

WP6 – Longitudinal and Biographical Aspects of Resilience Practices

Portuguese National Report

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February 2016

Introduction

The current report presents the results of the analysis of the interviews that were made by the Portuguese team within the RESCUE project. The goal of this report was to explore the data collected during fieldwork in a longitudinal and biographical perspective. Thus, the analysis followed the objective of framing the narratives of individuals in their social and historical contexts, linking the analysis of structural and institutional dynamics and the analysis of the experiences and agency of social actors, in a diachronic fashion.

The report is thought as feeding the WP6 International Report, thus data will be presented in a way that facilitates international comparison, giving more emphasis to the narratives. In doing so, we opted by selecting excerpts that either were representative of data for a large part of the sample, illustrating contrasting views and different dimensions of relevant phenomena or representing unexpected findings and conclusions.

Aside from this introduction, this report comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 is dedicated to frame the narratives of the subjects in the historical periods in which they occur. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the development of the previous chapter, integrating the narratives of these key historical periods with the effects that they had on families and individuals. Chapter 3 deals with the relationship between life experiences, narratives of hardship and practices of coping from two perspectives: how the current crisis was experienced and how it manifested in the lives of the households included in the sample; and the role that life experiences have on the set of practices and coping strategies developed at the household level. Chapter 4 works on the analysis of the turning points on respondents' lives, focusing on the resources they mobilized and the social networks they turned to. Chapter 5 is dedicated to reflect on how these turning points affected the processes of resilience of individuals and families, focusing, firstly, on the impacts on resources and ability to cope, and secondly, on how they relate to the norms and social expectations of the time. Finally, Chapter 6 questions the perceptions that interviewees have of their resilience paths, focusing on understanding how subjects interpret their practices and coping narratives. To do so, we will explore how interviewees rationalize and understand the events that turn into turning points in their live narratives and how they project their aspirations and expectations for the future.

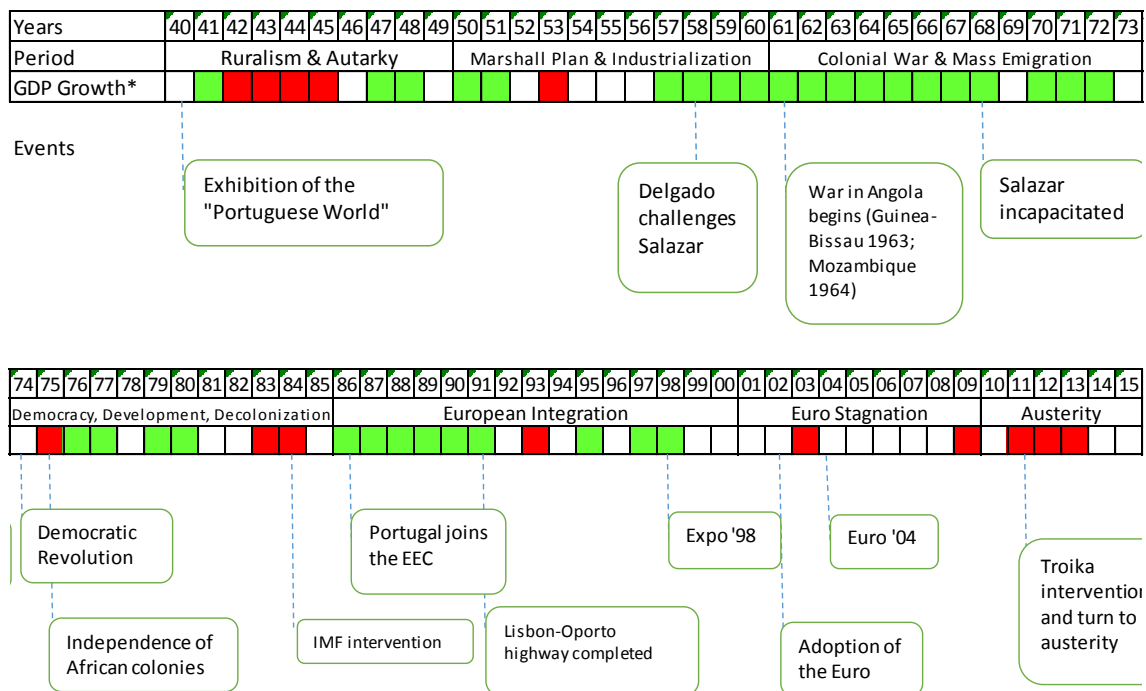
1. Key historical periods in Portuguese recent history

Given the age span of interviewees– the oldest was 73 years old at the time of the interview - we opted to take 1940 as the lower boundary for our historical review. We have considered seven historical periods, characterized by different political, economic and social trends. These were:

- Ruralism & Autarky (up to 1950)
- International opening & Industrialization (1950-60)
- Colonial Wars & Mass Emigration (1961-73)
- Democracy, Decolonization & Development (1974-85)
- European Integration (1986-2000)
- Euro-led stagnation (2001-2009)
- Crisis & Austerity (2010-?)

We give a brief sketch of the characteristics of each of these periods in chapter 2. The following figure is graphical representation of these periods as a line, featuring also two further layers. The coloured line identifies both economic recessions and periods of economic growth as measured by the evolution of GDP: in green, years of GDP growth above 4%, in red, years of negative GDP growth. The bottom layer is composed by some key social, political and cultural events in Portuguese recent history whose occurrence might constitute reference points in interviewees’ memories. The description of these events is also included in chapter 2.

Figure 1 - Portuguese history: major events and economic growth (1940-2015)



2. Historical context of changes in respondents life over time

The period up to 1945 corresponds to the heyday of the Portuguese dictatorship or "Estado Novo" (literally "New State"). The immediate roots of the "Estado Novo" lie in the 1926 military coup which overthrew the First Republic and installed a conservative military dictatorship. After a period of political instability and successive failed uprisings, António Oliveira Salazar emerged as the country's dictator in 1932, federating behind himself the different Portuguese right-wing currents - conservative republicans, conservative Catholics, monarchists and fascists. By 1940, the regime was solidly implanted. Internally, it had successfully dismantled or severely hindered the organizations of the progressive republican, communist and anarchist oppositions and had either killed, jailed or forced into exile most of their leaders. Externally, the regime inserted itself seamlessly in the plethora of right-wing autocracies that dominated Europe in the 1930s and, closer to home, shared strong ideological affinities with the Francoist regime set up in the wake of the Spanish Civil War.

The "Estado Novo" regime borrowed heavily from Italian Fascism in both its political organization and ideological grounding. It set itself as an authoritarian, corporatist and confessional regime with power fully concentrated in the dictator, Salazar. The regime set up an extended repressive apparatus which had the secret police, the National Republican Guard – a militarized police force – special political courts and an office of censorship as its lynchpins. It suppressed basic civil rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly or freedom of the press. Political parties and free trade unions were outlawed, strikes and demonstrations (other than those supporting the regime) were forbidden and a tight censorship of the press and of cultural activities in general – such as cinema, theatre or book publishing – was established.

In this first phase, the main economic tenets of the Estado Novo were ruralism and autarky. Ruralism was the drive to re-establish agriculture as the focus of the Portuguese economy. This drive had a strong conservative overtones, putting forward "the return to the land" as way of regenerating a nation supposedly corrupted by industrialization and urbanization – even if both phenomena were still rather incipient in Portugal at the time. In turn, autarky was put forward as a way of solving the perennial disequilibria of the Portuguese trade balances which had led to a string of debt crisis during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Ruralism and autarky had three major policy consequences. Firstly, the implementation of protectionist and import substitution measures. Secondly, a policy of industrial conditionality, which posed severe administrative restrictions to the opening of new industrial units and firms. And thirdly, the intensification of the exploitation of the Portuguese colonies in Africa both as sources of raw materials and as protected markets for low-quality metropolitan agricultural and industrial products.

Such economic policies heavily favoured large rural landowners – particularly wine, grain and olive oil producers – while stifling industrial development and innovation, with industrial activities concentrating in sectors that benefited heavily from protectionism, such as textile

manufacturing. Other sectors were directly related to farming and fishing, such as shipbuilding, food and drink processing, the production of pesticides, chemical fertilizers and of agricultural equipment.

The onset of World War II did not at first alter this picture and even reinforced some of its traits. While ideologically close to the Axis powers, Salazar's government kept Portuguese neutrality during the war and carefully juggled the demands of both Nazi Germany and Great Britain - thus avoiding not only military invasion but also preventing a rift between Germanophiles and Anglophiles among the political and economic elites that sustained his regime. Production of strategic war materials – particularly the mining of tungsten ore – fuelled a short economic boom, while sharp drops in imports, owing to the disruption of international trade by the global conflict, led to rare surpluses in the Portuguese trade balance. Yet, the war also sowed the seeds for the crisis, with inflation and essential goods rationing, coupled with extremely low wages and extended poverty, leading to a wave of strikes in 1943 and 1944, which were violently repressed.

The end of the war would however pose the first major challenge to the regime since its inception. The Allied victory brought with it the discredit of fascism and the need for the regime to engage in some – at least token - distancing from to avoid the risk of international isolation. This period of redefinition constituted a brief window of opportunity that was seized by the opposition to re-emerge in legal organizations pressing for democratization of the regime, hoping to count on support from the Allies.

The regime's answer was twofold. Externally, it began to present itself successfully as an important anti-communist bulwark in Europe and Africa in the context of the Cold War, thus fending off any Allied intervention. Thus assured, the regime now felt safe again to clamp down on dissenters, putting ever tighter restrictions to opposition organization activities until its full illegalization again in 1948.

This bid for renewed international legitimacy started with the admission to NATO as a founding member in 1949, and would continue with the full admission into the United Nations in 1955. Economic autarky too would be slowly put behind, first with the participation in the Marshall Plan from 1948 to 1951 and then with the adhesion to the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960. The regime also began to steer away from ruralism and turned progressively to a more industrialist stance as way of tackling with the economic crisis of the late 1940s. Starting in 1953, the government began launching five-year economic plans with a strong emphasis on industrial infrastructure – including the construction of dams for the production of electricity, improvements in ports and road and bridge building projects. At the same time, national financial groups began investing in industrial ventures under protection by the state.

Meanwhile, the enactment of strong restrictions on legal emigration – under pressure from large rural landowners and to keep wages at subsistence levels – turned the direction of the rural exodus towards the two major Portuguese urban areas of Lisbon and Oporto. This led to the quick urban growth of in the periphery of these cities – such as Lugarão, our urban study area – and the swelling of slums. Housing shortages in these cities were far from a new phenomenon – the second half of the 19th century had already witnessed the appearance of large slums in Lisbon and Porto but would gain a new dimension during this decade and would persist well into the 1980s.

The year of 1958 saw the second major challenge to Estado Novo arise. The election of the President of the Republic by universal suffrage was one of the few legal loopholes in the regime's political system. This loophole was seized by General Humberto Delgado – a former supporter of Salazar that had become delusional with him – to present his candidacy. Managing to rally the opposition under one major proposal – the dismissal of Salazar – Delgado's fiery style generated a wave of popular enthusiasm that initially took the regime by surprise. It responded in the usual fashion: harassing and jailing of Delgado's supporters, violently disrupting rallies and campaign actions, and tightening censorship and disinformation on news regarding Delgado's campaign. Massive frauds in Election Day – including widespread ballot stuffing and tampering with electoral rolls - would ensure a win for the regime's candidate. Delgado himself would be forced into exile shortly afterwards and would be later murdered by the secret police in 1962. The legal loophole would also be closed, by making future Presidents of the Republic appointed by a controlled National Assembly.

The third historical period considered in this report has the Portuguese Colonial Wars at its centre. It starts with the loss of the Portuguese possessions in India and with the nationalist uprisings in Angola in 1961 - followed by Guinea-Bissau in 1963 and by Mozambique in 1964. The refusal of Salazar's government to engage in any negotiation – or even recognition – with the African liberation movements would plunge the country into a long Colonial War which would have profound political, economic and social consequences.

Despite taking place thousands of kilometres from Portugal, the Colonial War represented a major collective experience, as it was waged by an army relying heavily on conscription. The war would thus directly involve a very large number of Portuguese families. In this period, every 18-year old Portuguese male had a two-year mandatory military commission in Africa looming in his horizon, and the number of those who actually served in Africa during the conflict would reach 149 000. Its sequels were also considerable. The total casualty numbers were never fully disclosed by the Army. Official sources list 8 293 Portuguese soldiers as killed during the War and 15 550 left with permanent disabilities. The number of soldiers with temporary physical wounds is not publicly known nor is the number of soldiers left with psychological illnesses – such as post-traumatic stress - even if estimations in this regard point to magnitudes of tenths of thousands

The Colonial War would also play a key role in the downfall of the regime. Engaging in a Colonial War at a time when decolonization processes were multiplying had heavy diplomatic consequences. Facing the hostility of the Soviet bloc and of the non-aligned movement – particularly the newly independent African countries – and suffering pressures even from some of its NATO allies – such as West Germany and the UK – Portugal would become increasingly isolated and adopting a diplomatic stance described by the regime propaganda as “standing proudly alone. Some support could be found only among states that constituted effective colonial rear guards, such as Rhodesia and South Africa.

