewed with Personal Computer and new digital media in the ‘80s and ‘90s?

Methodological orientations

As told above, demographic and historical evidence, together with previous studies (Aroldi & Colombo, 2003 and 2007), identified and tested four Italian generations, as reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Generation labels in the "Media and Generations in Italian Society" Project.

Generation labels	Born in
<i>Postwars</i> (those who grew up or were born in the <i>Post war years</i>)	1940 / 1952
<i>Boomers</i> (born during the Economic and Baby Boom)	1953 / 1965
<i>Neo</i> (those who grew up with <i>NeoTV, New media, Neo Red Brigades...</i>)	1966 / 1978
<i>Post</i> (those who grew up in the <i>Post Berlin Wall, Post Cold War, Post Gulf War I...periods</i>)	1979 / 1991

The empirical study of the relationship between media and generations was undertaken in Italy with a qualitative approach within the frame of a broader research project titled *Media and Generations in Italian Society*². A sample of 224 participants was composed taking into consideration aspects including: geographic criteria – with people living both in large cities (Milan and Rome) and in rural areas (Urbino) situated in the Northern and the Central regions of Italy –, gender criteria (50% male and 50% female) and a mid-high level of education (50% of participants had had between 8 and 13 years of schooling, while the other 50% had had between 13 and 17 years of schooling and tertiary education). The last criterion, which corresponds to a subgroup above the Italian average, was chosen as it would facilitate the reflexivity process of self-accounting. A total of 24 focus groups – 6 for each of the identified generations – were complemented by in-depth interviews involving 16 pairs of childhood friends (4 pairs for each of the identified generations). The recruiting process was carried out by professionals (60%) in addition to some snowball sampling (40%); focus groups and interviews were led by senior researchers (PhDs) belonging to the 1966-1978 group. Each session lasted about 2 hours.

Transcribed interviews and focus groups have been arranged and classified using the qualitative content analysis software *Nvivo8*, sorting out a grid of several key topics: Historical Experience, Cultural repertoires, Celebrities, Biographical experience, Social atmosphere, Media, Media connotation, Places of experience, Social Agencies, Values, Identity discourses. For the purpose of this study, only the focus groups and those interviews with individuals belonging to cohorts born between 1940-1952 and 1953-1965 will be considered.

Following the guidelines and scripts of the Italian Project, in Portugal the project involved eight graduate students at a Masters Seminar on Media Research Methods at the FCSH, New University of Lisbon, in 2011³. This research-learning orientation had already been used in the *Digital Inclusion and Participation* Project (Ponte & Simões, 2012)⁴. For the current seminar, students had to manage key concepts such as *media domestication* (Silverstone, Hirsch et al., 1993), *generations and generational belonging* (Aroldi, 2011), *tecno-dispositions*, *tecno-field* and *tecno capital* (Rojas, Straubhaar et al., 2012); they also researched the historical contexts in which different cohorts lived out their *formative years* in Portugal between the 1950's and 1990's; they were introduced to the focus group methodology and its explicit use of group interaction to generate data. Finally, each student chose a cohort, facilitated the focus group process and realised a theoretical sustained analysis in a final research paper.

Based on personal relationships and using the snowball recruitment process, the seminar reached eight focus groups and 38 participants. Amongst the 22 participants (10 men, 12 women) born between 1940 and 1965, only 10 had reached Tertiary Education; however, all had higher school marks than their parents, some of the latter being illiterate.

In all of the groups participants knew each other, which facilitated a familiar atmosphere. A focus group was held at a day-care centre, while the others took place in private houses in a relaxed atmosphere. Most of the participants had moved from the countryside to the metropolitan area of Lisbon at the end of adolescence, either for study or work.

Differences in the recruitment process, number and composition and mostly in conducting the focus groups (senior researchers vs. supervised graduate students) should not be ignored; some of the Portuguese focus groups did not cover all of the topics. However, transcripts provide lively, fruitful discussions and confirm data gathered in previous research.

Historical contexts in Italy and Portugal (1960-1979)

Situated in Southern Europe and sharing both Latin culture and the influence of the Roman Catholic religion, Italy and Portugal provided distinctly different political, socio-economic and cultural contexts for their younger generations during the 1960's and 1970's, as Table 2 shows.

