



WP8 – Communities, participation & politics

Portuguese National Report

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Introduction

Writing a report on political and community participation based on our fieldwork data was not an easy task. We were not expecting to find very high levels of civic engagement beforehand, due the traditionally extremely low levels of political participation in Portugal – as will be discussed on Chapter 1 of this report. And such expectations were largely confirmed. Indeed, one the more noticeable reactions of households to the crisis was precisely a further retreat into the private sphere. In practice, this meant that references to political and civic engagement within our sample were scarce.

From a formal point of view, this had two major consequences. The first was rendering impossible the construction of typology of participation that was asked in the WP8 guidelines. Only two of our interviewees had any sort of experience in active involvement in local institutions and only one of these in a political party. This meant that there was not enough diversity in the sample to allow for the creation of different types and the .

The lack of civic engagement in the part of our interviewees also reflects itself in the inventory of organizations that is provided with this report. This inventory table should be read with two important caveats. The first regards the fact that the unit considered was the household and not just the interviewee. In the case of FA/G this becomes a relevant distinction. Her son, who left for Lisbon to study at the university, becoming actively involved in politics and joining a political party. However, he was not present at the time of the interview, leaving us with only the experience of his mother – which is not very different from the rest of the sample. The second caveat regards religious participation. Skimming through the inventory table would suggest a high participation level with religious organizations. However, this should be taken with caution. Religion does play a very important in the life of our interviewees as a framework for ascribing meaning to events in their life and as source of psychological strength. Yet, what we see for the most part is very much a private relation with the sacred. As will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5, the participation of the referred in the table refers to attending services at churches, temples and mosques, with no active engagement in other activities from religious organizations.

Considering these limitations, we did our best to apply the WP8 guidelines. Chapter 1 is dedicated to a brief literature review on civic participation in Portugal and to provide an also brief historical contextualization of public protest and changes in the political system directly linked to the economic crisis, the Troika intervention and the onset of austerity. Chapter 3 is discusses narratives of the crisis and austerity emerging from our interviews, as well as visions of politics and political participation among the interviewees. Chapter 4 is dedicated to social networks and their role on resilience processes, while chapter 5 deals with notions of community and belonging. Finally, chapter 6 will discuss the contributions of local institutions to the households' resilience processes.

1. State of the art and contextualization

Unlike what happened in other Southern European countries – particularly Greece and Spain – the crisis and the implementation of austerity policies did not result in a significant increase in political participation among the Portuguese population. On the contrary, crisis and austerity seems to have foster an even greater political apathy in Portugal.

Working from data from the European Social Survey, Viegas, Teixeira and Amador(2016) conclude that the already extremely low level of conventional political participation in Portugal fell even further during the crisis.¹ Indeed, between 2006 and 2012 the percentage of people engaged in conventional political activities in Portugal dropped from 5,9% to 2,9% - the lowest value in Europe at this latter date.

This panorama changes somewhat when we consider non-conventional participation, which rose from 3,7% to 6,0% between 2006 and 2012. However, these are still extremely low levels, only comparable to the ones found in Eastern Europe. This contrasts sharply, for instance, with analogous rates for neighbouring Spain, where the non-conventional participation rate stood at 25,5% in 2012 (Viegas, Teixeira, & Amador, 2016).

Available data suggests that political attitudes were affected by the crisis, albeit in a sense not favourable to conventional political participation. The more recent research on political attitudes show significant declines in the trust in the major Portuguese political institutions – particularly the Governement, the President of the Republic and the Parliament (Pequito, Tsatsanis, & Belchior, 2016). The same authors draw on Eurobarometer data to show a decline in the satisfaction in the work of democracy - although much milder than the one detected in other Southern European countries such as Spain and Greece.

To be sure, the crisis did bring about there some flashes of conventional and non-conventional participation. And eventually some notable changes in the political system would also occur. The onset of austerity and the extremely aggressive nature of the Troika memorandum towards workers' rights did trigger a series of four general strikes between late 2010 and early 2013. Non-conventional too, perhaps the more widely known episode was the demonstration that occurred on September 15th, 2012 under the slogan "The Troika be damned, we want our lives back!". This was likely the largest demonstration in Portugal in the post-revolutionary period and did have some success in pushing through its more immediate claims². However, it did not result in the constitution of any new organization – whether association or political party - and its impact quickly faded. Subsequent attempts by the organizers to recreate this level of mobilization failed completely.

¹ Conventional political participation is understood in their here as participation in the activities of either a political party or social organization or association, while non-conventional participation encompasses signing petitions, participation in demonstrations and support for boycotts on certain products.

² According to the organizers, a total 1 million persons joined rallies in several Portuguese cities that day. The demonstration succeeded in reversing the policy measure that was the demonstration's immediate trigger. This was the announcement by the Government that it would sharply lower the employers' mandatory contribution for social security and raise workers' contributions in the same measure to cover for the loss. The Government would drop such proposal soon after the demonstration.

The crisis and particularly the austerity policies in place after 2010 also triggered some new dynamics in the workings of the Portuguese party system and in the relative strength of the different parties. Particularly, the results general elections of October 2015 can be seen as indicating the waning of bi-partisanship in Portuguese party politics and the further stressing of the parliamentary nature of the democratic regime. The right-wing coalition formed by the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the Democratic and Social Centre (CDS) with the incumbent Prime Minister at its head earned a plurality of 36,9% in the October general elections, defeating the Socialist Party (which stood at 32,3%). However, the polarization regarding austerity ran so deep that it led to an unprecedented formation of an anti-austerity left-wing parliamentary coalition between the Left Bloc, the Portuguese Communist Party and the Socialist Party (PS) – which together had the majority of votes and of MPs in Parliament – to support the latter's minority government. This was the first time since the creation of Democratic Parliament in 1976 that the parties to the left of the PS were part of a government solution. It was also the first time that the Government did not include representatives from the party that obtained more votes in the General Election.

However, these changes were all done within the existing political framework. Indeed, the Portuguese political and party system showed a remarkable capacity to generate a new post-austerity political solution without the need for any transformation in its structure – say changes in electoral laws, in constitutional or on the composition of the political spectrum. Neither but was it attributable to a surge in voter turnout. Abstention was in fact higher than in the previous election, raising from 41,9% to 44,1%.

The extremely low levels of political and civic participation detected in the literature are very much in line with what we have observed in our interviews. With just two exceptions – NA/G and LU/G- our interviewees did not show any type of active involvement in political, civic or social associations or organizations, let alone as a part of resilience processes and response to the crisis.

In fact, what we have witnessed was that increased hardship led to an accentuated tendency for isolation and less – not more – participation in public space. Several of our interviewed households stopped having means to move around and to participate in activities – even leisure ones – outside of their home. Also, tackling with new hardship was shown to consume a considerable amount of individuals' free time. We identified several situations where people reveal unavailability for any leisure activity, being so consumed in work and household needs. Some even confess embarrassment for not being able to satisfy the smallest daily leisure consumptions, like going to the cinema, eating out or drinking with friends. Even among the younger respondents, the trend is closing relations and replacing the traditional local life (at cafés, restaurants, bars, leisure associations) to each other's homes.