The war also represented a huge drain on public resources, with defence expenses peaking at 35% of total public expenses by 1967. Politically, it increased tensions among the support basis of the regime, increasing the weight of hardliners. The splits extended to the two main institutional supports of the Estado Novo, the Catholic Church and the Army. While the hierarchy of the Catholic Church remained, with few exceptions, fully supportive of the regime until its demise, those involved in the Churches lower level youth and workers organizations – one of the few non-state organizations of this type allowed – were progressively troubled by the war. The restlessness within the army also began growing. The dragging of the war meant

weariness with the inability of the regime to provide a solution for the war and the increasing reliability on conscripts even for junior officers positions - and professional soldiers – a fact that would also play a major role in the triggering of the revolution in 1974.

A second major feature of this period was a massive emigration flux towards Western Europe – particularly France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Germany and Switzerland. Illegal emigration, even under the tight restrictions and control of the late 1940s and 1950s, had always remained considerable and would be given an additional boost by young men escaping conscription as the Colonial War dragged on. But now the regime also reversed its policy on legal emigration, striking deals with some European countries who were experiencing fast economic growth and full employment – such as France – for emigration quotas in order to harness remittances.

Portugal did register strong economic growth rates during most of the 1960s, benefitting from a favourable international conjuncture, an influx of foreign capital and also the development of new service industries such as mass tourism for an international public – particularly in the southern Portuguese region of Algarve. In 1968, Salazar suffered a stroke and became incapacitated – he would die 2 years later - being replaced at by Marcello Caetano. Despite early promises of some democratic opening, the pressures from conservative elements within the support basis of the regime and the constraints of the Colonial War quickly dashed them.

At the eve of the 1974 revolution, the country remained one of the poorest countries in Europe, with only Ireland featuring a lower GDP per capita outside the Soviet bloc. Underdevelopment signs were rife. The rapid economic growth of the 1960s failed to rise significantly living standards and poverty rates remained extremely high, standing above 40%. Owing to the corporatist origins of the regime, healthcare and social protection schemes were organized on an occupational basis and were thus extremely fragmented, leaving close to three quarters of the population without cover of any sort. Health indicators were, unsurprisingly, extremely poor. Infant mortality rates in 1973 stood at 44,8 per thousand – against 22,9 in Germany, 17,1 in the UK and 15,1 in France at the time. Average expected lifespan at birth in 1973 was just 64,4 years – against 67,6 in Austria, 72,0 in Greece and 72,3 in Sweden.

The education system was geared almost exclusively towards the reproduction of elites, with a highly selective organization and functioning after primary school. By 1970, a quarter of the Portuguese population did not know how to read or write. Enrolment ratios were extremely low beyond primary education. In 1973, these stood at only at 24,2% for the 5th and 6th grades, 16,5% for 7th to 9th grade and at mere 5,0% for secondary education. Higher education frequency was all but residual.

The authoritarian nature of the regime meant that labour protection laws were scarce and poorly enforced and collective bargaining instances were non-existent, as independent workers organizations were brutally repressed. This succeeded at keeping wages at extremely low levels – even after the mass emigration of the 1960s had led to some improvements, particularly in rural areas. Child labour was a common occurrence in the working classes, being common for our older interviewees to have started working at ages of 12 or even younger.

The revolution of April 25th, 1974 inaugurated the Democratic period and represented a deep rupture with the previous decades in political and social terms. Led by a group of young junior officers in the army, mostly of moderate left convictions, it proposed a Program which was christened as the “three Ds”: democratization, decolonization and development. Civic rights

were re-established practically overnight, with the immediate freeing of political prisoners, the dissolving of the secret police and the abolition of censorship.

The shape of the future political and economic institutions however, was far less consensual. An effervescent confrontation took place between a pro-soviet bloc led by the Communist Party and a pro-europeist bloc led by the Socialist party – a struggle, which at its most acute times in the summer of 1975, stood on the brink of civil war. Ascendancy between these two blocks swung and tilted throughout 1974 and 1975, with the latter finally gaining the upper hand by both electoral victories and limited military action. Crucially, the moderate wing of the winning bloc resisted the radical calls for outlawing of the defeated bloc – thus setting the stage for the full integration of left-wing parties in the constitutional order of the new democratic regime.

The first free elections in Portugal for nearly half a century took place in April 1975. The elected representatives approved the new Democratic Constitution in April 1976 – a document that stands until today with only relatively minor revisions. Given its revolutionary origin, the Constitution consecrated not only political rights but focussed heavily on social rights as well – such as the right to health, the right to education, the right to work, the right to social protection or the right to housing.

The implementation of these social rights represented the foundations of the modern Portuguese welfare state. Landmark examples of this effort were the establishment of the national minimum wage in 1975, the creation of a universal National Health Service in 1979 or the construction of a universal Social Security scheme, concluded in 1984.

However, the new democratic regime also faced several economical difficult challenges. Ending the Colonial Wars ranked high amongst these, having been a key claim of the revolutionaries. The provisional governments quickly opened negotiations with the African liberation movements firstly to obtain cease-fires and then for fast-tracking independence. In a stretch of just 18 months starting from June 1974, nearly all Portuguese colonies – Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Cape Verde, São Tomé e Príncipe and Angola - had their independence recognized by Portugal.

But decolonization also sparked a sudden and massive return of Portuguese settlers as well as of Africans who had worked for the colonial administration or had been part of the Portuguese military. Both these groups feared post-independence reprisals and political turmoil – particularly in Angola, where a civil war between different liberation movements was already in full swing by the time independence was declared. In all, this represented an estimated influx of between 600 000 and 1 000 0000 persons during the years of 1974 and 1975. The integration of these former settlers would end up being a remarkable success in the long run – being diluting in the general population and never constituting the basis for homogeneous political force as, say, the Pieds Noirs had been in France after Algerian Independence.

Yet, the economic costs of such integration were very high – with support to former settlers taking a large a chunk of public resources – and the immediate everyday experience was one of mutual distrust and resentment, with many metropolitan Portuguese seeing the former settlers as remnants of the dictatorship and blaming them for the sufferings of the Colonial War. In turn, the former settlers experienced a hard time adjusting to a country that, in their view, was still a cultural and economic backwater. One of our interviewees, born in Angola from white settlers, gave us an emotional account of this experience – with resentment remaining so strong as to make her qualifying herself as a “refugee” in her own country.

Other problems put further strain in the financial situation of the country. The task of erecting a modern Welfare State in such a short time frame was hard enough and made much difficult against a backdrop of full-fledged international economic crisis. Rapid increase of wages and pensions under popular demand, a highly politicized environment, the nationalization of key economic sectors and political alignment with the previous regime ended up triggering a massive capital flight.

This forced the Governments to IMF interventions taking place in 1977 and 1983 and the setting of wage moderation measures and the tightening of restrictions on imports and consumption in order to correct trade balance disequilibria.

The ascension to the then European Economic Community was thus seen by centre-left and centre-right parties as essential for stabilizing the new democratic regime. The negotiations for ascension thus started back in 1977 and entrance would take place in January 1st, 1986. This date marks the beginning of a period that would see the definitive consolidation and stabilization of the democratic regime. In contrast with the high government volatility of the previous years, the period of European Integration would only know two Prime Ministers. First, Aníbal Cavaco Silva, from the centre-right Social Democratic Party, who held office of prime minister for 10 years between 1985 and 1995 - 8 of which with a single-party majority in Parliament. Afterwards, Antonio Guterres, who served between 1995 and 2001 – first with a plurality and then with a hung parliament.

But political stability was far from the only effect of European Integration. European legislation would set new boundaries for environmental and social policies, as well as setting yardsticks in almost every policy field. The afflux of European funds helped trigger a period of major public investment in infrastructures – particularly transportation network – and also in the expansion of the education and health system and in the increasing of pensions. Against the backdrop of a very favourable international framework - marked by the sharp fall of the dollar (and the ensuing relief on public debt service) and oil prices - this allowed for an 8 year economic boom, with GDP growth averaging 5,0%. Furthermore, fast drop in unemployment favoured the proliferation of double jobs and income – particularly in rural areas close to the urban and industrial centres – thus allowing for a significant increase in living conditions and the reduction of poverty even in a landscape featuring very low wages and pensions.

Emigration levels, which were already falling since the late 1970s, accelerated their downward trend until reaching an historical minimum by the turn of the century. Indeed, Portugal had by then become more of a destination and less an origin for migrations. Migratory fluxes from Brazil – owing to the language proximity – Ukraine, Moldova and Romania – owing to specific logics of migration routes in post-Communist Europe – now joined the more traditional ones from Portuguese-speaking African countries. Unemployment would also fall rapidly, reaching values as low as 3,9% by 2000 – a fact that pervades some of our interviewees narratives when speaking about the easiness in switching between jobs or finding second jobs in these period. The design of innovative social policies also dates from this period – such as the Minimum Guaranteed Income, from which a large number of our interviews benefitted at one point or another.

The organization of the Universal Exhibition of 1998 in Lisbon (Expo '98) is a something of a synecdoche of this period. Widely divulged in the country, it aimed at promoting the image of a new, developed Portugal. It also served as a pretext to rebuild from scratch an entire

derelict industrial area of Eastern Lisbon – in which a number of our interviewees worked and to whose memory is sometimes referred to as a reminder of better times in their own life.

However, severe structural problems in the Portuguese economy remained or were worsened throughout this period, among which the most damaging were arguably the very low stock of qualifications in the active population and a highly asymmetrical development of the economic fabric. Indeed, entrance in the EEC led to the destruction of higher skilled heavy industry sectors – such as metallurgy – and concentrated Portuguese industrial activity in sectors relying on low-skilled workforce such as construction, textiles, clothing and footwear. Hasty privatization and deregulation of the Portugal financial sector further fuelled the growth of private debt which would play a central role in the current crisis.

The international crisis of 2002-3 would mark the end of this period. GDP stagnated and unemployment began creeping up. The Portuguese economy struggled under the double pressure of an overvalued Euro and the opening to international markets in sectors in which Portugal had specialized in the previous two decades – such as textile, clothing and footwear. Internal demand, particularly of public and private services and construction provided some relief. The later owed both large public investments in infrastructures and also a housing boom, fuelled by very low interest rates and heavy borrowing from Central European banks by the Portuguese banking system.

The rapid decline in birth rates felt in the previous two decades – owing to families' strategies for avoiding poverty and fostering intergenerational upward social mobility - started taking its toll, with an ageing population pyramid forcing successive revisions of social protection schemes.

Social dialogue took large strides in the late 1990s with agreements on key sectors such as education, safety and health at work, but lost momentum in 2002. Growing unemployment began eroding the basis for families' strategies of taking double jobs, further accentuating the impact of low wages. With anaemic economic growth and stagnated salaries, the previous decade's improvements in living standards was in jeopardy.

Struggling with low popularity levels, Prime Minister Durão Barroso accepted the invitation to take over the Presidency of the European Commission, and left his position. A few months later, a new centre-right government would fall and general elections took place.

The centre-left Socialist Party won the 2005 general election with a single-party majority. The new government, with José Sócrates as Prime Minister, would push forward a strategy based on technological modernization – of which the more visible outcomes were the generalization of internet and computer access at school level and the development and expansion of the renewable energy network – and strong investment in science and education.

Of particular interest to our study was the implementation of a vast programme of adult education, which covered nearly 2 million adults and allowed the certification of around 700 000 adults with lower and upper secondary levels in the following four years – including three of our interviewees. A strong push for vocational education also allowed the early school leaving rates to quickly fall after a decade on a plateau around 40,0%. In 2005, early school leaving rate were still 38,4%. By 2011, it had dropped to 23,0% and would continue to fall in the following years, reaching 13,7% in 2015. Also pertinent to our study was the reform in social security, and specifically the introduction of a means-tested extra complement for lower

pensions – the Elderly Solidarity Complement – which had a significant impact in at-poverty risks for over-65s and benefitted some of our older interviewees.

The strategy of selective public investment was a moderate success. In 2007, on the eve of the crisis, GDP had grown by 2,5% and public deficit was at a mere 2,7% and public debt stabilized at 68% of GDP. These indicators, however, would change drastically with the onset of the global financial crisis.

Initially though, the crisis did not represent a substantial change in the policy outlook. Indeed the ongoing policies were in tone with the orientations of the European Council and further economic stimulus packages were put forward - included public funding lines for troubled banks and firms, easier access for unemployment benefit and also the reinforcement in programmes of public works, focussing heavily on the revamping of public infrastructure. Naturally, such packages implied an increased public deficit, but allowed for securing economic and social balance. However, this strategy would be undercut by the European sharp turn for austerity in mid-2010.