Politically, these years ushered in entirely different seasons. In Italy, the first centre-left government – headed up by Aldo Moro in 1963 and inspired by a reformatory project of welfare expansion – went into crisis in 1968, a year of workers' protests and violent clashes between students and police which culminated in the so-called *hot autumn* of 1969, and inaugurated a period of terrorism that would characterize the next decade (the so-called *years of lead*)⁵. Meanwhile, in 1974 Portugal experienced the Carnation Revolution, an event that brought a dictatorship of over 48 years to its end. Salazar and his successor, Caetano, ruled according to traditional values, political surveillance and almost entire closure to the external world.

Structurally, the *economic boom* occurred under different circumstances. Accelerated modernization and industrialization, growing incomes and widespread optimism affected the Italian population's lifestyle during the 1960's; the *economic miracle* manifested itself particularly in the automobile and mechanical engineering sectors, favouring a larger internal market and introducing Italian families to new forms of consumerism predominantly connected to household equipment (refrigerators, washing machines, television sets) and mobility (cars and scooters).

Table 2. Political, socio-economic and cultural indicators for Italy and Portugal in the 1960's.

INDICATORS	Italy		Portugal	
	1961	1971	1960	1970
Total population	50,624,000	54,137,000	8,889,392	8,611,125
Political system	Democracy	Democracy	Dictatorship	Dictatorship
Work force - Primary sector (%)	29	17.2	43.9	28.1
Work force - Secondary sector (%)	40.4	44.3	27.4	33.4
Work force - Tertiary Sector (%)	30.6	38.4	27.5	36
Years of compulsory education	8	8	4	6
Illiteracy above 7 years of age (%)	8.3	5.2	33.1	25.6
Population with Primary education (4 years) (%)	42.3	44.3	22.5	49.6
Population with Secondary Studies (%)	9.6	14.7	3.8	4.4
Students attending University (% total pop.)	1.3	1.8	0.6	1.5

Sources: ISTAT (Italy) and INE (Portugal)

Meanwhile, at the beginning of the 1960's the Portuguese economy was dominated by the primary sector and a protectionist orientation in industry. The strain of sustaining the colonial war on three African fronts pushed the regime to move towards external investments with the resulting economic growth being based on transformative industries and on the emerging tourism related economy. Here, the internal market did not really exist: widespread poverty separated the majority of Portuguese families from modern consumerist consumption.

In both countries, the rural world lost its economic relevance, with waves of migratory movements; in Italy this migration was mainly internal, from the South to the North (more than 9 million migrants between 1955 and 1971); in Portugal, besides migration to the industrial areas, there was also a wave towards Western industrialized countries (about 1.5 million between 1960 and 1974). Male emigration and the colonial war (150.000 soldiers involved) forced women into the labour market (mainly for undifferentiated jobs in factories and services), contributing to the breakdown of the traditional gender division in the labour forces and contradicting the conservative value attributed to a woman's place in the household.

Education reveals other differences. By the end of the 1960's, Portugal had five times more illiterate people than Italy; less years in compulsory schooling facilitated a far earlier entrance age in the labour market, with lower academic and professional skills. In Italy, the school reform of 1962 created a unified and compulsory secondary education - a similar reform in Portugal only would appear after 1974.

In both countries, access to the University was low at the beginning of the 1960's. By the end of the decade, the market demand for skilled workers and student movements for democratization contributed to liberalize access; but in the early Seventies less than 2% of the whole population had attended the University.

The media system's developments reflect these differences in modernization and consumption. The Italian media grew thanks to both the advent of a second RAI channel, television advertising and a nascent music recording industry intended specifically for young people. Although the decade opened with Fellini's masterpiece, *La Dolce Vita*, the popular film industry was destined to lose its audience to television. Launched in 1957, the Portuguese television was marked by the censorship that affected all cultural goods; subtitled films and serials distanced the illiterate and those with only basic reading skills. A massive *Television domestication* would only occur after 1974, related to new contents such as lively political debates or the arrival of Brazilian *telenovelas*, and the coloured TV in 1980.