This is not to say that local institutions and networks were irrelevant for resilience processes. Quite on the contrary. A considerable number of our interviews occasionally resorted to neighbours for taking care of children, sharing of goods – particularly food – and rendering of small favours. Family and kinship networks were also vital in the provision of – particularly food, child care, housing and money transfers – in times of hardship. Networks of friends were called upon for finding odd jobs and, particularly among immigrants, engagement in reciprocal gift practices worked as an important mean to face immediate and pressing needs.

Likewise, local public and third sector institutions played a vital role in this regard, providing access to resources – health care, training and education, social transfers, first need goods –

which interviewees would have otherwise lost due to the effects of the crisis and which were central to resilience processes.

What is not possible to say is that active engagement in collective action forms – whether through creation or revitalization of political and civic associations, cooperatives or other institutional forms, involvement in party politics or in forms non-conventional political participation such as demonstrations – played any relevant part in the resilience processes we have observed. In fact, these types were virtually absent in our sample.

2. Overview of the main characteristics and type of collective and associational forms in which respondents households get involved

The table concerning this chapter is in the appendix.

3. Citizenship, politics and political engagement

3.1. Understandings of the crisis

The economic and financial crisis into which Portugal plunged after 2008 was very much a dominant topic in various forms of political debate and even everyday life conversations at the time of the interviews. However, the hegemonic narrative – as put forward by the right wing parties that formed the government after 2011, European institutions and most of mainstream media - revolved around the idea of individual and collective moral guilt. In this narrative, the roots of the crisis are to be found in profligacy both in state policies and in families' lifestyles – or, using a very common formulation, of “a country living above its means”. Thus austerity policies – increases of taxes over wages and consumption, decrease of progressivity in income taxes, wage cuts and increasing working hours in the public sector, cuts pensions and in public services and in public investment – were to be seen as a form of punishment for past misdemeanors but also as a chance for regenerating the country.

As we shall see in the following sections and chapters, our sample had very few participants with an active participation in instances of collective action, be they political or cultural associations. Because of this, interpretations on the crisis put forward by the interviewees rely heavily on mass media – and particularly television – where the guilt narrative was hegemonic. Thus, it is not surprising to see how the trope of the crisis being a result of a country “living above our means” is very much disseminated among the participants as a means to describe the general situation in the country. Moreover, this is done frequently with illustrations from one's closer reality. Interestingly though, these illustrations take the form of a “general” perception – with generic formulations such as “I know someone who...” - and it is very rare for concrete cases to be discussed.

“I don't understand anything about these things. But I think people didn't know what they were doing. They spent too much, without thinking about the next day.” (MM/L/R1)

“Money was too easy for people to get... It was [because of] that easiness that later, when people had to pay it, they weren't able to do it. There were people who got themselves into certain debts counting they would have a certain amount [at the end of the month]. For example, I know people who paid insurances with their Christmas and holidays benefits³... and later that was cut off [of their salaries] and they got in a very bad situation...” (FA/G/R1)

“If I have a job, even with a small wage, I can manage by. There are people, maybe, who can't. Maybe they spend on things that they couldn't afford. I know people who don't work and smoke. If I don't have money to other things, why would I spend money on a cigars package? I'm lucky in that. Neither I nor my son smoke. But I see from my neighbors of the tip, no one has a job, they live at the expense of social security, but they all smoke. Boys with 14 or 15 years

³ In Portugal, the Labour law foresaw mandatory payment of – popularly known as Holiday and Christmas benefits - for full-time contracts, amounting to a full month wages and to be paid with the June and November salaries. These were suspended during the Troika period.

old. The cigarettes money could be for bread or one milk package. We must live with the things that we have.” (NO/G/R1)

“Tax evasion... I don’t know. All of them. I’m Portuguese and you also are Portuguese, but the Portuguese...I don’t know, the only thing we see around are swindlers. There isn’t a country so tiny so filled up with swindlers. Swindle after swindle. It’s the government, it’s the minister, it’s Joe, it’s Jack... (...) I don’t know. And all this, maybe, with the money badly managed that the market sent over here. Instead of using it like they said, they didn’t. They put it all in large houses, in large pools... I think that were all those things. Now we are paying the bill.” (LU/G/R1)

Also significantly, while the interviewees often called upon this guilt narrative to make sense of the crisis in both general and particular situations, such narrative is generally refused when the interviewee accounts for the source of his or her own hardship. On the contrary, and as we shall see in the following section, one’s own problems are usually framed as results of external shocks and as something out of their control.

It is also important to point out that, while the guilt narrative is very much dominant among our interviewees, there are some exceptions. We identified two main sources for such exceptions: working experiences; and political engagement. Thus, while drawing very much the same conclusion, GE/L presents a more sophisticated justification for the crisis that integrates perceptions from the crisis in the sector where he used to work – construction, one of the economic sectors that was hit the hardest by the crisis - and the role of the State.

“The building firm owners have all those buildings they built, lots of apartments that they can’t sell. If they could sell, they could build more. And, as they can’t sell, they stop. And people without jobs can’t buy them... The State could get jobs for people to live by, but can’t do that. If it does, it’s just for a few people and can’t help more because the money comes from the people, the taxpayers give money to the State. The State must pay all those expenses with hospitals and all that, public servants and all that. It’s forest fires, everything! So we come to a point where the State can’t be the only solution.” (GE/L/R2).

The case of PE/L is even more interesting in this regard as he intertwines what he presents as the general problem – lack of public work investment – with his own life trajectory:

“So the question is to start an employment programme. Because, as soon as there’s employment in Portugal [makes a tongue sound, indicating the problem would be over]. When the approval of the Airports and the TGV was given, I had already invitations [to work].⁴ And then... It was like a block of ice when they cancelled [these works]... Some people say that it was necessary, that we did not have the money for it. But I say: if there is no employment, how are we going to get out of the situation we’re in?!” (PE/L/R1)

CL/L also provides a different narrative on the banking crisis, drawing on her personal experience during her internship at a luxury resort:

“The crisis may have hit everybody but on different ways. The rich are getting richer. I saw it, because at [the resort] you would find only wealthy people – and not all of them foreigners. I

⁴ The TGV refers to the high-speed train connections linking Lisbon and Oporto to the Spanish border. The airport in question was the new Lisbon airport, which was scheduled to be built the Southern bank of the Tagus River, opposite Lisbon. Both these public works projects were shelved when the right-wing government took office in 2011, as part of a general trend of public investment cuts.

can tell you that the BES scandal came out and [the bank's owner] dined there several times⁵ His wife... was talking about the yacht they had. The bubble busted but they didn't become poor. You just have to open your accounts in other people's name. They still have money and continue to lead the same life they led before. Even after the BES scandal, they kept spending more than a thousand Euros to dine at [the resort]. Life's not bad for them – it's bad for me! They still have places from where to get money. He had his bank accounts frozen, but he keeps having money and his yacht. [The crisis] is just for some. For those who don't know how to get around... The scandal came out and that's good. But they... embezzled a lot of money from the bank. Where did it all go? It went to someone's pocket – and it wasn't mine! Had it gone to mine and I wouldn't have financial troubles [laughs].” (CL/L/R1)

Given the extremely low levels of civic and political participation in our sample, it is not possible to pursue a systematic appraisal of the impact of political participation in the deconstruction of mainstream narratives and proposal of alternative ones. However, it is worth highlighting the case of NA/G, the only individual in our sample with a history of political participation and active involvement with a political party – which he still maintained. Both his interpretation regarding the origins of the debt crisis and his skeptical take on the frail economic recovery after 2014 are very much different from the rest of the sample.