The Socialist government was forced to negotiate successive austerity packages with the European Commission. These packages undermined economic recovery and boosted unemployment. The fourth of these package would be rejected in parliament, thus triggering a call for financial assistance from an ECB-IMF-EC Troika and the fall of the government. Elections were held and a coalition of right wing parties – including a now much more radical Social Democratic Party - took office.

The new government, led by the new Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho, attributed the causes of the Portuguese economy not to the international crisis, but to profligacy of the socialist governments and to the dictum of a country that “was living above its means”. It embraced austerity not as an external imposition but as a full-blown political project, proclaiming, in a famous speech, that his government was willing and eager to go “far beyond the Troika”.

It thus adopted a strategy of “frontloading”, that is of implementing straight away cuts that were planned for the entire duration of the Troika assistance programme. This translated into generalized cuts in wages and funding for public services – particularly in education, but also in health care.

Pensions were reduced and social transfers were restricted – including key ones for fighting poverty, such as the minimum guaranteed income and the elderly solidarity complement – at the peak of the crisis. The government also implemented significant changes to labour legislation, increasing working hours and reducing compensations for lawful dismissals, while also suspending the planned increases minimum wage that had been agreed with all social partners back in 2006. An aggressive privatization plan targeted the remaining public - including public transportation and water supply companies – while corporate tax rates were significantly lowered.

Unemployment soared to record levels, peaking at 17,5% in early 2013 while poverty rates inverted a declining trend for the first time since 1974. Emigration spiked, surpassing 1960s levels and acquiring new features. No longer restricted to peasants and low-skilled workers, emigration now included swathes of highly qualified workers, with a considerable number of those who had benefitted from the growth in higher education frequency in the previous 20 years.

In sum, an underdeveloped country mired in war and under the yoke of a dictatorship started a process of “Europeanization” after the Revolution in 1974, following a non-linear but nevertheless clear catch-up the new partners in the EU. What we could call an unfinished modernization process changed economic, political and social structures and allowed an improvement of the living conditions of the population, including the poor. This process started to slow-down smoothly in 2002 and was interrupted afterwards after the crisis of 2007/2008 and mainly after the austerity program imposed to Portugal by the troika formed by ECB, EC and IMF, which hardly reverberated in institutions, groups and the middle and working class (including poor) families.

3. Earlier life experiences and household's ability to cope and bounce back

In this chapter, the relationship between life experiences, narratives of hardship and practices of coping will be analysed from two perspectives. First, we'll focus on how this crisis was experienced and how it manifested in the lives of the respondents, with particular attention to the relationship of continuity or rupture in relation to their life paths. Secondly, the analysis will focus on the role that life experiences have on the set of practices and coping strategies developed at the household level.

3.1. Narratives and perceptions of the crisis

The first analytical dimension seeks to answer two questions: (1) whether this crisis was qualitatively different from periods of hardship previously experienced by families; and (2) the extent to which past experiences facilitated or hindered the current experience of hardship.

On the first question, a common trace from the interviews is precisely the distinctive character of this crisis compared to periods of hardship previously experienced. This can be explained partly by the fact that the current crisis was particularly hard, is still being experienced, and also the all-encompassing nature of this crisis, which has been institutionalized as the reference framework for the public and political debate. However, interview analysis allowed us to identify a unique feature of this crisis from the perspectives of respondents, which refers to the loss of effective capacity of families to generate income.

In fact, the systemic nature of the crisis and consequential policy responses represented for most families and workers a reduction in employment opportunities and a decrease in the overall value of work. Among families interviewed we identified a set of phenomena, such as: reduction of wages and increased working hours; effective lack of access to paid work (be it formal, non-formal or informal); more difficulties creating income from home production (mainly due to the lack of demand); and reduced social benefits (associated with increased obligations of beneficiaries to be eligible). In this regard, the following quotes are illustrative:

JU/L talking about having the whole family together for Christmas:

"No, not now. Formerly it was, but not now. (...) I don't know, because of the crisis, I don't know. In the old days it was always that way, not now, since two, three years ago... (...) In the old days it was that way many times, many times. Also on Sunday, I gathered all of them, the family. Not now, I don't know why... (...) Yes, yes, now we don't are much in that way, it was better in the old days. Because of having a job. All of them worked and then the weekend gathered all. Not now." (JU/L/R1)

ML/L referring to mutual aid systems between emigrants:

"Before, there were jobs. Lately there isn't work. No one goes to hire you on one job because no one also has a job. If you don't have, you can't help." (ML/L/R1)

AR/L reflecting on the psychological effects of unemployment:

“At the time I began to stop eating meat and fish, I only ate when I went to my parent’s house and all that, that’s it. And I started to have problems, epileptic fits, due to nervous system and to the stress... [It was the question] of wanting and can’t do it: being useless. Wanting to surpass the crisis and not being able to do it. And now I’m being followed by one psychologist and by one psychiatrist at Amadora Hospital... It was the issue of the job, that I couldn’t find one. Of always receiving no for an answer. Felt useless. I had the suicidal thought. I wanted to put a steak on my son’s plate and I didn’t have it. Put only pasta. That’s it. And I won’t bear it [emotional voice]... No, now it passed. It passed a little more. It passed more. But I had one phase that was too much complicated, really complicated, really complicated indeed. Right now, it’s this way, things are a little more controlled.” (AR/L/R1)

Equally interesting is to read the contrast in the narratives compared to previous, in which the perception of affluence and the agency is directly linked to employment.

AR/L about her job changes during the 1980s and 1990s:

“At that time, they didn’t look at anything. They hired us, they tell us to do one brushing or one haircut or whatever, well, they hired us immediately. It was so easy... One day I left one hairdresser, on the next day I was in another one.” (AR/L/R1)

GE/L on his most recent employment history:

“When Expo [98] happened, there was the expo, there was the subway... I had a lot of work. If I wanted, I could get three or four bosses in one day. Then it started to fail, year two thousand, two thousand and something, already. Sometimes I managed a small job, it was at the contractors. Then I stayed for one month or two months. After that I stopped. I was spending little money. I had to spend more than the money I already had saved. Until this thing of the crisis happened. And now it’s all ruined.” (GE/L/R1)

PE/L about the life he had when he was employed in construction:

“After that, this boss, this same boss – I ended up to work three years with this same boss, with him and with Danilo. Exactly. Because after that, they won a major public contract, the Tâmega contract, with engineer Vitorino, so they really needed me... I met other cultures, other folks. I Lived in Vendas de Grijó when we were working at the Carvalhos toll. At night we went to explore the place, we went to play snooker, we went there or there were was that disco before Santa Maria da Feira, the... what was the name? It was “bicanço” or “picanço” or something like that. Then we went to play snooker in a man’s place that is really in Vendas de Grijó, which is Zé of snooker. Hey, it was completely different. And when employment or jobs exist, everything is completely different!” (PE/L/R1)

The loss of possibability by families to generate income has had as direct consequences the sharp increase in (1) dependence of households in relation to external support (e.g. social transfers from the welfare state, local social services from the state, the institutional network of social solidarity and informal social networks) and (2) social vulnerability levels (increasing health risks, particularly among women, long-term unemployment, family conflicts, loss of assets and properties, etc.). Thus, the most distinctive features among the families interviewed is how the cut in access to income limited their agency capacity and the increasing levels of social exclusion, particularly as a result of atomization and social isolation.

The second question, which refers to the relationship between a history of hardship and the coping capacity under the current crisis, implies a dual response, where the first part refers to the subjective perception of the crisis and the second part to its objective experience.

Regarding the subjective impact, in the case of families characterized by trajectories of poverty, deteriorating living conditions were experienced in quantitative terms, as the worsening of situations and contexts that were already precarious and difficult before. In turn, among households that recently fell into poverty, the crisis represented a qualitative change, a sharp rupture on their lifestyles and future aspirations. The following quotes show those different experiences:

AS/L talks about the changes on their patterns of consumption:

“Before, we went to the market and bought the usual things, the fundamental ones, and didn’t notice it on the wallet as now. Now, I’m going to the supermarket and there are things that I even don’t look at, I go at the distance in the corridor. It really is the basic, what is need in the everyday. I arrive at home and I don’t have anything, the money doesn’t justify the purchase when I look to it. And sometimes I left half of the things at the register. That makes me anxious. I keep looking at the ticket to see if there is any mistake, but no. Everything is there. It’s very complicated.” (AS/L/R1)

In turn CL/L, referring to the impact of her work accident and her husband's job loss on the family, tells a more gradual process:

“We didn’t felt much the crisis at that time; our biggest problem was him [the husband] to get unemployed at the time that I had the accident. During these two years I didn’t receive anything. If the insurance company had been supportive, or even the social security, we could get things more balanced. If so, my eldest daughter wouldn’t need to drop some school subjects to work and help me, as she did. Maybe the oldest would had continued to study and at least got the 12th degree. Maybe the options would be others. Unfortunately, everything happened at the same time. All of our bad luck happened at the same time. It was all in the space of those months. It was a chain of events that brought us to the state we are today.” (CL/L/R1)

In what relates to the objective impacts, families that recently have fallen into poverty proved to have more resources and support networks, which allowed them to better resist the constraints imposed on them and to transition gradually to the new situation. In families with accumulated paths of poverty, highly dependent on income earned through work, the loss of access to income represented in several cases the sudden drop into a social emergency situation.

EL/L talks about the differences between hardship amongst Portuguese and immigrants:

“I have the impression that the Portuguese aren’t the only ones who suffer. I think that us, immigrants, also suffer. I know that the Portuguese suffer but they already have their own life. They have a house, they have jobs. And I think in those who don’t have a house; with this crisis related to employment, and in that concern I see it very big, in the jobs domain. But we can, even with the crisis, survive.” (EL/L/R1)

CA/G tells how her parents help her financially when her income from work wasn’t enough to meet expenses:

“I count a lot with my parents help. Despite of working many hours – the business isn’t good that way -, I count with them; I eat at their house, me and my daughter... They don’t let me lack anything, to me and to her. She has swimming classes; presently they pay the swimming classes. If she needs shoes, if she needs clothes, they buy. It’s a great help I have.” (CA/G/R1)

The current crisis thus represented a turning point in life’s trajectories of all households, manifesting itself both directly and/or indirectly. For example, NV/L was forced to close his business in sales due to lack of demand, while CL/L’s husband was fired due to the elimination of his job (in the sequence of alterations in labor law), both being directly impacted by the crisis. In turn, LO/L has had a work accident before the crisis and when she returned to work (in 2011) found fewer job opportunities and decreasing working conditions, while CA/G had to accept poor working schedules (driving a cab) and to rely on her parents to help her raise her young daughter, after breaking up with her partner and moving back to her home town.

3.2. Life experiences and coping strategies

In this subchapter we will explore how accumulated experiences throughout life (knowledge, values, skills, networks, etc.) are strategically called by households to cope with contexts of hardship. First we will give an account of the relative weight that these experiences have on the income generated by households, and secondly, we will approach how these experiences materialize into coping strategies.

A major characteristic that stands out in the Portuguese interviews is the importance of paid work. Although unemployment is a characteristic shared by all households, in most of them there’s at least one adult working full time. That income almost always represents the main source of revenue for the family, even though not being enough to fulfil its consumption needs. In most cases, subjects work full time and with a fixed-term contract. There are not many cases of multiple jobs from one household member. Instead we found many situations in which various members of the household contribute to the overall budget. The existence of unpaid labour is also residual, usually taking the form of volunteering for future remuneration and the respective formal job integration.

However, as mentioned in the previous section, there is a general tendency of devaluation of labour. Almost every interviewee that lost his job when re-employed did it in a job with a lesser status or in a devalued position in the same job, following a trend of depreciation of the employment status from the previous employment career.

LO/L and PE/L share their experience:

“[At backing to look for a job in 2010, after an AVC] There wasn’t [work] It was in that time when many Brazilian women came to here, cheap labour. Even as a cleaning job, we already earn eight euros by hour. We fall drastically to five euros by hour. It was really moving backwards. And then I said: “If now I’m going, to clean up a house, if I’m going...” I tried everything: domestic, cleaning jobs – I looked everywhere. I didn’t like the price, I didn’t go... Now, I, I’m going to be there two, three, hours cleaning, polishing – even to do cleanings jobs you must like to do it. It’s not working by obligation or because you need money. At least I face the kitchen, I face the cooking – but I always do everything that I do with love. I like to do what

I do. And there, but they want multitasked people. So, I wasn't the cooker. I was the cooker, I was the cupbearer, I was the cleaning lady, I was everything." (LO/L/R1)

"I've been doing community service here in the parish council of Mina. And so it was when I met this one here who is in charge of the parish council. And he told me: "Look, you're almost finishing the time that you came here to pay to the court. If anything happens, do you accept to come work here with a contract? Hey, you don't need to do nothing." But I never thought I could be exploited in the way as I am to be, right? But well. And it is a thing made by the parish council, which is a local authority, and the Job Centre, isn't it? They put us there, we do not have equipment. We don't have anything! (...) Neither boots! I had to be the one who bought the boots and they don't want to give me back the money. I have no right to holidays, I have no right to holiday pay, and I have no right to unemployment benefits, now I'm going to unemployment." (PE/L/R1)

Also, this trend is articulated with cuts on the revenue provided from work, both direct (via smaller wages) and indirect (via increases in taxes), which should be put in context with the increase of unemployment during this decade.