These differences in the lifestyle pattern of families and the related socio-economic, political and cultural contexts strongly impacted on how young people in each country lived their *formative years*. As mentioned, only a minority group had the opportunity of attending a University, and many were the first members of their families to be able to do so. How do specific biographies reflect these distinctive national contexts? What memories do they have (and share) of traumatic events that marked their formative years and what are the media's contributions to those memories, both in images and framing?

Main results

To investigate our audience's members, it is very relevant how their memories of the past are stratified and how these remembrances affect their present collective identity. The memories of formative years (childhood and adolescence) depend on three types of reminiscences. The first concerns the general "climate" of those years, a sort of mood that is rebuilt and re-enacted, often wistfully, referring in a very general sense to historical events or to economic, social or cultural trends; the second involves single, biographical or historical facts, celebrities, fads and occurrences that characterized the period; and the third is expressed through the memories of everyday practices, customs, social rituals and consumer products associated with the participants' own childhood and adolescence.

Without establishing a hierarchy between these three orders, it is worth remembering that different factors – ranging from individual and biographical memory to historical awareness relative to that period, the activation of social discourses (including those from media) through which those years are described and evaluated – impact on each of order, and are often intertwined in an indistinguishable manner.

Memories of the formative years

In Italy, the memories of *Postwars* and *Boomers* contrast sharply with those of later generation, each of them marking a personal turning point: for the *Postwars* this was the year of 1968, while for the *Boomers* it was at the beginning of the Eighties. Similarities and differences between the two groups are detectable in relation to each of the three orders of memories.

The general mood of the Fifties and Sixties referred to by the *Postwars* was characterized by a great economic dynamism and a climate of social mobility (the years of the *Boom*, the *New Italian miracle* and a more diffuse welfare system); it is accompanied by the representation of strong social cohesion (in terms of shared values, widespread regulations, a perception of security and rootedness in the local community) and a collective orientation towards social change (which resulted later in the formation of the youth movements of '68) and modernization (industrialization and education, new forms of consumption, private mobility, access to mass leisure activities, the rise of technology); historical events took on an international character (e.g. the invasion of Hungary, the space race and moon landing, the Kennedy's, the deaths of Pope John XXIII and Martin Luther King', the Cold War and the war in Vietnam); national events were often traumatic (e.g. the Vajont tragedy, the Piazza Fontana bombing, crime reportages, the occupation of the universities); memory rituals of daily life ranging from youth (e.g. private parties at home with portable record players) to individual achievement (e.g. the first means of personal transport, the growing individual autonomy, the first experience of sexual intercourse).

In all of these representations the media occupied an important space, both as information channels through which historical events were experienced, particularly those of an international nature (e.g. the memory of the first man on the moon), and as elements that characterized the social atmosphere of those years; the principal media to play a role in this form of narration included cinema, music – and especially Italian music – comics, the newborn television industry with its characters (Mike Bongiorno, Mina, Celentano) and their genres (the first quizzes, the Festival of Sanremo, dramas taken from both Italian and international literary masterpieces, football), a strong national and educational aim and public viewing:

Those who could afford television were rich... in the Sixties... I went to coffee bars... (Female, 1949)

The *Boomers* recounted a narrative of the Sixties and Seventies that was indelibly marked by the crisis of the industrial development model adopted by the country (the "oil crisis" and the resulting "austerity" of 1973), and the explosion of political conflict and terrorism (the so-called "strategy of tension" and "opposite extremisms", with their long trail of blood, and the kidnapping and murder of the Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro, in 1978, by the Red Brigades). The new opening witnessed by the *Postwars* in the late Sixties resulted in the closure of *years of lead* experienced by the *Boomers* in the next decade, and the optimism of the "economic miracle" gave the way to economic and social crisis.