“When they said that we were spending more than we had... Look, if I spent what I had and I'm going to ask [for money] and there's someone who lends me.. .It's the lender who failed, because he knew I couldn't pay! If I hit rock bottom it's because they spent what shouldn't be spent. But we didn't spend it! It was an issue of guidance. Who's fault is it if a factory isn't built or another is closed? The fault that the [olive oil bottling factory] being closed is of those who bought it to, afterwards, sell it to Brazil! The culprits are those who manage the country.” (NA/G/R1)

“I'd like to know what the future of this country is going to be. Because I don't see a way out. [Draws a small graph in a piece of paper]. The country was there [before the crisis], the floor is here. The country fell and hit the bottom. Now, it's rising to here. But I say: where is the factory being created? Where are the services? I don't see them! There was that solar farm being built [here], but even that stopped! When they tell me we are growing, this and that... Growth how? Is there any recovery? With what? Things are bad. Bad, bad, bad.” (NA/L/R1)

3.2. Visions of social order

The visions of social order and the capacity for action of individuals found in the narratives of respondents are very much marked by two ideas. Firstly, on a more macro level, events and interviewees tend to assume a position of submission and marginalization, internalizing the status quo and the social hierarchy. Secondly, on a micro level, external constraints are

⁵ BES (Banco Espírito Santo) was the largest Portuguese private bank until it went bankrupt in July 2014, triggering a major political scandal and forcing the State to nationalize it to avoid the collapse of the Portuguese banking system. The ensuing Parliamentary enquiry brought to light several shadowy practices by the bank owners, such as embezzlement, hiding losses from account records, extensive resource to off-shore jurisdictions and collusion with directors other large Portuguese companies (such as PT, the former public communications company) to inflate share prices. Criminal investigation is still on-going.

presented as a daily challenge, related to unexpected obligations (health problems, cuts in income, etc.) that demand exceptional mobilization of resources. Living in a limit situation of exploration of accessible resources, interviewees say they are powerless to cope with external stresses that build up to the hardship they currently live in. EL/L's is very much typical in our sample.

"What can I do? I think the only thing I can do is to pray and ask God to make things better. [laughs]" (EL/L/R1)

It is interesting to see that, in contrast with the narratives of guilt used to describe the country's situation and generic situations closer to one's everyday contexts, the shocks that propel the interviewees' into hardship are almost always described as something out of their control and will. An example of this was the case of CL/L, recalling how the coincidence of a work accident and her husband's loss of his job deeply affected her life.

"I began to go into a tailspin. I worked during the day and went to College in the evening. I had my children, my house and my things. I had a balanced life. My husband was working. I was working. Things were even. Suddenly, he lost his job, and I lose my ability to walk. I couldn't go to the college. I couldn't do my life, my everyday life." (CL/L/R1)

Even when key events are presented by the interviewees as conscious decisions, they are often framed something that was forced upon them and over which they had little – if any – realistic alternative. For instance, NO/L quit the furniture factory where she worked, after her employer had failed to pay her wages several months. By doing so, she forfeited the compensation she was legally entitled to if her employer dismissed her – and, as she had been employed there for over 20 years, such compensation would still have been considerable. This situation could effectively be described as one of moral harassment. Yet, her account of the situation goes in a very different direction:

"But if he wasn't able to pay me my wages, how could he pay me the compensation [for dismissing her]? There were colleagues that didn't sign the paper because they wanted the compensation, but they also had to leave because he didn't pay and for them he kept owing even more money, because he also didn't pay their salaries. But they had husbands, I was alone, so I left because I needed to feed my son. At that time he didn't work. I had to sign the paper." (NO/G/R1)

This is not to say that there is not a critical view on social order among our interviewees but rather that it is always attached to an overarching notion of powerlessness. Specifically, references to any possibility of collective action to subvert or correct such an order are totally absent. An example is provided by PA/G

"If they take from the poor, the poor won't have any other options left. If they take from the rich, the rich knows how to move and has money to get away with it. They don't take from the rich, they take from the poor because they don't have..." (PA/G/R1)

In a more extreme case, LU/L follows this line in his view of international relations and the effects of the crisis. Despite his hyperbolic discourse and the tones of indignation that frame his speech, it is the idea of powerlessness that once again emanates from it:

“We increasingly have less and less. Nothing is ours anymore. They sell everything. And one day we won’t have anything. One day the Taliban from Syria will come and take everything away from us. We don’t have nothing, it’s all private. It’s all for the Germans, for the English, for the French, for the Americans and, one day, we won’t have anything. One day we will stop being Portuguese because they will change our nationality.” (LU/G/R1)

3.3 Political engagement

Participation in political associations is very low across our sample, something that can only be aggravated by the aforementioned tendency for retreat from the public space. Two excerpts illustrate a common sense of detachment from the political sphere which is very much transversal to our sample:

“I’ll be honest with you. There are some associations [in the neighborhood] but I don’t go there... I don’t. If I sometimes go is because someone invites me to have a cup of coffee on the café right below my apartment. And it is just “good morning”, “good afternoon”, “hi!” “how are you”? Let’s say I not much of an affable person” (AR/L/R1)

“The only thing I was a member of was the football club where my son played [laughs]. Because these people [politicians] today they say one thing and tomorrow other. I don’t even vote anymore. And maybe I’m to blame. We fought so hard to be able to vote... Sure, I can sympathize with one [candidate] more than with another. But, as I said some time ago, “But vote on whom? For what?”. Because I did not believe in anyone.” (TE/G/R1)

The single exception to this is NA/G, who is a member of a political party and served a term in a civil parish back when he lived in Lisbon. But even he paints a gloomy picture regarding civic participation in the village where he lives:

“I was part of the Board [of the Casa do Povo of the parish⁶]. And they still wait for me to come by and help. They are now reviving the Folk Dance group. It’s an anniversary [of the «Casa do Povo»] and there is going to be a festival... Those who love the village and like it to have something, they care. But even there we have difficulties. Having people contribute, working and helping... It isn’t easy. The «Casa do Povo» has a Folk Dance group and other activities. Trekking, Mountain cycling. It keeps people occupied. It has a bar, it has TV. But convincing people to work or doing something, that’s difficult... The «Casa do Povo» only fills when Benfica plays. But then the match is over, everybody disappears [laughs] and the bar remains empty.” (NA/G/R1)

⁶ The Casas do Povo [literally Houses of the People] were institutions created during the Fascist period with the aim of integrating rural labour within the corporatist framework of the regime. They were supposed to serve a representative role of these workers also provide as a minimum safety net for rural workers, as well as offering a range cultural activities and maintaining some cultural equipments (such as public libraries). After the democratic revolution of 1974 they lost these political and economic functions but remained for cultural and sporting equipment in many rural towns and villages.