In this environment families have to explore alternative sources to generate income and alternative consumption practices. The main resources called by families to the development of these practices are precisely past experiences, that is, the knowledge, skills and networks that they have accumulated throughout life. Thus, class background also comes into play regarding coping practices, setting the resources and boundaries to adjustments in their ways of life.

This phenomenon is consistent with households exploring and using every type of resources that are available on their resilience processes, either directly or indirectly. By exploring these resources, households to convert them into income or into goods that can replace consumption needs. This kind of practices by themselves are not enough to replace paid work or to compensate losses in social transfers by the State, but in most cases – regardless of the relative weight they represent in the household budget – they are vital to secure the minimum standards of living.

The three main types of alternative sources for generating income and/or of consumption are:

1. Household production for own consumption;
2. Support provided from safety networks;
3. Employments search through the exploration of personal and social skills.

Household production/work for own consumption or generating income has little expression in the selected cases. In what relates to generating income, most cases identified in this research are related with individuals that were forced to retire from the job market, but still work occasionally and informally in jobs related to their professional past. ML/L occasionally helps in construction works, while AR/L maintains her professional skills as a hairdresser to her family and to a small group of clients, most of them elder women, being compensated almost symbolically.

Even though having little expression in the selected cases, it plays a key role in the patterns of consumption. Using private or public land – either legally or illegally –, households work to produce vegetables and fruit and, in some cases, raising livestock in small quantities, becoming

the basis of household consumption regimes, particularly in what relates to food consumption. Despite the high investment, it doesn't allow to turn it into a form of revenue, by selling goods to the public or to a cooperative. Other sources of home production are residual.

GE/L, RO/G and NS/G talk about their home productions and the importance in their patterns of consumption:

"Now I'm receiving the minimal income, I mean, the Social Integration Income. They pay me one hundred and eighty eight euros and fifteen cents. As I have a kitchen garden, I take some potatoes (...) I'm here, I can work. [I grow] Potatoes, cabbages and onions, garlic. And (...) I grow up little beans, like this, those red beans. It's only for me. I could give some cabbages. Or I could have a little more of potatoes. But to sell, they don't buy, they don't even buy. (GE/L/R1)

"I have a little vegetable garden. It's only things for the house. It's for him [RO/G's husband] to entertain himself, it's some cabbages, some lettuces. I have there orange trees (...) If wasn't this, then the things would really be bad." (RO/G/R1)

"I have a vegetable garden that has potatoes, has green beans. Still today I wake up by 5:30/6 am because I knew that you're going to come. I stayed there watering and doing something else. My everyday life is like this. (...) I don't sell anything because it's too small. Sometimes I give it to my neighbours. For example, now it's the season of zucchinis. There is those... grapes, for example, they don't come in quantity enough to sell." (NS/G/R1)

In many cases, the use of alternative production practices is done indirectly. It's not members from the household unit who engage in these activities, but their close family and neighbors' network, which provide them with goods and/or assets to meet their consumption needs. We call this type of social phenomenon "intra-family redistribution network".

Besides money transfers (that are not considered in this type of practices), 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, with the exception of immigrants. Indeed the only extended networks of gift outside the nuclear family that we came across in our sample were those of immigrants.

Thus, networks and support structures are an important resource for the survival of families. Against a backdrop of lacking resources, and insufficient income earned by paid work, families are heavily dependent on resources that they can obtain from the support networks they can access. These formal and informal networks are not employed to bring more comfort to families, but are employed to satisfy immediate expenses and needs.

CL/L tells how her parents in law provide vegetables regularly to their household:

"My luck was my parents in law, who live in Castelo Branco, 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)

AR/L talks about how her both 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 Ivo. If it’s enough, we don’t ask for Ivo’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)

CA/G mentioning the help from her parents regarding supermarket supply:

“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/L/R1)

The last type of resources refers to the personal and social skills of individuals. Searching for protecting their target income, individuals explore all the skills and/or abilities they developed in their life trajectories to find jobs or other forms of work. For instance, PE/L took advantage of being a good cook, accepting temporarily working for free in a café, in order to later get employed there; while RO/G and her husband started to work on the backyard land as a hobby, and nowadays use it to produce vegetable gardens and raise a few stock.

A particularly interesting aspect of this type of practice is that the convening of skills learned throughout life has no purpose for creating a business or replacement of paid work. Rather, the main purpose for exploring this tacit knowledge is the later employability. Example of this is the residual nature of unpaid labour, usually taking the form of volunteers for future compensation and formal integration at work. These practices, following the same logic as the previous types, also assumes a role of income supplement, although in most cases this is done occasionally and with an informal status in disqualified jobs as cleaning, catering or delivering care for dependents (usually elders).

LO/L telling about the period in which she worked and received in kind:

“Yes. All in school and all still minors. But at that time... then, I started looking for a job. I went to speak, I got a job as, there, in a day-school, cooking. I mean, I wanted the better to my children. I mean, they studied there. And I paid with the meal. I cooked at home and supply to them. I paid their studies and still received something more.” (LO/L/R1)

Later, LO/L’s cooking skills became a business:

“I open, I rent a barbecue restaurant... I rented it by the parish council of Mina. Because, it’s this way; since I had the accident, I couldn’t find a job. Because, while working, I must, when the pain came, seat, pass the cream, take the medication to stop the pain and continue to work again. I can’t do hours in a row... Since I’m the owner, one of the owners, now I can.” (LO/L/R1)

AR/L describing her clients:

“But the deal is; we must have one bill of clients. Now, since I have been all this time without working. I keep working. I’m going to be honest; I keep working at home... And I also go to their houses, to go; I do that to the old people. Disabled people, I even go to one or another

retirement home to cut the hair to people who are there... I do it to those persons. One of them does colour. I put the dye, buy the products, and do the dying. But I made very low prices, right? Well, it's one help that it's just for me and is a favour that I do to the older people, because them, the poor ones, also are retired, isn't it right? At the retirement home, precisely the same thing. They give me two euros and a half or three euros and that's a help. But I just go to the retirement once on three months period." (AR/L/R1)

The main shared characteristic of these practices is that, while they are recently activated in the context of the crisis, they basically recover and reproduce traditional practices and ways of life. Thus, coping practices have less to do with developing innovation and more to do with exploring known and accessible resources, networks and knowledge.

The lack of assets and property is one of the most salient findings from the interview analysis. The majority of households don't own any significant assets – a characteristic that is particularly pronounced in Lugarão – and when so, it's usually housing and/or a car. Only NS/G and TJ/G own some small portions of land. Both these cases were middle class families pulled into poverty by the crisis and its effects. In the first case due to retirement and the increase of household members (NS/G, recently, is taking care of his two adult grandchildren); in the second case conflicts in the family enterprises led to his dismissal and withdrawal from family. On the other end, immigrants – both newcomers and established – do not hold almost any assets, living from the income generated each month.

The analysis of resilience processes reflects the tendency of households to mobilize all their available assets and resources to find solutions to current situations of hardship. Its noticeable how families that have fallen recently into poverty (and still hold some assets), can still manage their situation and get by. But, the longer they are in this situation the more vulnerable and at risk they get. Families without assets mostly fell in a situation of absolute survival, with no means to even establish short or medium term plans.

MM/L e AS/L referring to the lack of resources of the most vulnerable:

"The concern is huge! Huge. And when appears one bad thing, it's worse than a bomb that explodes at the top of one person's head. It's said that doesn't has to save. The person doesn't have anything. Stays here thinking every day, doesn't sleep. Goes to bed, puts the hand on the head and doesn't sleep. And when, tomorrow, if I don't have a job, what am I going to do? My concern is huge! That is, if one person doesn't have a house, doesn't have anything. Street. My concern is awful. It's awful." (MM/L/R1)

"[To whom the crisis affects more...] Mostly to those who have less. I practically always lived in crisis, because what was left always was very few, but I could buy a little treat to my son. Now I don't do it. I think the crisis, namely after counted the cents, became more hard because even one thing is more cheap twenty cents, those make a difference. I think that people, who don't have it, see it more." [AS/L/R1]

So, the shapes resilience processes take are not so directly related to life experiences, but instead are more aligned with the resources that households can mobilize and by the opportunities available, particularly on employment.

With this approach we are not rejecting the role of experiences accumulated over a lifetime. On the contrary, our goal is precisely to integrate these experiences as part of the capital of the subject or household, converting these experiences into recourses available for subjects

and households. Only by analysing the (socio)economic capital of households in an articulated perspective with life courses – which translate into other forms of capital, like cultural or symbolic –, we can understand the diversity and strategic influence of past experiences in resilience processes.

4. Turning points, resources and networks

The concept of turning point was one that posed some challenges to our analysis – the most important of which was how to assess the importance of different events in regards to interviewee’s life trajectories. We thus quickly felt the need to distinguish between two modalities of turning points. The first modality comprises events whose impact is strongly delayed in time. For instance, one leaving school at an early age to follow an occupation can result in more difficulties in finding a job several years later. The second modality is composed by what we deemed “shocks”, that is events whose disruptive consequences were felt across several aspects of one’s life in a short time frame. Given the focus of our work on resilience processes – and thus on sudden transformations of ways of life in response to shocks – we opted to focus the second modality.

The data from the interviews in Portugal allowed for the identification of four major types of turning points in this second sense:

- Ending a relationship, either through separation or divorce
- Losing one’s job, either through forced dismissal or voluntary resignation
- Migrations to, within and out of the country.
- Suffering an accident or falling ill – either physically or psychologically.

4.1. Separations and divorce

The end of relationship or marriage qualifies as a shock that may trigger resilience processes. In our sample, we have found two main contexts for separation. The first was the breaking point on a relationship that had a long history of physical abuse. A particularly graphical description of continuous violence and abuse is provided by CL/L and is presented in chapter 6. Other cases are also very much present in our sample. EL/L, a Brazilian immigrant accounts for her first separation, in the early 2000s, still back in Brazil:

“At that time I lived with my children. And their father used to insult me and beat me in front of them. He was very aggressive and did not respect me. It was a terrible situation and was hurting my children. I lived with him for some ten years until I got fed up with it.” (EL/L/R1)

LO/L , who lived in another city at the time, also accounts for episodes leading to her separation in the early 2000s in similar terms:

“He hurled himself against the door, cracked it and came tumbling inside the house - and then began smacking me left and right... I had to leave everything behind. I had to run away from home!” (LO/L/R1)

A second context of separation was the lack of emotional satisfaction in the relationship, manifesting itself in either through of a new partner or simply the need to move on. TE/G accounts for her dwindling sense of fulfilment with her relationship:

“[I had] a good house, a good car and a good TV. In spite of it, I found out that this was not what I wanted. There was something missing. I pondered deeply, as I earned less than 500€ [a month] at the time... Even so, I thought I could manage on my own. So I decided to end my relationship and start anew one, just me and my son. There wasn’t... I mean he [the ex-partner] was an excellent person to my son – absolutely impeccable... It was [about] me. There was no

reason in particular. I just wanted peace, to find myself again and stay away from confusions” (TE/G/R1)

In the case of CA/G, who had left Gótica in 2007 to follow her husband to his hometown in the North of the country, her difficulties in adaptation compounded the deterioration of emotional attachment

“When I got back to Gótica [after the separation]? I felt like I had become ten years younger!... It was all about personal feelings. Or better, I don’t know if it was because of feelings or if I just had to turn things around. Because I just couldn’t stand living up there anymore – that much I know.” (CA/G/R1)

Separations are often accompanied by a sudden drop in disposable income as well the need to relocate. In the case of women in our sample, this situation is compounded by the fact that they kept the guard of their children and thus had to continue to provide for them with dwindling resources.

The case of breakups of relationships with a history abuse is particularly drastic in this regard, with separation itself taking the form of their home. This is the case of CL/L

“I restarted my life practically from scratch. I ran from home with my daughters by the hand and nothing but the clothes I was wearing... He kept everything. Including the trousseau my mother made for me when I was little – he kept it all. Photographs... everything!” (CL/L/R1)

Though in a very different context, AR/L narrated how she had no choice but to search for a new home following the breaking up of her second relationship – in itself an interesting case because it also points out the differences in legal treatment between marriage and domestic partnerships still prevalent at the time (2001).