Fontana Square, the dead guys from the Right and from the Left, strikes, occupations, protests... (Female, 1958)

Historical events were, in part, the same as those recalled by the *Postwars*, but they acquired the vividness of the first memories of childhood (the Kennedy assassination, the first landing on the moon); some of these events, often experienced through the media – especially radio and television – appear to be strictly enrolled in the individual biography as "flash-bulb memories", precisely associated with places and ongoing activities; others are mythologized, like the memory of the legendary World Cup semi-final between Germany and Italy played in Mexico City (1970). Greater awareness is manifest in the memories of terrorism and political conflicts that, in those years, were a part daily life in cities and the school:

I remember the period of the Moro kidnapping very well... I was in seventh grade... but I remember that time... I remember when they found the body... I remember when he was shot... it was the first time I bought a newspaper. (Male, 1965)

Yes... because it happened in the afternoon... the news that he had been kidnapped began to circulate... [...] Even the people... the city seemed dazed... it was struck dumb... it was as if everything had stopped, petrified... (Female, 1962)

Italian *Boomers* seemed to share dialectic between collectivism and individualism: in part due to the cultural mood, in part simply because of the demographics of the *baby boom*. They recounted the need for personal self-fulfillment and that of taking a stand on one side or another in a political conflict that came into everyday life, with these aspects leading them to express their own membership through material (clothing) and cultural consumption (musical tastes, literature, leisure).

Television plays an undisputed role in the memory of young *Boomers* as an element of modernity at the heart of the family and household, especially with the soothing evening ritual represented by *Carosello* ("After Carosello, everyone go to bed!") and by the afternoon programs (*La Tv dei Ragazzi*): TV played a crucial role in activating their imagination; its contents (programs and characters) became an almost indelible memory of generations. Music, played on the TV and on the radio (*Alto Gradimento, Sanremo, Per voi giovani*), but also that music associated with discography (rock, country, blues), as well as American, English or Italian, is commemorated as an indicative tool in the definition of tastes and identity, while comics became increasingly important (*Diabolik, Mickey Mouse, Il Corriere dei Piccoli, Linus, Alan Ford*).

Each of the two generations tended to define its own collective identity both in opposition with other generations and by self-characterization: the *Postwars* tended to emphasize their radical difference from the past, taking credit for having addressed and changed the rules of collective behaviour "forever", making a real break from the traditional mechanisms of transmission "from generation to generation" still maintained by their parents.

You didn't live with old parents... [...] you do not have a very strong generation gap with me... but I had very strong with my parents... so we reacted in a very drastic, collective way, socially, politically... we were the first generation of reactive to what was the previous way of life... you didn't need to fight indeed... (Female, 1951)

From the point of view of self-characterization, the generational "we-sense" oscillates between the memory of subjection to social rules and their subversion, even through new forms of cultural and material consumption:

We are the ones of '68, people who got home at midnight, the music bands, the economic boom... who went to school in black smocks with white collars, put on mini-skirt and maxi-skirt, made the private parties with "the dance of the broom", who saw the start of the discos, put on flared trousers, saw the "Cinquecento" and "Seicento", the rise of television and the man on the moon, the first bikini on the beach... (Collective writing from PostwarFocus Group)

The *Boomers'* discourses are different: there was a widespread awareness of having arrived "too late" to participate actively in '68, but the recognition of having breathed that atmosphere of ideals and values; generational opposition is less contrasting and dramatic, but the gap is equally distributed between both the past, occupied by the bulky generation that preceded them (the very "active" generation, quoting Edmunds & Turner, 2005), and the future, represented by a generation considered to be less idealistic and more individualistic:

We are the ones of many ideals, many of which have been lost, the ones who have seen the merging of different classes, those who have seen the coming of computer technology. (Collective writing from Boomers Focus Group)

In Portugal, the memories of those born in 1940-1965 are also clearly distinguishable from later generations. Even having experienced social mobility compared to their parents, our elderly participants stressed structural constraints and placed themselves within a generation affected by poverty, difficult access to education, gender discrimination, and the dictatorship of the time. They recall a traditional order, the cult of the rural and the *decent poor*, the influence of a conservative Roman Catholicism, an (apparent) stability supported by ignorance, social conformism and generational continuities. The colonial war and its traumas as well as the death of Salazar are key historical events, contrasting with a scarce memory of international events, with the exception of the moon landing and the Marshall Plan. Women in particular recall gender discrimination, prejudice on accessing to education, lack of autonomy (fathers and husbands had to give permission), professional restrictions or the social disapproval of a broken marriage. At the same time, they recall themselves as pioneers in getting a driving licence or wearing trousers:

At the time there were no trousers for women on sale, so I asked my father to let me make some. He said no, "this is a small community". And me: "Oh daddy, please let me". The nuns in school: "Oh trousers, no way". And I said: "outside of the school doors I am me, inside the doors it's you." I found a seamstress and made a pair of blue trousers and a pair of black ones. (Female, 1940)

Memories of ritual moments and daily life evoke this traditional order, paced by the Sunday Mass and by the Pig Slaughter in the village. Although absent in their self-definition of generation, broadcasting media, music and cinema contributed to the circulation of modern lifestyles, in spite of the rigid censorship of their contents. The radio provided some pop music-on-demand and access to international channels (BBC, Radio Argel, Radio Moscow), heard in secret for information on the country and on the world abroad. Pick-ups and discos were scarce. Watching TV was a social and public ritual since the availability of this device in households was low:

I remember that in my living room there were thirty something kids sitting around watching television on Saturdays and Sundays. (Female, 1940)

In turn, those born after 1953 coincide in defining themselves as the generation that experienced the "historical new" (Corsten, 2011, p. 48) in their formative years:

Now we should all talk about our 25th of April! (Female, 1958)

We are those that lived the transition, from repression to openness, the equality of boys and girls. We experienced the freedom and the opportunity of studying. No more segregated schools, the rich going to the University and the poor going to the professional schools. (Collective writing)

The live transmissions of events like the moon landing and the legendary World Cup 1966 in England were recalled by all the participants. Sports, serials and festivals were better remembered than news; subtitled fictional serials (*Bonanza*, *Perry Mason*, *Mister Ed*, *The Saint*, *The Invisible Man*, among others) were reported as "being part of the television history". Once a year, "the country stopped to watch" the RTP and Eurovision Song Contests.

The climate from the replacement of Salazar (1968) to 1974 intensified tensions between modernity and tradition. The economic dynamism of the 1960's and some educational reforms contributed to a certain degree of social mobility; culturally speaking, these were creative times: intellectuals and artists took advantage of the gaps in the censorship and created some media contents (songs, radio programs, the popular *Zip Zip* at RTP) politically charged. Those born in the 1950's that reached the University expressed this mood, some even revealing a political engagement; part of the "international generation", their recollections include events such as May 1968, the Biafra crisis or the war in Vietnam. By adopting modern styles they challenged traditions, accessing to cultural goods and new ideas; attending tertiary education and living in the metropolitan areas also made a difference:

In those teenage years, we went to the coffee shop, smoked a cigarette, went to the cinema, to Lisbon... the garage parties, the new records, the forbidden films which we saw at the cineclub... and those books about socialism which were forbidden, but that we still managed to read. (Female, 1953, tertiary education)

Biographical memories before 1974 from these participants born between 1940 and 1965 coincide in terms of the conservative values involving the youth. Women, again, have particularly lived memories of segregation and punishment:

We could not talk to any boy 300 meters from the school. One day I was seen talking to a boy, a friend of mine, and I was grounded all day. (Female, 1954)

Among the more educated, television was not as relevant as music, cinema or cultural magazines, unknown for those who lacked cultural and economic capital and lived in rural areas. Modern media contents, mobility and living the cosmopolitan reality were related to peer groups' lifestyles, even under the dictatorship.

We spent our time listening to music and talking. And we held dancing matinees and garage parties. (Female, 1955)

We went to the local cinema, to the midnight double-features... and when there started to be concerts... we started to go to jazz festivals. (Male, 1955)

Oh, and we also travelled. We went to the Algarve, to the beach, looking for "bifas" [English young women]. (Male, 1954)

Generational self-definitions and attitudes towards ICTs

In Italy, even towards the era of new digital technologies and ICT, both generations of "digital immigrants" (Prensky, 2001) show common characteristics and differences; the *Postwars* witnessed the advent of information technology in the Eighties as a change in the world of work, top-down driven and limited to certain professions: it was an innovation that changed professional routines, that dealt with an idealization of the "condition of youth" as a timeless feature of the members of that generation, who claimed themselves to be "forever young":

I remember the birth of the personal computer... there was a PC boom in Italy... (Female, 1952)

Well, it was the beginning... not very personal... and weighed two hundred pounds! (Male, 1948)

We continue to evolve... we met computers, internet... we are not over... we still believe in evolution. (Female, 1948).