4. Exploration and analysis of relevant social networks

As we discussed in the previous chapter, the worsening of living conditions resulting from economic and financial crisis coupled with austerity policies, led to a tendency to social isolation of families. Not having consumption capacity, the participation of families in collective events or (even) in public space decreased exponentially, eroding much of conviviality and existing neighborhood networks. Indeed, the social networks that survived and saw reinforcement are those whose role is related to coping and resiliency practices.

Thus, networks and support structures are an essential resource for the survival of families. Against a backdrop of lack of own resources, and insufficient income earned by paid work, families are heavily dependent on resources that they can access. These formal and informal networks are not assembled to bring comfort to families or to allow making medium and long term investments or plans, but to satisfy immediate expenses and needs.

From the interviews, we identified three main types of social networks to which households resort: (1) the intrafamily network; (2) the institutional network and (3) gift exchange networks.

If we set aside welfare provisions – which are key feature in resilience practices displayed in most interviews – we find that family redistribution network plays a decisive role in resilience practices. Support from family is reflected primarily through money transfers, (re)distribution of goods and through the assumption of certain roles in family organization. However, it should be noted that it was not extended family that played such a role – with the possible exception of immigrants - but instead the nuclear family and its direct ascendancy – that is, grand-fathers and grand-mothers.

In CA/G's case, her parents began to assume a more prominent role in the education of their granddaughter, taking on school costs and other immediate needs, as well as taking care of her during the day. This help allows CA/G to hold broader work schedules, which she needs being a cabby working on commission.

"I depend a lot on my parents' help. I have to work for many hours, as the [taxi] business is not that good... Me and my daughter eat at my parent's house everyday. They don't let that anything lacks, either to me or to her. She practices swimming and they pay for it. If she needs a pair of shoes, if she needs clothes, they buy them. It's an enormous help I have. [But] my parents are 72. It is very stressful for them to see me in this situation. At that age, they begin to think that they won't last much longer. And they begin to worry about what will happen to me and their grand-daughter." (CA/G/R1)

CA/G also dines daily with parents and receives from them grocery shopping. Despite being employed full-time, this support is critical to meet their immediate needs.

"In the present time and since long time ago I no longer know what is to go to the supermarket and fill up the house with groceries. I have the indispensable. I must, or sometimes I say "I need to buy this, I need to buy that". I don't need to say it a second time because when I'll arrive at my parents' house, there it is for me to get." (CA/G/R1)

The case of NO/G shows more clearly how this support is entangled in a more complex money transfer network:

“My father gives us [she and her sister] some money from their pensions so that we can take care for our mother. (...) Because she suffered a stroke that caught her legs and hands. At first, we thought about putting her into a nursing home. But my mother is still young. She’s just turned 70. So I started to think: “I know what a nursing home is like”. There are lucid people but also others who are senile. And lucid people have to watch their sorry state – it’s not easy. So I said: “If you are willing, we can come over here so that you don’t have to go [to the nursing home] right away”. So far, we have managed it. One of us goes in the morning and the other in the afternoon. This is how we have been doing and she is better now.” (NO/G/R1)

RO/G, who is herself 72, shares a similar experience.

“My mother has her pension and the pension of my father. So, if wasn’t her pension, that’s the thing I say many times to my husband. If wasn’t my mother’s money, we... because it’s like this. We... besides our income is low – the house is paid but we have water, electricity, gas, always regular, right? Yes, there is no way around. And the illnesses? (...) Because of the lenses. They cost seven hundred Euros. I’m still paying the glasses, right? (...) I’ve been doing acupuncture. I can manage the payment. We arrive at the end of the month without money. But I still pay because I have her money here. The day she leaves, it’s done. The car’s repair, the glasses, those things I manage. I didn’t pay everything. I continue to pay. At the end of the month, when we receive, by day 10, when we receive, we give something to the car, we give something to the glasses. The water and electricity is paid. (RO/G/R1)

Besides money transfers, the most common form of an intra-family redistribution practice is homemade vegetable production, with family members taking advantage of backyards and/or other pieces of land that they own. However, it should be noted that it was not extended family that played such a role – with the possible exception case of immigrants – but instead to the nuclear family and its direct ascendancy, that is, grand-fathers and grand-mothers. Friend and neighbour networks play a more peripheral role in this regard.

Practices such as farming for self-consumption are dependent on access to land – whether owned, leased or communal – but also on the possession of farming skills and tools. The fact that NS/G can reduce much his expenses in food through cultivating of vegetables and fruit and rearing of hens and rabbits depended on the fact the he disposed of land inherited from his parents and also on the skills he acquired during in his childhood and youth.

This access to land may be indirect and mediated by the nuclear family, under the form of gifts of food produced by parents. Again, this is made possible because the parents are themselves farmers. Thus TJ/G are relieved from their scarce income by regular gifts of vegetables, fruit and chicken meat because her parents possess skills – being former farm managers in a large property in Gótica - and land – part owned and bought with savings after retirement and part leased against the delivery a portion of their harvest to the owners. Likewise, CL/L can benefit from regular gifts of food from her in-laws, who have moved back to their home village after retirement but are still able to travel monthly to Lugarão to visit them and bring them part of their production.

“My luck was my parents in law, who live in [region in the Portuguese interior], every month they bring us potatoes, vegetables, fruit, onions. The things that they grow on their kitchen garden – pumpkins and I don’t know what – they send to us. Every month they come to Lisbon.” (CL/L/R1)

But for the providers of support themselves, the burden of their situation is often acutely felt. NS/G and his wife expressed the tension about of having to provide for both their sons and grandsons, which conflicts with the plans they had envisioned for their retirement years – a fact complicated by the fact that their pensions are rather small, given their professional past as business owner and housekeeper respectively.

“The money just drains away. Some six months ago, [my younger son] wanted 1000€ and appeared on my doorstep crying, with a debt to pay. And there I went again... Maybe it’s my fault. If I just threw them on the street... But I can’t. I am a father and a grand-father and I would never do such a thing [laughs]. I’m keeping afloat by selling what I have, but it is getting very hard. If my grandchildren had a job or if they were just living with their parents, as it should be, I would say I might not be well-off but I would have enough – because, from a certain age onwards, we don’t have that many demands. You don’t go to the cinema, you don’t go here and there. Life is different, more peaceful, more quiet... [But] we don’t have that security now. After all those years of hard work, one sees his children and grand-children in trouble... Some people just close the door. But I haven’t got the courage to do it.” (NA/G/R1)

ML/L also describes the anguish of being responsible for providing his family back in his home country of Guinea-Bissau, despite his own precarious situation:

“Being in Europe, the family puts all the trust over you. If things don’t go well, one gets disoriented... In disease or any other difficulty, they ask for help... Prescriptions and medication, sometimes food. They ask me and I have to find a way to get things there. Every month I have to send something.... In Africa, I am the first son of my father. My father and my mother have died, so my brothers shifted all the trust to me. They work there as peasants and the like. But when something is lacking, it to me that they turn.” (ML/L/R1)

This phenomenon is also observed with the roles reversed. In the event that offspring are inserted in the labor market (formally or informally), parents resort to their children to help them complete the necessary budget to meet the monthly needs. AR/L shares how both her sons contribute to the monthly budget:

“And my son, well. We arrive at the end of the month and we do the math. It’s this, this and this. It will be enough? It won’t be enough? If it’s not enough, we’re going to ask [her son]. If it’s enough, we don’t ask for [her son]’s help. If it’s not enough, we have to ask for help to [the oldest son]. The [eldest son] helps with some expenses. We take out his expenses, also... He gives swimming classes on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.” (AR/L/R1)