“He left and went to live with that other [woman]... But the house [where we lived] wasn’t mine and we were not married. He had bought it with a special youth loan and didn’t put my name on the deed. I went to three lawyers to see if I had right to something, at least from the bar [he owned]. Nothing. I was given nothing! Not even with our son as proof. Just because we didn’t file Income Tax as a couple.” (AR/L/R1)

A further problem for two of interviewees was being left saddled with debt because of the actions of their former partners.

“As my daughters’ parent is this very good person, he managed to contract debts of 10 000 € in my name! My reprieve was that I had changed my signature right after I separated from him. I had to go to court several times to prove that that was not my signature. As the [loan] contracts had been made after I had changed my ID card, well... I did have to pay judicial costs but not all debts. I still had to pay some, mind you.” (CL/L/R1)

“What a clanger I made, when I took a loan for him to pay his debts. And he, when I left, left me saddled with 354€ [a month]... It was up to him to pay. I left in April. He paid it until December – and then he stopped paying. 354€ every month! He was left with everything paid. The car was paid, the motorbike was paid - I feel like laughing now – the central heating at home was paid. So tell me: am I a nice person or what?” (CA/L/R1)

We identified four main types of responses to this sudden drop in income, debt and loss (immediate or deferred) of housing: getting a second (and even a third) job to compensate for lost income; relying on parents or friends for providing financial support and housing; relying on former partners for the same effect; and applying for social benefits.

Taking additional jobs is not specific strategy to deal with sudden shocks such as a separation. It is also a common way for low-income families to compensate for the very low wages that are practiced in Portugal – and perhaps the one that was more compromised by the effects of the crisis, such as the fast rise in unemployment. AR/L refers to having a double job as way to compensate for increasing expenses after her first separation in the mid-1980s. Likewise, LO/L took up three jobs after her separation in the early 2000s. Note also that this excerpts also reveal how family and neighbours were mobilized to allow for engagement in this type of strategy – in this case, by providing child-rearing.

“I had to get a [second] job at a cleaning company to help my parents, because they didn’t have a lot of money. My mother took care of the child – it was her that practically raised him... I worked in that company [in the morning] and then I worked as a hairdresser from three in the afternoon to eleven in evening. I had two jobs.” (AR/L/R1)

“Because I had five [children] and a little baby to take care of. And he [the former husband] said: “if you leave this house, you won’t see a penny!” And I was not going to turn to begging, was I? So what was I to do? At a certain point, I managed to have three jobs at the same time. I was working at the fish market and then I came to work as a head cleaner at the hospital... And I also cleaned houses for a lady on weekends. So, these were the three [jobs] I could handle. ... I had a neighbour who is also my friend. I would leave them [the children] cooked food and everything [ready] at home. Then my neighbour, she held the bits and pieces at home.” (LO/L/R1)

Parents and friends were not mobilized just as preconditions for other responses to take place but also to provide directly for resources such as housing. Two cases of CL/L and TE/G are very interesting in this regard, as they not only illustrate this solution but also its limits and problems they entailed.

“I love my mother, and she was one of the persons that helped me most in my life. When I separated, I went to live with her. She had works at home made so that I wouldn’t lose my daughters... My mother’s house is rented from the time I was born. My mother pays some 20-something euros of rent. While my father was alive, he said “I won’t pay for works in house that is not mine.”... It’s a basement, yes... It was like this: the kitchen was supposed to have this marble workbench. It didn’t. It only went halfway – the other half was replaced by a wooden plank. The hallway had a wooden floor. If you stepped on one end of a bat, the other would come right up. It was dangerous for her and also for me and my daughters. And their father new about this. When we went to court, he used this to try to take away my daughters. I said we would do the reparation works and the court gave us a deadline to finish them – or else it would take my daughters away on housing conditions grounds. We did the reparation works and I ended up keeping the full custody of my daughters.” (CL/L/R1)

“I decided to go that to my mother’s house. And then, well, it turned really bad. I had to make works in the house my mother had in [village], to make it meet the lowest of minimums... I thought it would be easier because I wouldn’t be paying rent and would have no extra expenses. It was the opposite. I had to take a loan that ruined my life (laughs). Because the money was not enough and the works had to be finished. I had to pay the men that were there

– I would never in my life be left owing them. It was very tough period. So I took that loan and paid almost 200 € a month. And that was... it wasn't in my plans, you know? It derailed my life completely.” (TE/G/R1)

Friends were also called upon to provide for housing. This was the case of LO/L, who found shelter for her and her children at a friends' house right after leaving her husband and also that of EL/L's:

“I lived there [in the South of Portugal] for four years. When we separated I came here [to Lugarão]. I could have returned to Brazil, but I didn't. I thought: “If I leave and then I want to come back, what will I do? I won't be able to return. Now that I'm here, I'll stay here!”... My ex-husband even bought a passage for me. But, when the day came, I backed off. I went to a friend and stayed at her house for a period.” (EL/L)

Former partners could also be an important factor in responding to shock – either by their actions or omissions. In some cases, the former someone to where interviews could turn to. AR/L's former partner was instrumental in how she solved her problem with housing, helping her getting a new place to live.

“I told him: “I will only leave this house when I have a proper place to live for me and your son. Without that, I won't leave. And you will pay for it, because I won't pay anything. The only thing I'll pay is food for me and your son and the telephone bill. I won't pay anything else. The house is yours – so you pay for it!”. “It was always like that” he said. And he kept his word... A year later, I managed to buy a little one-room apartment... And he was very helpful. It was him who bought some of the electrical appliances and payed the estate agency so I could get a loan from the bank. So, in this regard, he was impeccable... He failed in our relationship but he did respect me and my son.” (AR/L/R1)

However, there were several cases in our sample where former husbands or partners dragging or altogether eschewing even legally mandatory support:

“The father of my daughter?! The first thing he did when I submitted the request to the court for child allowance was to quit his job. He just quit! Then he joined up with another woman and left for France. I think he now lives in [French city]. [There's] nothing for his daughter – not even for her birthday or for Christmas...” (FA/G/R1)

The allowance he gives to his daughter should fall [into bank account] until the eighth day of each month. But instead falls on the fifteenth, twentieth...” (CA/G/R1)

“You can't imagine for how long I have been trying [to get child allowance] (laughs). In other countries, he would have to pay or would be jailed or something...When he got a job in some firm, the court would go after him and send a letter to his boss. So he would quit... Nowadays, I just want to get something for the two that are still minors. One is 14 and the other 11. But, now that I opened a business, I doubt I will ever get anything.” (LO/L/R1)

Finally, it is worth pointing out that, in two cases, – such EL/L and AC/L – the impact on available income was so severe that led to application for social benefits to compensate for lost income, and particularly Minimum Guaranteed Income.

4.2. Losing one's job

The loss of one's job and the closure of one's business is the second major turning point we have identified in our interviewees' life stories. This is one type of turning point over which the current crisis bears a particular weight. Indeed, we had several instances of job loss in our interviewees' biographies prior to the crisis. What distinguished the more recent ones was how difficult it was for our interviewees to find a job. Indeed, in some of our cases, it is the prolonged inability to find a new job that constitutes the shock, rather than the initial dismissal or resignation.

A few events of job loss in our sample are thus closely related to the economic crisis. This is the case of NO/G and PE/L, whose employing firms closed, of TJ/G, whose small firm was forced into closure because of dwindling revenues. In turn MM/L, a former housemaid described how she was accused of stealing by her bankrupted employers, an accusation she believes was a means for them not to pay compensation for her dismissal:

"I went along fine with my employers. And I thought they liked me too. So when they decided to fire me, I couldn't understand what was going on. One day, she [the employer] got home and just started screaming and screaming to me – and then she fired me... Had she just spoken to me and said "MM/L, I can't pay you anymore, so you'll have to leave", all would be solved and I wouldn't go to court. But it was she that went to court. She didn't want to pay me. And in the end, she admitted to the court that she wasn't able to pay herself because she had just filed for bankruptcy. Had she told me... there would be no problem. It wouldn't have hurt my feelings so much – because it did." (MM/L)

The worsening of working conditions in the context of the crisis is also a factor that comes to light in the case of MR/L and her decision to quit her job:

"[The crisis] did change things a lot. I had to leave my job in 2010. I was working at a bakery. But they didn't fire me - it was I who quit. They wanted me to make night shifts too, to go and work every night. And I didn't want that. At that time, my son was too young." (MR/L/R1)

Another case to which the crisis bore a strong influence was that of CL/L. In her case, a work accident suffered three days before switching employers left her without a contractual binding to any of them. However, this coincided with her husbands' dismissal, allowed by the new labour laws approved in the context of austerity and the troika intervention. This left both unemployed at the same time in 2013.

"Because of the crisis, the new law of dismissals for extinction of work post was put in place. 'Why are we paying so much to this guy when we can just have a kid here on minimum wage? That is good business!'... It's thanks to this crisis that I am where I am. Not because of my own accident but due to my husband's dismissal. They had to find new ways of firing people, so that the employers have fewer expenses..." (CL/L/R1)

In other cases, job loss is not itself related to the crisis. However, it increased her vulnerability when the crisis did hit. For instance, the job loss of AR/L in 2008 was not something new in itself, as she had already switched jobs frequently during her life. However, coupled with the strong ageism in her sector, the crisis meant that it would be her last stable job so far.

"He [the employer] did not behave properly with me. He argued with me in front of the costumers and I think that is unacceptable. I did not put up with it and I told him. As I had the

key to the saloon, I gave it to him and said to him "I am not opening this place anymore!" And, he, as I was on a six-month contract, sent me home. But the saloon also closed shortly afterwards... It was then that it all start going the wrong way... Since then, I had five years on unemployment benefit and I have now been on minimum income for two years. Seven years, in total." (AR/L/R1)

There are other interviewees in comparable situation. MA/L and GE/L are both ageing construction workers whose patches in unemployment were already becoming frequent and getting longer each time before the crisis - reflecting also the slowing down in construction activity during the economic stagnation of the 2000s.

Finally, it is worth pointing out the case of retirees. In this instance, it is not the job loss in itself that is the turning point but instead leaving the job market altogether as a consequence of retirement. We have three interviewees in this situation: RO/L, a former cook in a large firm, NA/G, a former draughtsman and later owner of small factory and NV/L, a shop owner. In the case of the latter two, their retirement meant also the closure of their business, and as we shall see, strong decline in disposable income.

The loss of one's job or the closure of one's business brings with it a decline in income, stemming from lost wages and revenue. Unemployment benefit played a crucial role in smothering this impact for a considerable number of our interviewees, at least in the short and medium term. However, in situations in which the interviewees did not have access to it, decline income was very sharp and disrupting. This was the case of TJ/G, who, as former small business owners did not qualify for unemployment benefit, but also of MM/L, whose employers eschewed their mandatory contributions to Social Security. It was also the case of CL/L, whose unemployment benefit was withheld because she was supposed to be paid by her former employers' accident insurance – but the insurance policy had been cancelled without her knowledge.

Nevertheless, even the deferred consequences can be very strong. PE/L refers to his situation after exhausting the unemployment benefit and then a grant for a training course sponsored by the Job Centre:

"After I finished the course in 2012, I went around, looking for a job. And those were seven or eight really tough months. I ended up without a home. I had a girlfriend living here in [street in Lugarão] back then. It was she who took me in." (PE/L/R1)

In the specific case of immigrants, losing a job also translated into losing their lodgement, which was provided by their employers. This was the case of GE/L., a construction worker who lived in dormitories at the construction yards, and also of MM/L, a recent immigrant who was working as an internal housemaid.

Aside from direct impact on income and housing, the effects of unemployment on mental health were very much conspicuous in our sample, particularly associated with the inability to find a new job. We can see thus how acute stress and anxiety also stem from becoming unemployed and unable to find work.