The *Boomers*, however, place PC and ICTs in a continuous time frame with the technological innovation that had characterized their youth: new media appeared as a logical evolution of the previous ones - from videogames to recordings of their own favourite music -, supporting the same social rituals and cultural consumptions already shared with their peer groups. Digital media entered into the household directly, without first having to pass through the professional field, or were part of this field from the very beginning:

I got it in '85, an IBM, a personal laptop... that was a very heavy thing called laptop, with a little screen, all conglomerate... it opened and there was the keyboard... I remember... yes, yes, there was the DOS and no other software... (Female 1954)

The boom of computers... Anyway in the '80's I was 26... I started to work as an architect, that as a profession was starting to use computers in an important way... (Male, 1954)

Thus, while the rise and diffusion of ICT's in everyday life seemed apparent to the *Boomers* without being a trauma, and indeed, as a new expressive tool or a professional resource available to the self-realization process, ICT tools appeared to the *Postwars* as objects of a necessary personal up-date, even on an intergenerational basis thanks to the initiative of their children, members of that "third" generation that - in the Italian context - has been defined as the *Neo*.

In Portugal, gender continues making the difference in relation to the ICT among these generations: while all the male participants use computers and access the internet frequently, half of the women, older or less educated, are excluded from the digital reality. This situation might be explained by the late computerisation of several services that would only occur in the 1990s.

I don't know anything about computers, but I used the typewriter a lot and a calculator... (Female, 1940)

I was lucky because I could witness the birth of IT at the bank. At first... I rejected it because after a certain age everything new becomes confusing, but when I started understanding things I loved it. I learned with some Economics students, I taught them accounting and they taught me IT. (Male, 1941)

Predominantly instrumental uses of the internet for work or searching for useful information suggest an "ethic of the duty", a rejection of easy consumption:

I only bought a computer when I saw the need for it, many people already had one. I have only had one mobile phone, and still have it to this today, it's still in black and white, it cost me around 500 euros. (Male, 1945)

Yes, I use the computer mostly for work. (Female, 1957)

Discussion and conclusions

On the basis of our cross-national comparison, some conclusions can be drawn, with most of them being coherent with the historical and sociological literature on generations.

Firstly, the role played by structural constraints and resources in the shaping of the "first international generation's" identity in Italy and Portugal (see RQ1) reflects the lasting relevance of the social, political and cultural framework of the nation-states, albeit that of the historical experience of the 20th Century. In fact, in the definition of the boundaries and character of both Portuguese and Italian generations born between 1940-1952 and 1953-1965, different political regimes, economic development, educational levels and the degrees of gender segregation/ female emancipation are crucial, to the point that similarities in the more educated born in 1953-1966 in Portugal and Italian *Postwars* can be easily grasped, in spite of a gap of 10-15 years.

In particular, the relevance of historical events experienced during youth and the process of catalyzing generational identities, already widely reported was confirmed: in Italy, this turning point is identified in the 1968/1969, with the opening season of the youth movements and protests and the start of terrorism, whereas in Portugal it is clearly the Carnation Revolution of 1974 that acted as a decisive watershed. Although separated by only a few years, these dates mark a real gap between both the Italian *Postwars* on the one hand, and the Portuguese born in 1953-1966 on the other, and the respective previous generations.

Secondly, in addition to the increasing and wide-ranging lifestyles and consumption habits of late modernity, media memories suggest that the way in which Italian and Portuguese youth socialized to the media (see RQ2) becomes more and more relevant in the shaping of generational identities, in both contexts; movies, radio and television and, above all, music memories are actually a plot that supports a shared account of the years of youth. In such a plot, national features are predominant, and coincide with the domestic character of 20th Century media systems in Italy and Portugal, already opened to global flows but still rooted in national industries, institutions, markets and standards (from pop music to radio and television scheduling, to sport like football, even if played at international levels); from this domestic background, only a few international events stand out (e.g. the *moon landing* in 1969), heavily marking one's biography by virtue of their exceptional nature as *media events* (Dayan & Katz, 1992). As already pointed out by Volkmer (2006), while the oldest generations can be described as "place-based", with physical presence and identity being bound to a geographical life-world context, the youngest seem to be "space-based", being the concepts of "distance" and "proximity" defined in a very individualistic way.