Similarly, the institutional network mainly takes the form of food support. We found multiple cases of families being helped by food banks, provided by third sector’s local institution. It’s not a situation limited only to cases of absolute poverty. In the majority of cases, access to the food bank runs via guaranteed minimum income. Benefiting on the knowledge that social workers gain of the reality of families, they signal and approach families in order to be awarded such help. TE/G shares her experience:

“It’s this way, they gave pasta, sugar, toilet paper [the food bank]. They also didn’t have large quantities or varieties to give. Sometimes they gave 2 or 3 packages of pasta and I thought there was no need. Maybe could have more need of other things than 2 or 3 packages of pasta. Maybe existed one variety of... but I understand, it’s the City Hall, maybe It doesn’t have so much support like others associations.” (TE/G/R1)

Another one of such cases is the one of AR/L. She lost her job as a hairdresser and in her fifties she’s having many difficulties to find a new job. She has been living with the social integration income and with the support of her parents (whom she takes care) and her sons (both young adults). Also, the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* of Lugarão has been a good support to her, both through counselling (about training programs, job opportunities, benefits and other forms of support) and through material help, namely the food bank, clothes, toys (to her grandson), etc. In a life changing situation, *Santa Casa* has become one of the support pillars of AR/L.

The same can be said about GE/L. Like AR/L, he lost his job in construction in his fifties and couldn’t find a regular a steady job since. Without family in Portugal and withdrawn from the regular labour market, GE/L has been living much in isolation, on account of the social integration income, small odd jobs and his urban vegetable garden, on a neighbourhood that is on a process of demolition. *Santa Casa*, on the other hand, has provided him with help and guidance regarding his social benefits and health needs, but also training (in gardening), counselling and other forms of inclusion, namely gardening. GE/L goes twice a week to *Santa Casa* to work on their vegetable garden with other beneficiaries (namely JU/L), producing all kinds of vegetables that afterwards are distributed in the institution. Besides getting GE/L involved in a social activity, his participation is also a way for social assistants to monitor his situation and fight the tendency to social isolation.

There are also situations such as MT/G’s, which food support began as a request from school for her children to eat lunch during holidyas at school, but in the meantime has become a systematic weekly help directed to the household. The need for food fortification to the household was identified in school, and from there developed a strategy by the local social network, to address the family and integrate them in the food distribution network.

Finally, “gift exchange networks” occur mostly among emigrants, which develop informal network of gifts of small amounts of money, which are distributed in emergency situations by those who have some disposable income. PE/L and BA/L refer to participate in an informal network of gifts of small amounts of money, which are distributed in emergency situations by those who have some disposable income. Those who give and receive change over time, according to their status of income and their immediate needs, involving at some point all members of this informal community.

PE/L mentions how he feels obliged to help friends with small sums of money, even if he has very little to spare for himself:

“Well, it’s that thing that we Angolans have, right? Man, I don’t have much but hey! Take 10. Look, take 20 something. Sometimes there are friends like this over here. For instance, I, with the little money I have... Last month, when I received, I remembered there was a friend up in [nearby neighborhood] who was going through a bad patch. So I said to him: “Look, I don’t have much; but, here, have 2 Euros. At least it’s something”” (PE/L/R1)

These types of networks also take the shape of shared help. This is very much the case of GE/L's maintenance work on the shack where he lives:

"I have taken the dirt away, I have added the gravel. Now it's just adding the sand. I make cement. I add a layer. Then a friend comes: a fellow countryman! He joins me, mixes the screed and clears some things up. Because there is little money and it almost isn't worth to spend a lot, as the neighborhood is going to be demolished soon." (GE/L/R2)

Similarly, AS/L doesn't have capacity to help people with money or goods, but she is willing to help with her time and work. She shares how in certain situations she helped an acquaintance to clean her house, since she couldn't do it due to her work schedules.

"Helping someone, I already helped. Now, I don't have anything to give. (...)I did some work without receiving payment. I went to someone's house and found myself even anxious to do things and I was all day washing the dishes and cleaning the house and did not get anything. [On why] She could not do things because she is working and comes home tired and since she works in the morning and have to catch another work in the afternoon... so I saw that she was afflicted with the house being untidy and could not clean it and I volunteered to help."

Practices relating to shared resources are activated in very specific situations, and most commonly among immigrants. The most common form is house sharing. EL/L, ML/L, DI/L and PE/L – all of them immigrants that settled in Lugarão – share housing with others. Only DI/L is sharing with a family member, his cousin. In the other cases the housemates were found based through informal contacts made in the neighbourhood or through fellow immigrants.

"Yes, neighbors and friends whom I have good ties with [money gifts]. Acquaintances from Africa and from here. When they are a little better and I have more difficulties... they can help. It can't be all, but some help, yes." (ML/L/R1)

Regarding virtual social networks, they take a very practical shape and are tied to functional uses of the internet and virtual platforms by respondents. The main usage of virtual networks is to be informed of shopping discounts and job opportunities. Many respondents use mobile networks to this function alone, since job vacancies in many cases are only applicable through virtual platforms. Also, in the case of shopping discounts, the notifications in the phone allow respondents to chose and strategize their groceries.

Another usage of these types of networks is to keep in touch with relatives and friends, which takes a more integral and indispensable role in maintaining social networks in the case of immigrants. Our urban subsample distinguished itself by the large presence of immigrants. In several cases, this meant that interviewees were part of family and solidarity networks that far exceeded the local place. Such integration had different modalities. A very common one was the immigrant as a *provider* for its family back in the home country. An extreme example of this is ML/L. He reported to us how his family in Guinea-Bissau expected him to provide for needed goods - such as medicines – even if he himself was – thus forcing him to recur to gift networks and thus further indebting him regarding his friends. A second modality is *home as reference*. In this case, the family network plays the role of an emotional bond which helps giving meaning to the current hardship and suffering. This is very much the case of EL/L, who is constantly in contact with her mother back in Brazil via Facebook and for whom her current predicaments were a way of providing a better future to her children and to one day being able purchase a house in his hometown and return home. The third modality is the *translation of the network*. This is the case of immigrants that have no intention of returning but instead

want to establish themselves in the host country and whose actions are – at least partially – oriented towards creating the conditions for bringing their. This is the case of PE/L, who had the long term goal of bringing his children from Angola to Portugal.

5. The role of rural village and urban neighbourhood communities or the communitarian spaces

5.1. Definitions of community and feeling of belonging

The interviews revealed different interpretations of the notion of community, highlighting and valuing different dimensions of social life, that allow us to understand what individuals value and expect from the local networks, how they act in the public space and if they interpret their constraints as individual problems or collective challenges.

In this sense, community definitions are closely related to the sense of belonging of the respondents to the context in which they live, while this feeling of belonging is determined by the current lived experience, the life story and the expectations and prospects regarding their future and the surrounding environment. Thus, these views are particularly revealing of the levels and modes of social integration of individuals and families in the local community.

For ML/L, JU/L and AS/L community is a kind of extension of the family in the local spatial context. They value knowing people from different areas of the county and the need to maintain conviviality. Thus, familiarity with the territory and the people who inhabit it (hence, social cohesion) are the elements that make a community.