"At that time, I started crumbling. I started crumbling because my husband was crumbling. I talked to our family doctor about it. My husband couldn't get a job, his unemployment benefit was at an end. He woke at 4 or 5 in the morning. "Oh, go to sleep", "I can't sleep", "But you have to sleep, otherwise you will be banging your head to the walls soon.", "I can't sleep. What

am I going to do with my life?”. It all coincided: my husband breaking, my mother getting ill, I myself failing to get any money – everything was striking me at the same time.” (CL/L)

“When something this bad happens, it’s, like, worse than a bomb that blows over your head... You keep thinking about it all day long and you can’t sleep. You lie down, put your hands on your head and [can’t] even sleep. ‘If I don’t get work tomorrow, what will I do?’” (MM/L)

But unemployment also carries with it the erosion of solidarity bonds forged in the workplace. NO/G is a very good example of this as she makes a point of stressing the differences between what she experienced in the factory where she worked and what she feels now in her new job in a nursing home:

“We still get along well. We worked for 24 years together. Sometimes, you have stronger bonds with your workmates than with your own family. Say, now at the nursing home. I see my colleagues more often than I see some of my aunts or cousins. I am day after day with them... But here at the nursing home it is different. When I left it [the factory], I used to say that what I missed most were my workmates. We stood by each other. But here it’s each one for herself. Really. If there’s a problem, the chief knows straight away. Everything gets known fast. Colleagues are not so good. It was better back there [in the factory]. For instance, if someone made a mistake, we all tried to cover it so that the boss wouldn’t know about it. He would only get to know if there was no way to hide it.” (NO/G/R1)

Prolonged unemployment also deteriorates networks that interviewees used to find jobs. GE/L who worked for a construction company in different periods of his life, accounts for this:

“They used to have works all around the country and even abroad. That’s well over now. A year or so ago I went to where this constructor used to be. He even had a villa. Once, I went there and there were lots of people – and this was at night! And I went there again to see if I could get some work. This was seven years ago. But I didn’t get anything. They had no more openings. They told me to wait. Sometime later, I found the lads [former workmates] and asked them: “are you out of work?” They answered that a few of them were working in Algarve and others were in the North [of the country]. But a lot had been fired. About a year ago, I went there to check. There is nobody there anymore. Where their office used to be, it is now a cell phone shop.” (GE/L/R1)

Responses to the loss of one’s job and continuous inability to find a new one varied considerably in our sample. The main ones that were found in our sample were: applying for benefits; engaging in odd jobs; getting younger family members to work; investing in education and training; and attempting to open a business.

As we have seen, unemployment benefit played a very important part in smothering the impact of job loss. Of our interviewees, AR/L, PE/L, NO/G, AS/L, RO/G, MR/L all received unemployment benefit. Several others also received Minimum Guaranteed Income upon the end of unemployment benefit or when they just couldn’t apply for the latter – as in the case of TJ/G, ML/L, MM/L and AR/L.

Engaging in occasional and informal jobs is also a common response in the lack of a stable job. Thus AR/L currently calls on her hairdressing skills and former clients to gather a small complement to her income. Likewise, ML/L an ageing construction worker from Guinea-Bissau, still finds odd jobs occasionally – although this is something that is increasingly difficult because of his age.

“Sometimes, I get an odd job as a bricklayer. I get it through friends – Guinean, Portuguese, Cape Verdean. Sometimes I get them. But not always and I have to live like this... Financially, I am in great need. There’s no work. And at this age... It’s hard to get a stable job when you’re 66 years old.” (ML/L)

Three of our interviewees took to education and training as a strategy for dealing with unemployment, even if with mixed results. Part of these cases relate to training sponsored by job centres. For instance, MR/L found a job right on finishing her two year training course:

“Actually, it was quite easy. I wasn’t expecting it. I went there to make my internship and they liked me... I was on unemployment benefit and then I made this training course in cooking and baking. Then I went there [to her current workplace] to make my internship. And the lady there told me I could stay on!” (MR/L)

In the case of PE/L, investing in training is still a valued option, even if it was still to deliver gains in terms of employment at the time of our interviews. Having completed the 9th grade in adult education while still employed, he later enrolled in a vocational course between 2010 and 2012:

“Well, I was registered at the job centre. So I asked to be admitted in a vocational course. I went to an interview and sometime afterwards, they asked me for some documents. I gave them the documents and I began attending the course. It lasted two years... I benefitted from a training scholarship... I loved it! And I still have my diploma. It’s a shame the market being as it is. But at least, no-one can take me that away, right? So I can only grow and get better from here.” (PE/L/R1)

CL/L, had also began attending adult education courses after in the mid-2000s. After concluding the 12th grade, she enrolled in college and was about to conclude her first year when the accident that left her without a job took place. Yet, attending college was a project important enough for her to look for a way to pay for tuition fees and not quit:

“I went to work in this canteen. When my son was about a year, my chief there, who is a professor in a High School of Tourism, told me: “You like this so much, why don’t you go to college? You know so much about this area – just go study it”. I talked to my husband and he [said]: “Go, you can make it!” “What about the boy?” “Don’t worry; with my schedule, I can perfectly pick him up from kindergarten after work. Just go!”. So I did the tests for over-23 year-old candidates and... I enrolled in college. In the first year, I had a stable situation at work, so I did not apply for a scholarship. But, on the second, after I had the accident, I went to the services to ask what I needed to do to get a scholarship – and I applied for it. Both this and last year were done thanks to the scholarship. Without the scholarship, I wouldn’t have been able to do it.”(CL/L/R1)

4.3. Accidents, illnesses and injuries

Another important turning point for a considerable number of our interviews were illnesses and injuries from accidents. Work accidents and occupational illnesses in particular featured heavily in some of our narratives.

We already saw how CL/L suffered a fall at her work in a canteen, which left her with a disc hernia which prevented her from walking for several months. As this occurred when she was

just three days away from moving to another firm, her employer declined to take responsibility and she later found out that the accident insurance had been deactivated a few months before – leaving her without a job and in a protracted court battle to receive compensation.

“I became dependent on my husband for everything. For going to the doctor... To take a bath, to eat – everything. I couldn’t sleep at night because of the pain. I began tail spinning. I used to work by day and had college at night. I had my children, my home and my stuff. Things were balanced. Suddenly, he is out of his job and I can’t walk. I can no longer go to college and take care of my life by myself. My safe haven was my little son. He was the reason I kept afloat. It was my son that cheered me up. He got home, picked up his toys, came by me and played with me. He was there all evening long and kept me company. He was two and half at that time. I believe it was because of him that I didn’t sink. It was a very tough period for everyone at home.” (CL/L/R1)

A work accident also played a considerable role in the biography of LO/L. She was working as a cook in a canteen when she fell down the stairs and broke an ankle. The resulting recovery took a year long, with the insurance company pulling out payments before the treatment was completed. The inability to return to previous workloads led her to opt for the opening of a small restaurant by herself, with help from her wife and children.

“I made food for 480 people... In the beginning, I was working 14 to 16 hours a day. I used to enter at seven in the morning and left at nine in the evening. Actually, never at nine – more half past nine, ten hours. To leave everything done. I worked for two days and had two days off. Fast pace always. Always moving around, running down the stairs to open the door to a supplier, running up again to keep cooking. In one of those runs, instead of using all steps, I skipped one – and that was it. I fell... You can’t even imagine how swollen my foot was... I was given discharge [from the hospital] in November 2013 with 20% incapacity to see if I could hold out. I couldn’t. My foot bones didn’t heal. The contusion was so big that there is no cure... They even made an infiltration with my own blood, but it didn’t work.” (LO/L/R1)

Illnesses - both own or of other members of the household - also constituted a turning point for several of our interviewees. Some of these illnesses are occupational in origin. It was the case of AS/L, who contracted a tendinitis while working as a waiter in a restaurant. This has led her to lose her job and a period of six-months to recover and later on patchy career there since.

In turn, LO/L suffered a stroke in the early 2000s, which she attributes to a very heavy workload.

“I was working many hours [a day]. It was a lot of stress. So, what happened? I suffered a mild stroke. My doctor later said: ‘You know what this means? Stop, stop! Change your life! Change your life. You’re leading a far too agitated life. You look like a robot! Stop! Stop!’... I moved back to my friend’s apartment – she is now my wife, by the way. I returned there, my mouth drooping and no more pay check. I still had some money left, but no security at all. My children had to leave private school. No chance of that anymore... I [also] had to give back the keys of the café [she was renting] to the owner.” (LO/L/R1)

Illnesses to other members of the family can also constitute an important shock to families. The wife of JU/L, a Romanian immigrant, was forced into a leg surgery in 2007, which has severely hindered her capacity to move and therefore to work. This happened by the time that JU/L himself, a construction worker, was having increasing difficulties in finding work - thus compounding a situation in which both adults in the household were unemployed and relying on minimum guaranteed income.

“She’s now ill and can’t walk because she’s made this surgery. She was always in pain. Now she has a bandage and can’t walk, so she stays in bed. Now I have to help her. I do everything, like cooking for her... She used to work cleaning houses and also buses for [public transportation company]. She had to leave that too, because of her leg. She wanted to work, but couldn’t. She worked for two or three months with her foot in pain, because she can’t stand in her feet for too long.” (JU/L/R1)

RO/G’s biographical trajectory was influenced by illness in both these ways. Firstly, a spinal injury forced her to quit her job as a cook in 1998. Initially benefitting from successive sickness leaves, she then filed for unemployment benefit before being granted a disability pension in 2003. In 2006, it was her husband that was diagnosed with a bone cancer. The considerable emotional drain was patent in the interview which also precipitated a decrease in the available income in the family and expenses with treatments and travelling from the village to the hospital in Gótica.

4.4. Migrations

Migrations – both internal and international - were yet another turning point for a large number of our interviewees. It should be noted that a significant part of our sample in the urban area of Lugarão was composed by immigrants, which can make for a bias in this regard. Nevertheless, even among a few of our non-immigrant interviewees, migrations – particularly within the national space - played an important part in biographical trajectories.

One point that should be stressed is that the status of migrations as turning points is somewhat different from the others that we have discussed so far. Indeed, migrations constitute a shock which alters individual’s lives in different levels, but are sometimes also a response to other events that would also qualify as turning points.

International migrations in our sample were explained by interviewees mainly as a planned attempt to improve poor living conditions. It was the case of PE/L or JU/L, who left for Portugal from Angola and Romania, respectively. EL/L also left Brazil for Portugal in search for better working conditions than at home.

“I listened to people saying: “It’s Europe. And Portugal is a very good place to work”. I asked myself “Is it really?” I had this curiosity to find out. I had heard that it was good place to earn money and good place to find work... My goal was to provide for a better life for my children... But there’s certain things I saw and I couldn’t make it. Not in the way I had imagined, at least... I thought I could get a job and earn well enough, so that I could send something for them [the children] to buy what they wanted. I used to hear a lot of people saying “Hey, this guy is in Europe, he is earning good money. He already bought a house in Brazil, he has this and that.”

And I think: 'What kind of services do these people do? Can it be just honest services?' Because that is not easy when one has an honest job. Money doesn't fall off the sky!... Of course I suffer because I did not reach my objective of returning and buying a house for me and my children. But, on the other hand, if it is just for suffering, get there and not being able to help my children, then I'd rather remain here alone, knowing that, when I get work, I can send home something and help them." (EL/L/R1)

A 20-year-old LU/G emigrated from his native village near Gótica to Belgium in 1984. He justified this decision with the scarcity of jobs and the short-term contracts associated with the existing ones.

"I had just finished my [compulsory] military service. I left the army in April and I went away [to Belgium] in September. There were very few jobs here – and all were on one-year contracts... When I was 15, I began working for [car workshop] where I learnt car paintwork. The contract ran out and I signed a six-month contract with the [Olive oil company] factory. I was then called up for the Army – and when I finished it, I went there [to Belgium] – where I stood until 2009." (LU/G/R1)

Between our first and second interviews, CL/L's husband decided to emigrate to England, with the support of a cousin who was already established there, and she was seriously considering joining him soon.

"So he made this cooking course, but he was finding nothing but internship after internship. His cousin came to visit us about a month and a half ago. He [the husband] said to him: "Man, this situation is very stressing, very tough. I am thinking of trying something elsewhere". "So why don't you come and join us?". And I said to my husband: "Look, maybe it is for the best that we emigrate. You already had thought about leaving to Germany anyway... And then I told him – because, if the option was to go alone he wouldn't go. I would sooner see myself going than him. He wouldn't go. So I told him: "You have the support of your cousins. Your other cousin is moving there also. Your godson – he is godfather to one of her children - is moving there. The children are all going there. You have help, you have support and you can speak Portuguese at home at the end of the day. What else can you want? [Cousin] says he can find work for you there – you can't have any better!" (CL/L/R2)

A rarer reason put forward by interviewees for emigration was studying. The instances we found are both of Cape Verdean immigrants – though, in both cases these intentions quickly fell by the wayside. In AS/L's case, an early pregnancy is also strongly intermingled in the decision of leaving for Portugal.