Nevertheless, the existence of a real "international generation", characterized by the same ideals and feelings, and driven by the same cultural and political tendencies thanks to a global media system, as suggested by Edmunds and Turner (2005), seems to be affecting only the more educated and advanced part of different generations, often acting like generational "units" (Mannheim, 1952). Rather than a single model of "global generation" which does not necessarily respond to national contexts and their structural dimension, our findings suggest an increasing affinity between audiences who are similar in terms of their cultural capital and *habitus*, and who are more likely to share cultural and media consumptions with their peers who are living in other countries but have similar social status, than with their peers living in their own country but have a different social status.

Despite the increasing homogenization of the digital experience, first impacts with PC and access to ICTs by the two generations studied here (see RQ3) have been strongly influenced by the structural development of the two countries and, consequently, by generational belonging. Indeed, for those born in 1953-1966 in Portugal it took on more or less the same shape as it did for the Italian *Postwars* and was associated to the digitalization of the working world that took place in Portugal more than ten years after the same phenomenon occurred in Italy. On the other hand, a positive *habitus* related to technological innovation as an integral part of their adaptive resources made the domestication of ICTs easier for the Italian *Boomers*, who found a set of tools for personal expression and individual achievement in digitalization, which could be added to daily routines of consumption and leisure time management, if not yet a common trait of a generational shared identity.

Some conclusions regarding the methodology should also be noted.

The Life-story approach confirms its usefulness as both a socio-historical research tool in the media system and as a paradigm, using media and their memories in a larger project aimed at a reconstruction of generational identities and processes. In this framework, some acquisitions help to clarify the extent and the significance of research tools and techniques.

First of all, we would like to stress the emotional, often empathetic and nostalgic, dimension prompted by the life story focused on the years of youth and shared among peers; these talks contributed to a lively and highly participatory collection of information and commentary. Focus groups and interviews were, from this point of view, always welcome by the respondents, who often turned them into real moments of solidarity, mutual recognition and heightened self-reflexivity.

Secondly, in order to reduce the bias of the research setting, it was essential that we used private spaces for focus groups and interviews, so as to emphasize the confidence and the sharing of emotionally oriented self-accounts. From this point of view, some tools proved to be strategic: for example, the Portuguese choice to lead the focus groups by specially trained students, so as to turn the interaction into an inter-generational commemoration, functional both in leading the discussion on smoothly and in reaching and obtaining the core evidence; or, the testing of interviews involving pairs of childhood friends, which proved particularly useful in the initiation of dialogic and reflexive discourses.

The relevance of both content and method seems to confirm the role and importance of the media in shaping and "colouring" early experiences with some specific traits, that are more or less strongly shared within each generation, so that the mere recollection of media technologies, products, narratives and characters experienced in the youth acts, even today, plays a role as a catalyst in the formation of a collective identity.

Notes

1. In the same way, nowadays internet could create the technological conditions for the emergence of new global generations, linking people through shared international experiences, introducing new motivations for political action and new means of coordination and activism, opening up new the possibilities for the sharing of the same traumatic events, like 9/11 or the bombings in Madrid and London, with their capacity to provide "a focal point around which memories and political activism hinge" (Edmunds & Turner, 2005, p. 572).
2. The project was funded by Italian Ministry of Universities and Research (MIUR) as a Research Project of National Interest (PRIN 2006) (see: <http://mediagenerationproject.wordpress.com>). Main results in Colombo et al, 2012.

3. To Celiana Azevedo, Miguel Cêncio, Frederico Fernandes, Ariane Parente, Sara Beato, Brenda Parmaggiani, Romiana Oyama and Natacha Halftman, thanks for your involvement.

4. Funded by the UTAustin|Portugal program, the Project aimed at understanding the conditions and tendencies of access and appropriation of digital media by users and non-users in both countries. Amongst other data, 130 life-story interviews involving 65 families were collected and analysed by supervised graduate students (see http://digital_inclusion.up.pt).

5. In December 1969, the bombing of the Bank of Agriculture in Milan provoked 16 deaths and more than one hundred injured.

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