In this quote ML/L highlights how he visits friends throughout the municipality of Lugarão:

"Yes, yes. There are people from Lugarão with whom I have a good relationship. And I have friends who live on [nearby town] and I have friends in [nearby town]. People who live with me, too, we are family. Life has difficulties. When we are here, Africans, we need to know where our family is. If not, you may have problems at home, alone. You have to visit family and friends, and let them visit you." (ML/L/R1)

AS/L also uses the word family to describe her relationship with Lugarão:

[What community feels part?] "Here in Lugarão. [laughs] Here's where I feel among family, more or less, yes. I speak with everyone, I go to the supermarket and I talk with everyone. Mostly older people. I feel good here." (AS/L/R1)

In the rural context this vision of community takes singular contours. Respondents in this context refer to the (small) size and continuity of families in the same territorial context as factors leading to close knowledge between all inhabitants and social cohesion. NO/G and LU/G refer to the cohesion and mutual support in where they live:

"Here people are very close. (...) I don't know how to explain. People who come here from outside are all welcome. In the past, there were people who were afraid to come here, because we are one for all and all for one. If there was a fight with one of us, everyone got into the middle. So there were people who were afraid to come here. People are this close. If something happens to one and another nearby, he helps immediately. People here are like that." (NO/G/R1)

"Yes, I'm in the community here. I was born here, and I live here. I feel good here. We all know each other, it's a small village. We know everyone, I feel good here in the community. We live with our friends. I with mine, you with yours, the other with theirs." (LU/G/R1)

This community vision as an extended family in a shared territory can also have a detrimental effect for families who find themselves in a difficult situation, to the extent that this familiarity can be felt as an unwanted public exposure. TJ/G, who fell into a situation of vulnerability to poverty after years as part of the family business, reflect on their situation:

"Since it's a small town, turns out to be a village with many people, where everybody knows each other. So, as my family is originally from here, with a established business with more than 100 years ... families know each other. When the conflict began [they were removed from the family business], we began to feel a bit apart." (TJ/G/R1)

Despite the history they have in the community and their knowledge of everyone, TJ/L see themselves excluded:

"Right now I think we're a bit isolated. Maybe it's our fault. It is also not very pleasant disclosing... [sigh] My parents know, some people possibly know that we have difficulties, but we will not say "ah, we are ...". I have some friends who think we are in this situation... it's not good, and then you are part of... I don't know what, and their always what you're doing or not doing." (TJ/G/R1)

Sharing the same perspective, EL/L and PA/G also include public services and the institutional network in their definition of community. In this interpretation the notion of community has a necessary implication with the notion of citizenship. EL/L shares her feeling of belonging to the community:

"I think it's this way. Where I live, do I mingle? I do not know, because then people think, "Oh, she's Brazilian," I do not know. I think so. Now you got me. [laughs] I think so, I do, because my address is there at [neighbourhood of Lugarão]. I'm registered, I think so. Even though I'm unemployed, if it happens one day [to get a job] and I do my tax discounts, I'm part of society." (EL/L/R1)

PA/G, despite feeling socially excluded, consider that by paying water, electricity, etc., become part of the community. In this perspective community belonging is associated with citizenship and citizenship to social contributions.

"Whether we like it or not, we are always part [of the community]. Notwithstanding that we feel excluded. (...) Whether we like it or not, we always contribute to the community. It's the people we see and speak. By paying water and electricity we are already contributing something. We always contribute. But sometimes there is the feeling that we are excluded, we are set apart." (PA/G/R1)

In these excerpts it is implicit the idea that they start as foreigners (respectively Brazilian and Roman) and that the membership to the local community involves the integration in Portugal and this is done through social contributions. Note how PA/G, although they were born in Portugal and being children of Portuguese nationals, rationalize their Portuguese nationality:

"Yes, I find myself part of the Portuguese population. I am a citizen like any other. And in one way or another contribute well." (PA/G/R1)

A second approach to the notion of community is formulated, for example, by MI/L and GE/L, where it takes on a micro scale. The scope of this notion is restricted to the neighborhood – in both cases, slums in demolition process. It is by reference to the activities and people of the neighborhoods that respondents think the notion of community. This definition is particularly interesting, since it reinforces the marginal and secreted nature of the territorial context in which they live. Although it is within the municipal boundaries of the city, it is not perceived as an integral part of the same. The demolition process further exacerbates this situation, as shown in this excerpt:

"[Referring to the contrast between neighborhood nowadays and before] Because before we had a park. And the neighbors were all close. Not now, now we're separated ... Some are, some aren't. Because the Council is demolishing it. Who has the right have, who doesn't... they put on the street, as in my case." (MI/L/R1)

In the same vein, AR/L defines community in the same scale, the neighbourhood, raising the question of belonging in terms of conviviality with neighbours. The community here is synonymous with sharing a common space and with tolerance, not necessarily implying participation or involvement in public space.

"And so. I cannot say nothing of the people who live in my building. It's like this: my next door neighbor is my good friend. Once she knows I'm sick, she's the one who cooks for me and brings it to my home. (...) I also have a friend there [in the building] and another one underneath too [in the floor below]. In front I have another friend of mine too. Everyone in this neighborhood." (AR/L/R1)

Incidentally, it is visible in the excerpt below how AR/L establishes a distance from the people who live in her neighborhood.

"I'm not going [to parties or someone's home]. If I sometimes go, is when someone invites me to drink a coffee in the cafe just below my building. For the rest, it's "good morning, good afternoon, hello, how are you". Let's say I don't give myself much." (AR/L/R1)

With the same territorial referent, CL/L focuses her definition of community on neighborly relations, as participation and involvement with people living in the same neighbourhood. The welfare state, in the figure of social services, is mentioned in this excerpt, but by its inefficiency.

"It's a bit tricky to define community. I only see my neighbours [laughs] from time to time when they knock on the door to say that the top light is on. Rarely I leave the house. Just to go to college or when I have to catch my son or when I go to my mother or the doctor. Moreover I'm always at home. I have no money for sightseeing or to be with friends, so I'm at home. It is complicated to define community because I only know my neighbours from condominium meetings. If we talk of friends and family, I'm with my mother, I see my mother once a month and my friends once a year [laughs]. We talk more on the phone. They have no money to go to my house and I do not have to go to their house. The state level... it's very time consuming and people who spend difficulties end up spending more difficulties." (CL/L/R1)

There is still a third definition of community, postulated by NV/L and FA/G. In this perspective community operates on a more macro level, serving to name different groups of social belonging. These can represent axes of social characteristics (such as religion or nationality) or simply groups of friends or social networks.

NV/L throughout the interview keeps mentioning the Portuguese and Indian communities or the Hindu or Catholic communities. In this sense the territorial dimension loses prominence. What are valued are the belonging circles and thus the existing social heterogeneity within the same territory.