"I did the 9th grade in Cape Verde. Then I came here to study, but I never actually went to school, because it was my mother who was helping out with my son [You had your son here in Portugal?]. No, I had a son in Cape Verde, when I was 15. It was my mother who was always there for me. Afterwards, I came here to study but I didn't go to school, so that my mother didn't have to bear all the expenses. And the work schedule was also not suitable. Then I was to study by night, but I have been postponing it until today... At the beginning, I was planning to return [to Cape Verde]. But she didn't want me to return with my son. She wanted that I went back alone, because she thought I would be able to concentrate on studying that way. But I didn't want to go back without my son, so I ended up staying." (AS/L/R1)

"[I came to Portugal] in 1989. I was 9... I came with my aunt. Supposedly, so that I could study during the day and she could study at night. It didn't work out that way. I didn't study. I stood at home to take care of her children – she already had three children back then... She was working as a cook assistant, a cleaner or something like that – I don't remember that well. And she was taking a primary teacher course at night... I kept holding out until I was 16 – and then I left." (LO/L/R1)

Internal migrations in our sample seem to be more diverse in motivation. These included the case of CA/L and the PA/G couple. Both left Gótica after marriage to live with in-laws – to the north of the Country in 2009 in the case of CA/L, and to the Madeira Islands in 2003 in the case of PA/G. Finding an affordable housing solution was another reason for moving within national territory. MR/L moved to his father-in-law house in Lugarão because this allowed her to save on rent and utilities bills. RO/G's husband decided to move to a village near Gótica, which she claims to have reluctantly agreed and was also a response:

"I must have been drunk! [laughs]. And I lived in [city] back then, do you believe it? I lived in [city] and ended up here... My brothers-in-law were living here and founded this [housing] cooperative. We would pay this share to become members. We got a bit carried away with it. I still thought: 'we move to [village] and then we have no work and this and that'. But in the end we became members and now we have this fine house." (RO/L/R1)

An element that is often present in migration processes is the aspiration to return to one's origin place in a more or less distant future. Our sample did comprise three cases where did this happen. We already saw how CA/L return to Gótica in the wake of her separation. The other two cases at point are those of NA/G and LU/G, who have both return to their native village – the former after retiring and the other after 25 years spent in Belgium. Yet, in both cases, the fulfilment of a long-lasting expectation is referred to in disillusioned terms:

"If you go back to the provinces after 30-something years living in Lisbon you're going to feel it. It's different, even if were not completely disconnected, as we came here once in a while for family reasons. Of course, we lost the relations we had with our friends. And when you live in Lisbon, you are bound to create some habits. I remember one thing that cost me a lot. I used to travel around, to sell and contact clients. I experienced the outside more. But then my parents were ageing and I thought: 'What I'm I doing here?... It's best we just go there and help our parents through old age'. And so it was. In the year 2000, more or less. We returned here. And I ended selling the flat I had in Lisbon." (NA/G/R1)

Migrations have in bidirectional effect on one's networks, both shaping and being shaped by them. Family networks in particular played an important part in our interviewees' migrations. We saw how the presence of relatives was important element in framing CL/L's husband decision to emigrate, by constituting a support network on arrival. We also saw how family ties played in both AS/L and LO/L emigration processes as was the case and this was also the case of GE/L and JU/L – whose father and brother respectively preceded him and later called for them to join. EL/L is another case at point too. Although lacking in family or friends in Portugal, she did move to Portugal with her boyfriend.

Yet, also interesting is to take into consideration the cases in which people played a more mitigated role. The case of PE/L is very interesting in this regard, because of the ambiguously towards his family in Portugal, downplaying their role in favour of friends he made afterwards.

“In truth, when I came [to Portugal], it was a friend of mine that was supposed to receive me. But I arrived on a Saturday and this friend was not answering his phone. He knew I had this aunt, sister to my late father, who lived in [suburb of Lisbon]. But I didn’t want to go there. By fate, I ended there anyway, because there was no-one at the airport to receive me. So I went there. I stood there for just three months, then rented a room... She didn’t know I was coming. It was an uncle of mine that had told me back [in Angola]: ‘Look, if you are going to Portugal, there’s this aunt of yours – here’s her number’. But I had little proximity to her – she’s a half-sister of my father – and I had decided not to call her. But I ended up stranded in the airport, so I had to... When you are lodging, and particularly when it wasn’t arranged beforehand, one has to make concessions, right? We can’t really demand things, can we? Well, it could have gone a little better, but that’s OK. It was a lesson for me... While I was looking for a job, I got to know a guy from Guinea-Conacry – he lives in Switzerland now. So he told me ‘man, but you don’t have any privacy; you live at your aunt’s and don’t have the keys to the house. I live in this place where they rent room – for that money [he was paying his aunt], you can have your own room.’ So I pondered and went for it... He called the landlord and by the end of the day we met. We talked it over, he gave me a key to my room and I gave him €100. And that’s how I began living alone [laughs]” (PE/L)

5. Turning points and social norms and expectations

In order to elicit the workings of social norms in the biographical turning points of our interviews, we focussed on two types of utterances: those comprising justification of decisions and actions and framing of events that either led to these turning points or constituted a response to it; and justice principles to which they appealed in emotional responses to these turning points. Two types of turning points stood out in our data as being heavily charged with these type of utterances: those related to work – particularly situations of unemployment – and to family – particularly regarding to marriage/separation.

Regarding work, one salient finding in our interviews regarding work is an implicit framing of framing of unemployment and inactivity as a transgression – and thus requiring elaborated explanations in order to detach oneself from any idea of voluntary idleness. When asked what she is envisaging when she follows her husband to England, CL/L stressed:

“I am not picky. I’ll go and take whatever comes up. I have worked all my life. The type of work was never a problem for me. I have washed stairs, I have worked in restaurants, canteens and hotels, I have worked as a real estate seller – I have been countless things so far. This is what I always tell my husband: I don’t care if I am in a hotel or restaurant; what I care about is that I have work. Because I have to pay my bills at the end of the month. I am not picky. If it’s in my field, doing what I like to do, the better. If not, I don’t care. I can even work in some factory. For me, working is not a problem and what I’ll be doing is not a problem. What is a problem is getting to the end of the month and having money to pay your bills. That’s the problem for everybody, right?” (CL/L/R2)

TE/L accounts of her switching from school janitor – a move she credits as key because it later allowed her to transfer to the town and move off minimum wage - is also very interesting in this regard, being framed partly as a divine reward for her correct righteous attitude towards work.

“I was extremely tired. Physically and psychologically... So, once again, I asked God for strength. I recall asking God: ‘Lord, give me strength! I don’t want to take sick leave, I don’t want to stop working. I want to keep working so that I am able to keep my head holding high’... And in the following day, I am on duty at the PBX, where the telephones were... And then the president of the school board, one of the teachers, opens the small window above the counter and asks me “TE/L, how would you like to work at the school secretariat?” And I: “What?!”... So once again, I get home exhausted... But at the same time thankful [to God], because I had only asked for strength to hold out a day at a time – and instead I got this wonderful invitation to work in the secretariat, which changed my life!” (TE/L/R1)

In turn, PA/G, a gypsy couple, stress the centrality of work in their projects and picture racism as being at the heart of their.

“We are not afraid of working, thank God. What happens is that he [the husband] can’t get a job because he is not given one. He goes to interviews, they look at him, and as we are gypsies, there’s this racism. We can say at will that there is no racism, but it’s there. For instance, it’s easier for me to get a job because I don’t look like a gypsy – while he gets nothing but refusals

at the places he goes – and he goes to a lot of them... How we wanted that he could get a job in a project like mine! Our dream is for both of us to be working.” (PA/G)

Also interesting in how, in these explanations, principals of personal fulfilment and social recognition are called upon to justify or explain actions and events leading to unemployment. For instance, LO/L explained in this terms of lack of professional fulfilment her decision to drop her job at a temporary work agency

“Even for work as cleaner, it takes passion. To work passionately. Not just because you’re forced to or because you need money. I, at least, look at cooking as something that I always do with gusto. I love what I do... But, in that firm, they just wanted versatility. So I was no longer a cook. I was a cook, a waiter, cleaning woman - everything.” (LO/L/R1)

CA/G also frames her turn to full-time taxi driving and the definitive abandonment of her previous career as an optician as a matter of professional fulfilment

“When I came back to Gótica, I thought “what am I going to do with my life?”... So once, I was at a [shop of office supplies] I found this man I knew was a taxi driver. I asked him if he knew about anyone that needed an employee. He told me to meet the owner of his taxi. The owner, without knowing me from anywhere, put the car on my hands straight way. Then I left, I went to on an optician’s shop for two months, to cover for someone’s holidays. After two months, they sent me away. I went back to taxi driving, now working for someone else. After some time, I tried the optician shop again for a month. But it was tougher this time. Because this is an addictive job. We are not confined behind four walls, we don’t have the boss watching over your shoulder all the time. It’s addictive and... we earn by commissions, and we just want more and more. So it last just one month before I came back to my boss again. And here I am!” (CA/L/R1)

Likewise, it is the lack of what is felt as proper recognition for one’s work as much as the conflict on wages that plays a central place in the highly emotional account of CA/G quitting her job after 13 years:

“Six years! Six years without recognizing me as a trained optician. But only when it came to paying, because he recognized it in the [official] papers. And then there were a lot of situations in which I thought that him... If I was having to pay for my salary to be delivered through a bank transfer – some miserable cents, I don’t care – then he had to pay me back all he had stolen me for six years!” (CA/G/R1)

Lack of recognition was also the base for RO/G indignation at being rejected by a medical board for obtaining a disability pension, despite of her back problems:

“I paid 50.000\$ [250€] for this doctor to come with me. But I didn’t pass. I was rejected by the medical board. All because I was a chief cook and they kept saying that chief cooks don’t do anything but tasting the food... My doctor told them that I couldn’t make heavy efforts any longer. And they just said that chief cooks... I was as chief cook on paper, but I did everything! I had days where I had to chop down five, six, seven lambs a day. There was a time... when I made food for 400 people. And it wasn’t a single dish, either. I had six dishes. I had diet soup,

diet dish, normal soup, meat dish, fish dish and yet an alternative. All this, on my responsibility! Yes, I had helpers, but still... And they said I was apt for working!"(RO/G/R1)

Social representations of specific occupations also emerged occasionally in our sample. AR/L referred how her decision of beginning working in a hairdressing saloon in the mid-1970s, was angrily received by her father – whose reaction also hints at a level of violence in their relation.

"[I got there] through a friend of mine, who knew I wanted to be a hairdresser. She talked to me and I said: "Man, I'll go!" My father gave me a beating because he didn't want me to go. Because in those days, hairdressers had a poor reputation. They still do, if one thinks about it. They used to say that hairdressers were prostitutes. My father didn't want it. He wanted me to keep on studying instead. But I said: "No, I won't study, it is not worth it, I won't go!" So much so that I took a beating from him. And that was it." (AR/L/R1)

GE/L, a teenager back in Cape Verde in the late 1960s, spoke of how the social framing of construction as man's job played a role in her decision to become one.

"I started [working] on basket weaving. Those baskets, made out of reed, to carry things and go shopping. To catch and carry beans, potatoes, everything. People used baskets, because, in those days, there were no plastic buckets... Then I started working in agriculture. I still made baskets, but those I had to take [to the market] and sell them. Sometimes, people bought all of them, sometimes they didn't. And then I decided to work in the road [construction] brigade, where I worked by the fortnight. After seven or fifteen days, we got our wages. [I did it] because of the money. It was better than making baskets and having to carry them around for selling. And we had this idea that we had to work the way men did. Already at school, we watched them working with their pickaxes, shovels and hoes. We loved to do it too. And it paid enough for surviving, right?" (GE/L/R1)

Turning points regarding family are another subject in which we can detect strong emotional overtones and investment in justification. Separation and divorce – specially in the case of women – are one of the more salient features in this regard. It is a somewhat remarkable feature that, unlike in accounts other turning points it was rarely necessary to probe for an extended account. Justifications flowed spontaneously in narratives, which may result from the subjective importance attached to these moments but also hints at a need to dispel as some not breaking shared social norms on marriage. We already saw how separations were justified on grounds of domestic violence but also of lack of emotional fulfilment. Yet, also at how feelings of abandonment can also be present.

For instance, MM/G made no qualms of her indignation on what she considered a desertion by her husband, who returned to Cape Verde after failing to find a job in Portugal:

"He got here and became depressed [because] he couldn't find any job. So he just stood by the house. He just sat down there – and sat, and sat. And one day he left. He just said to me: 'Now, I'm going home'. He didn't care about us or that we were being left behind. Nothing!" (MM/G/R1)

Family pressure for marriage – coupled with to provide due to unemployment – play a part in PE/L justification for the breakup with her girlfriend in 2011.

"We were well together in our little corner. But [we had] always that interference from her family. I no longer had a job... And her family was all over her, becoming really demanding on her, that she had to do this and that... Man! One day, I had to take her back to her family... Then she would regret it. But her family was against it [the relationship] and there she would go back home. We broke up because of her family [takes a deep breath]. The day came when I had to say 'enough!'. And I remember as if it was today, she... Her uncle phoned me and told me that they would no longer meddle in our relation. I was still very, very hurt by it all! But [he then said] I would have to marry her. And if I didn't they wouldn't let me see her again. Then one day – I was doing the final exams, a math exam actually [laughs] – and she was travelling away in that same day. My cousin called me saying "look, [girlfriend] is leaving". And right after that, she phoned me to tell me goodbye. Oh, man! That sure wasn't easy for me!" (PE/L/R1)

AR/L's interview provides further glimpse on social norms regarding marriage and relationships. Even after several years of separation from her former husband, and despite the declared antipathy of her father towards him, she was still feeling the need to hide a new relationship from her parents to avoid their disapproval.