In turn, the FA/G reflects on how she felt supported by different communities to which she belongs:

"There are several... I have a group of friends of whom I did not speak now... are friends from school time, which I still meet sporadically... friends that I acquired in the various jobs that I have had throughout life... I am part of their lives... I am part of the Council community, where I entered several years... for example with [name], who was my boss... with whom I continue to maintain a friendship... maybe even in the place where I live... as it is a council neighbourhood... [laughs] although it's only good morning and good afternoon but, for example, if they want an appointment with a council technician they say: "look, if you don't mind to help me neighbour..." in the case of a friend who works at the school that calls me and asks me to go to the education [department], since I know some people there, and calls me to go to the school because a problem erupted there ... I yes ... I am part of a range of several groups ... such as the group dinners where I cater... I feel like part of those parties because I'm in all and everyone goes to the kitchen to greet and ... and congratulate me, because the food was good, the service went well ... I think so, I belong to various communities..." (FA/G/R1)

Underlying the various community definitions is the same social function, which is the mutual support among people living in the same territory. ML / L exposes it eloquently when he explains the need to visit his friends in Lugarão:

"I see on television people who die in the house and stay there a long time without anyone noticing it. A disease can attack you and if you have no communication with anyone, there can be no one know anything of your life." (ML/L/R1)

FA/G, in turn, shows the importance of such support even when it translates only in comfort and encouragement:

"I feel... I feel... for example in the case of the team with whom I work... when I'm more down... for example when I receive the e-mails from the teacher [of her son], which are constant... and that they notice, my colleagues soon notice that I'm no longer well... I'm reading something that is not... they comfort me with words... they offer me time to go to school deal with what I have to deal with... because they know that, if necessary, I'll be here until eight in the evening without having to make a timesheet... I think it is to live in community... is to be supported." (FA/G/R1)

5.2. Community life before and now

Community life is in a deep depression. Small neighborhood businesses are closing at a high rate, people are less and less involved in local associations and activities, even the relation with religious institutions are more random. The streets have less movement, which is a function of the time consumed by work, but the main factor involves the consumption incapacity.

LU/G speaks of the economic depression in town:

"Quartel⁷ has no money. Now it has some movement, but it's the summer. People go out to the street and drink a little coffee. But at business level, Quartel died too. The [village]... Look, if you close the smelters of Quartel; if you close the olive oil factory of [company 1], if you close the olive oil of [company 2], the village becomes hollow. No one invests. So, if you look around the streets, all you see are old houses, all falling". (LU/G/R1)

Walking through the city every day, given her profession as a taxi driver, CA/G describes Gótica as a ghost town:

"Gótica is increasingly dead. Now you find movement around town because people are working. If you came at seven o'clock, everyone is running. It becomes completely empty. Gótica is a dorm of Lisbon". (CA/G/R1)

The interviews in the urban context show that the recent trend is similar in all respects. AS/L points to the contrast among a busy and dynamic city that has gone and an increasingly empty city that has emerged.

"Before you could see many people on the streets. It was a mess at the weekend. But now I do not notice this movement. I think that with the crisis people are no longer here. I notice that there are fewer people. I did not realize ... (...) the other day I was talking to a friend and I said that I have noticed that many Cape Verdeans and Angolans are gone and maybe they headed back homeland. Or emigrated, whatever." (AS/L/R1)

If to AS/L fewer people on the streets and in public spaces can be explained by migratory movements, to LO/L the explanation is in the consumption inability of families.

"It is more empty. Previously we still saw lots of cars going over there. [Why?] The lack of jobs, lack of money. The ones who have jobs don't have money to deal with the situation. And if you don't have a job you have to stretch [the money]. (LO/L/R1)

In turn, CL/L reinforces this perception by describing the changes of her leisure habits in recent years:

"To go out ... to go drink a coffee with someone equals spending money [laughs], we do not have. To go to someone's home is equivalent to spending money, even if it's only gas and we don't have it [laughs]. Sometimes we go to the garden with him [her son]. Sometimes I picked up my son and I go to drink a cup of coffee with my mother, who is usually who pays. I pick my child and we go to the garden or the back to ride the tricycle, play ball or play catch." (CL/L/R1)

A second important evidence is the growing in isolation as a reaction to increasing levels of hardship. This isolation is often explained on actuarial as well as moral grounds and has as a consequence a growing withdrawal from community life. The main feature of these changes is a movement of retreat from public spaces and of re-centering leisure activities on the private space – and, particularly, home. Families don't have means to move around and to participate in activities outside of their home.

⁷ Some of the interviews in the rural setting were made in the municipality of Quartel (fictional name), near Gótica. The territorial characteristics of Quartel are very similar to Gótica. We thus found many of the same dynamics and social phenomena. In view of that, we are going to include quotes and observation from Quartel articulated with data collected in Gótica.

NS/G and CL/L describe the lack of community life and the increasing closure on the direct family network:

"But there isn't that community as we see it before. It's only friends and family, that's all that still stands."(NS/ G/R1)

Even among the younger respondents, the trend is closing relations and replacing the traditional local life (at cafés, restaurants, bars, leisure associations) to each other's homes. PE/L provides a perfect example of this tendency:

"I'm also somewhat limited on some things, so I hang out more with people that I already know. I'm not the one to hang out in cafes and that time ended also. Even if before you could do that and more. But now? It's more hanging out at each other's homes or something."(PE/L/R1)

The loss of the ability to consumption, according to PA/G, also affected the conviviality relations in public space. In a moment of self-reflection during the interview she points to a change in the relations between people.

"It may even be just me, but I think people are colder, more antipathetic. I speak up for me. There are days that I walk around with a face... my God. (...) People lose patience. Seeming not, the money helps a lot and is much worse. And people don't have much patience. (...) It's the debts. Not just us. The others also have debts and also are in a bad mood". (PA/L/R1)

Among the older population this trend of isolation is viewed with some trepidation, to the extent that the breakdown of neighborly relations and the lack of movement in public space bring with it the threat of crime.

GE/ L lives in a slum being demolished. Being one of its last inhabitants, he has fears with the breakdown of community life:

"It is so, but the person is no longer as before. In the past, it was easier. Each person went to their work... Now with this crisis, these types [criminals] can attack a person. But also to attack the person because of money, that's why we are as we are. I mean, when we had neighbors, it was much better. We all got along and we were more assured. And now, for example, if I'm alone, if you come from there to attack me, I have no one to help me. That's the problem." (GE/L/R1)

In short, in recent years there has been a marked transformation of community life in Portugal, closely related to the economic recession and to the decline in household living conditions. These factors have had a marked and visible effect on public space, with the closure of much local commerce and the withdrawal of people and families from the public space (either due to migration processes, either by withdrawal for private and family spaces). The interviews, in addition to confirm this phenomenon, alert to another transformation process in community life, which involves the fragmentation of the relations of conviviality associated with the growing isolation and stress caused by situations of deprivation and unemployment.

6. Contribution of community/political involvement to practices of resilience

As already pointed out in previous sections, we found little in our sample in the way of active involvement in collective action instances, whether economic - regarding production, distribution or consumption – or civic – such as collective bargaining with public and private institutions or protest actions.

One of the rare exceptions to this situation is the practice of farming vacant public and abandoned private land, which is rather common in Lugarão and all over the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon. One of our interviewees, GE/L, did engage in this practice. GE/L lives in a shack on a partially demolished slum. The slum was built on private land mostly by immigrants from the former Portuguese colonies during the cities booming growth period of the 1970s and 1980s. GE/L grows vegetable gardens on adjacent patches of land. The collective dimension of this practice is however, very limited, being restricted to the occasional sharing of farming tools and some gifts of food. Farming itself is organized and carried out in individual patches and is almost exclusively destined to self-consumption.

“Each one has his own vegetable garden. But the garden, well, these are [Municipal] Council’s lands, right? Some say that the land doesn’t belong to the Council but to some owners – but it’s the Council that is responsible for it... [The vegetables] are only for me. Sometimes, I may give out a little. But I don’t sell. People won’t buy. They say they don’t have money. And if they had, they would prefer to buy at the market. One could sell to a grocery store. I never tried it, but some people have. They say they have their own suppliers. And they [require] receipts or something like that. It’s a receipt, with VAT and everything.” (GE/L/R1)

However, this is not to say that the institutional fabric of the areas we studied does not play an important part in the resilience processes in which our interviewees are involved. On the contrary, the role of two types of institutions should be highlighted in this regard: charities/third sector institutions; and public services

Charities - and particularly the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia (SCM)*⁸ - did play an important role in some of the resilience processes of the interviewees. Such role takes place mainly at two levels: by working as mediators in the access of individual to resources such as social transfers; and by providing themselves short-term jobs.

It was through charities - and mainly the local SCM - that a significant part of our interviewees accessed the RSI, the Portuguese minimum guaranteed income scheme. Both applications and renovations of RSI requests were handled through the SCM services, while social workers from these institutions were responsible for the follow-up and monitoring of the beneficiaries’ situation. Part of the mandatory activities connected to RSI – such as training – also took place

⁸ The Santa Casa da Misericórdia (SCMs) are charities connected to the Catholic Church which work on municipal– sometimes even civil parish– level and whose origins can be traced back to the 16th century. The SCMs are the more prominent charities in most Portuguese municipalities, running a host of social equipments, such as hospitals, nursery homes and kindergartens. This are also often the most well-funded. For instance, the SCM of Lisbon has to the concession, in monopoly regime, of national lotteries – similar to what happens with ONCE in Spain – European lotteries (Euromillions) and also legal bets on sporting events for Portugal.

in the SCM premises. It was also through charities that many interviewees got food donations, as these institutions act as distribution channels for food banks operating at a more centralized level - whether municipal or national.

Finally, some of our beneficiaries ended up working in the social equipments of the SCM, though their labour contracts are mostly precarious. This was the case of both TJ(T)/G and PA(P)/G, who were invited to work – even if on short-term contracts and on minimum wage - in nursing homes run by the local SCM, which had also been their access points to the RSI.

In turn, access and coverage of *public services* provide a good observation point on the role that processes of socialization or individualization of risks play out in individual's life. This is very much the case of health services, which are a key element in guaranteeing access to physical and mental health care. It is through the Portuguese National Health Service (SNS) that CL/L (at the time unemployed) and TE/G (who worked on minimum wage) could be treated for major illnesses. Aside from this, we also found out that family doctors at public health centres weigh play a considerable role in addressing not just in cases of physical illness or injury but also in accompanying situations of depression and anxiety.

By contrast, absence or deficient coverage in some areas represents a major element of psychological distress and disruption for very tight budgets. Two relevant cases were those CL/L's physiotherapy for her damaged spine or TE/G's need to go to the dentist or to replace the lenses in her glasses. Both of these are not covered by regular SNS services. In the case of CL/L, this led a delay in her recovery process. On TE/G's case, it ends up being the example of a major budget imbalance that takes a few months to recover.

“When you are on 485€ [a month] you can't afford other expenses. You can't go to the dentist, you can't go to the doctor, your car can't break. Because that ruins your budget. This month, for instance, it was my glasses. On top of it, I've been unable to adapt to them - I still must use these old ones. It was also the car reparation which cost me some 300€. How are you going to pay for all this? So we have to make some “gymnastics” with it. And I learned: ok, you won't give up!” (TE/L/R1)

Public schools should also be seen as providing a key support to strategies of investment in education. This is the case of BA/L, who is taking a vocational course in a public school in order to improve her chances of finding a better job.

Given the importance that charities and public services assume in resilience processes, it is worth to emphasize how Portuguese territorialized state policies influenced the shape and efficacy of their operations in the two regions we studied. The most important of these policies is likely the *Rede Social* (RS - literally “Social Network” in Portuguese). An RS is a structure that integrates public and third sector institutions in each Portuguese municipality. It works as forum for identifying and monitoring social problems and for planning interventions, avoiding overlapping of actions and fostering collaboration between participating institutions. RSs were also given competences regarding the approval of applications for State and European funds.

RSs were set up through a pilot programme set up by the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity in the late 1990s and were extended to the entire country in the early 2000s. Participation is mandatory for local public services. Although participation in the leading body of an RS is formally open to any institution, in practice it is the municipalities that have assumed a leading role in the RS's workings in every RS. This owes to the unique political

legitimacy that they enjoy, enabling them to bring the different partners to the table more easily.

Participation on RSs has in general greatly increased the ability of local state services – such as Social Security, Job Centres or Health centers – to identify and monitor situations of poverty. They have also been key in improving the efficacy and efficiency in the interventions of third sector institutions and allowed for the creation of partnerships between the latter.

However, differences in the characteristics of territories as well dependence on the initiative and ability levels demonstrated by the municipalities gave rise to considerable asymmetries within the country regarding the efficacy of RSs' works. Our two study areas give us a glimpse of this problem. Lugarão – a small, densely populated area – and where the local RS has long been a priority for the municipality, features a very high level of integration in intervention between public services and third sector institutions, effectively working as highly integrated network for sharing information and rerouting users between them. Gótica is slightly different in this regard, due to the two-tiered nature of its territory – a small central town and villages scattered in the countryside – made for an asymmetrical capacity, with more difficult access to the hinterland – and thus reduced capacity to track and monitor critical situations in these cases.

Appendix

Participation and involvement of interviewees in associations, communities and networks

Portuguese Sample

Respondent ID	Municipalities and local	Political organisations	Social organisations	Religious organisations	Trade Unions	Ethnic/migrant communities	Charities	(Sub)cultural communities	Virtual social networks
TJ/G	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PA/G	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FA/G	-	3;7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TE/G	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CR/G	-	-	-	-	-	-	2;5	-	-
MT/G	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CA/G	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NO/G	2;5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NS/G	4;7	3;7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LU/G	4;7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RO/G	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ML/L	-	-	-	3;8	-	3;7	-	-	-
JU/L	-	-	-	-	-	-	2;8	-	-
EL/L	-	-	-	3;8	-	-	2;5	-	-
BA/L	-	-	-	-	-	-	2;5	-	-
CL/L	2;5	-	2;6	3;8	-	-	-	-	-
AS/L	-	-	-	3;8	-	-	2;5	-	-
NV/L	-	-	-	3;5	-	-	2;5	-	-
DI/L	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MA/L	3;7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MI/L	-	-	-	-	-	-	2;5	-	-
LO/L	-	-	2;9	-	-	-	2;5	-	-
PE/L	-	-	-	8;3	-	-	2;5	-	-
AR/L	2;5	-	3;8	-	-	-	2;5	-	-
GE/L	-	-	6;2	-	-	-	2;5	-	-