"I became pregnant by accident, after three years of what I would call 'dating' – because we just saw each other at night, right? Because of our work. At the time, I worked at the train station and all that. Inclusively, I hid it from my parents and told them that it was not a man I was living with, but just a girlfriend of mine. I didn't tell my parents it was a man. I told them I went living with a girlfriend, because it was handier, I was closer to work and all that." (AR/L/R1)

Another point where the working of social norms and expectations is especially visible is on the obligation of caring for family members – both towards descendants and ascendants. For two of our interviewees – NA/G, RO/G – the obligation to house family members fallen into hard times was itself a turning point – yet they framed it as a moral duty that precluded any other alternative.

"I manage to live by with the revenue I have. But this is very hard. If I had my grandchildren employed or if they were, as it is normal, with their parents, then I wouldn't say I'd be living comfortably but I would certainly have enough – because, from a certain age onwards, you don't have great needs. You no longer go to the cinema, nor here or there. Life is different, more peaceful. But after all these years, one see his children and grandchildren on the doldrums, they knock on your door and I... I couldn't do something like that [turning them away]... I have lived a long life. I arrived at an age where I just wish I would have enough [to live by] without worrying about my grandchildren. But what will happen to my grandchildren without me? I have to take a bit from me to give them. I don't know if my grandson can hold on to an occupation that will free him from me. Likewise for the girl." (NA/G/R1)

"I don't [sew at home for sale] anymore since my mother came to my house, about three years ago. She used to stay for [alternate] spells at my house and at my sister's. But then I had to take her in, because she [the sister] said she could no longer take care of her. I told her I'd take her and leave her back at the end of the month. But she just said she didn't want her there any longer. I had no choice. I was not going to throw my mother out on the street, was I? I stopped [working]. I stopped because I cannot do it and take care of her at the same time." (RO/G/R1)

The strength of the social imperative of helping one's family is visible also by the distress it causes when interviewees talk about what they perceive as their inability to fulfil it. When mentioning his son's wedding that was to take place in the three days after our first interview, AR/L nearly broke in tears.

"The wedding is going to take place and I won't be able to help my son in anything. It is even he who is having to buy me a dress, shoes and everything. It's very hard. It hurts a lot." (AR/L/R1)

NV/L goes one step further and explicitly mentions the shame he feels for being dependent on the help of his nephews.

"They know their uncle is an old man. I am ashamed I have to ask them. I should be the one that ought to be helping them.... When I ask my nephews, as I am their uncle, they will help. "It is uncle who is asking, let's help him, the poor guy!"... Can you imagine what it is like to have to ask for 15 or 20€. How embarrassing it is?" (NV/L/R1)

Another turning point where social norms are at work can be easily grasped is international migrations. Indeed, our interviews to immigrants contain plenty of elements that point to migration as very much a collective experience in which one's decisions and projects are framed by a wider context – such as the family or friends that stay back. This is very much visible in the web of obligations that subsist towards those who remain in the place of origin. We already saw how EL/L framed her decision to remain in Portugal not as something individual but as a way to help her children back in Brazil. ML/L gives a more explicit account of this type of obligation, which gains an even starker tone against the backdrop of the paucity of his own material resources.

"When you are in Europe, your family relies on you and trusts you. If things don't go well, it's very distressing. If they have an illness or some difficulties, they will ask me for help. Things like [medical] prescriptions and medicines. Sometimes they have food shortages. And I have to find a way to send something there. Every month I have to send something back. Such as food and the like." (ML/L/R1)

GE/L gives an intake on this web of from a different perspective, by drawing on the conditions that one expects to meet in order to return home.

"I don't have money to go back, so I'm better staying. Because the family stays with you until you die. For example, if I could go down there, I would only go just for visiting and take a look. But if you don't have money, you can't move around..[And] it's shameful if one arrives from abroad and has no money." (GE/L/R1)

6. Perceptions

In this chapter we will question the perceptions that respondents have of their resilience paths. We intend, therefore, to understand how subjects interpret their practices and coping narratives. The analytical focus will therefore be the representations of the subjects on their own agency.

We will develop this topic from the exploration of two perspectives: (1) the turning points in the narratives of respondents, which will allow us to understand how they rationalize and solve the events that have re-directed their life paths; and (2) the aspirations and expectations for the future. These will allow us to see how they plan to shape their future lives, simultaneously capturing their perspective on the strength of the current external constraints to their capacity for agency.

6.1. Perceptions of turning points and responses to shocks

One of the most striking features of life stories collected during the fieldwork is the perception that interviewees' life paths, from a very early age, are strongly guided by the constraints that are imposed on individuals and by the processes of social reproduction. When we analyze the narratives, it's apparent the lack of control that they have on various stages of their lives, showing an unexpected absence of decision making in relation to the paths followed. Thus, the actions often take a reactive form, of an urgent response to circumstances that impose themselves, in a context scarce on resources, where the possibilities of alternative routes are severely restricted.

Examples of this can be found on EL/L, MA/G and LC/L narratives, which in an adolescent age already lived in a relationship, had children and left school. Later, after tempestuous relationships, and in some cases extremely abusive physically and psychologically, they broke up with their partners in order to try to gain control over their lives, and for first time really choosing what they wanted to do and how. EL/L decides to emigrate to Portugal from Brazil, escaping an abusive relationship; MA/G moved from rural villages of Gothic to the city center, signing up for a course of clothing designer; while CL/L decided to go back to school, starting a journey that led her to the conclusion of Higher Education.

At the opposite end of life paths ML/L, AR/L and GE/L see themselves in an early retirement process without having intention or being ready to do so. The common features of the three cases consist of the redundancy associated with age and physical limitations resulting from the professional activity, followed by a period of unemployment that is still ongoing, and by the lack of concrete expectations of being hired or retraining. However, any of these respondents consider themselves capable and able to return to the labour world, continuing regularly to explore employment opportunities, which are being progressively scarcer and regarded with less expectations.

The lack of decision in interviewees' life is associated, on the one hand, with the incorporation of class status in the definition of self (a topic that will develop in the next sub-chapter), and on the other hand, by the lack of resources. Indeed, data analysis points to a situation of impotency by families to address (more) external constraints, which is related to the lack of material and

immaterial resources, which would allow them to control their choices and give them room for action. External constraints are presented as a daily challenge, related to unexpected obligations (car problems, health problems, unexpected cuts in revenue, 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 and PA/G provide illustrations of this feeling of helplessness:

“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)

“If they take from the poor, the poor doesn’t have any other options to go to. 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)

This disposition will match the interpretation that respondents make of the moments of their life stories that come to represent *turning points*. As we saw in the earlier chapters, we can distinguish four types of sets of *turning points*: (1) migration; (2) the loss of employment; (3) the separation or divorce; and (4) the disease or accidents.

By analyzing how subjects rationalize their role in these events, we find that they tend to attach their decisions to explicit or implicit norms, thus framing their actions in external behavioral dynamics. The events in which this behavior is most evident are those related to migration processes (especially among immigrants) and those related to early marriages or conjugal unions, often associated with unplanned pregnancies.

Migration processes are mostly naturalized in the interviews (most of them came from places where emigration is a common option, this is to say, “natural” choices), not being discernible any rationalization process prior to the migration act weighting the pros and cons of such a decision. The act of migration itself is associated with specific events (illness, pregnancy, marriage, etc.), but this decision is always framed in a dynamic of social expectations that value migration as a natural step towards a better life. For instance, in cases like AS/L or JU/L, most of their relatives weren’t living in their respective home country.

AS/L and LO/L remember the circumstances how they came to Portugal:

“I lived alone with my sisters [in Cape Verde]. My mother came here very sick. She’s been here for more than thirty-odd years. And so I stayed with my three sisters, it was I who took care of them. My father, in quotation marks, that he lived in another house, supported us, yes, but it was I who took care of them. And then my sister came to here, sick with anemia, and we kept coming ...” (AS/L/R1)

“[When did I come to Portugal?] In ‘89. I was nine years old. [Did you come with your parents?] No, I came with my aunt. (...) I was young, I didn’t have option, I couldn’t choose. [It was your parents who told...] No, my grand-mother did. I don’t have father or mother. So, I came with my aunt. Supposedly it was also to start studying – I would study during the day and she at night. It didn’t happen.” [LO/L/R1]

The loss of employment, in turn, is faced with impotence. Respondents see themselves as workers without access to decision-making processes in their jobs; the first to be expendable in situations of cost cuts; and as having no resources to fight or guarantee their rights on dismissal.

NO/G talks how she was forced to sign a document doing without compensation:

"Right, but if he wasn't able to pay me the wage, how could he pay me the compensation [for firing her]? There were colleagues that didn't signed 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 do feed my son. At that time he didn't work. I had to sign the paper." (NO/G/R1)

GE/L explains the limitations he has to work:

"[Don't you work now at constructions as you used to?] I'm not working now. It's annoying. I have osteoporosis problems. But I can still do something. It's just (...) if it is to make concrete, I can no longer do it. If it is a wall, I can still lay bricks, tow and do it all. Working at the floor, because of my knee, I no longer can do it. (...) [About the baskets that he makes at home] Even making the baskets, I could be making baskets, too. But I have to make the bottom on the floor. We [shows the position] have to stay on this position. But you must lower everything. And when I hit this position I can't... You must lower all your body to make the bottom. If I had someone who would make the bottom for me, I could do it. Then, there are the canes, all must be work out and then I could make it. And I must work over my hip. That way, I would do it." (GE/L/R1)

Diseases and work accidents follow the same line of rationalization. However, this type of phenomena consumes the various dimensions of life of the subjects. Not only their health and ability to work, but it's also associated with job loss and/or the loss of rights related to sick leaves and social benefits for the treatment of their illness or injuries. In addition, having a high incidence among women, they affect family organization, since in many cases women manage the household and are the main source of income through paid work. On the other hand, having employment histories marked by manual labor, the inability to work by physical limitations is a tremendous burden on the identity level, with interviewees, in various situations, assuming justification stances regarding their inabilities.

CL/L shares about the changes in her life and the psychological toll associated with them after her work accident:

"I had a depression beginning because I saw my life once up there and now down here. If it was just me to stay at home ... it was me, it was my husband, it was the employer who didn't participate to the insurance company as he should have done and didn't want to assume responsibility. I didn't receive from the social security. My sister in law is a lawyer. I tried by resources and funds. She even wrote letters to social security to see if it was paid because it is a process that is on court. It would be returned to the social security by the insurance company. They didn't accept nothing till today. At the time I was in the rate 2 of the allowance. When I had the accident I asked to be changed to the rate 1. I had to make it up, trying to find solutions to save money. I had two cars and had to give up their insurance. I had to save in every way and modes because I didn't have money to pay expenses. I had to stick to the essential. Until today I have been able to pay the installment of my house, which is small, it is € 200. If it was higher I would be already due to the bank since two years ago, more or less. I have, I can do it for the essentials, water, electricity, gas, house installments. My mother in law pays the day nursery. I had a contract that ends this March; I had to pay that amount and it was my mother who paid it for me. Now, as it ends in March, I already gave up them because I must find one cheaper." (CL/L/R1)

In turn, LO/L shares in detail all the steps and the various obstacles that she faced when she got injured at her job. First, how the injury happened and how she handled initially:

"I made meals for four hundred and eighty people, at the Expo unit. (...) And when I started, I was doing fourteen to sixteen hours. So, I enter at seven and leave at nine in the evening. I never leave at nine. Half past nine, ten o'clock. To leave all my work done. And I worked two days, and rested two days. That was the pace, always. (...) And in that pace, it's running, it's going down to open the door to the supplier, it's going up, is to prepare the food. On one of those downs, instead of descending stair by stair, no – I fall. I failed one [And then failed all]. And it was. I fall. (...) It hurt me badly but I thought "it's a sprain, tonight I'm going to put ice and salt on this and I'm ready for another. But each time it hurt more. This happened at one in the afternoon. I tolerated it until nine-thirty. Only later when I took off the uniform, then went to the bus stop, I took the bus and when it stopped at Oriente station, I couldn't get down, could no longer set foot on the ground. Ouch, ouch, ouch! People helped me get off the bus; I took a taxi, home! (...) D you think I would spend a night at the hospital? I had to open the house in the morning! (...) I got home, put hot water on the leg, it was really hot! I put Voltaren, even more cream and more stuff. I lay. The alarm went off in the morning. Lift the foot - ouch! I really fall! As I set foot, I lost strength immediately. I called immediately [the colleague, because she couldn't reach the boss, he only will be at the job at nine] because I had to have the breakfast ready at a quarter past seven. I said to my colleague, at five o'clock in the morning: "Hey, Judith you must go and open the house because I had an accident yesterday and I did not think it was so serious, but I can't set my foot on the ground." And all of them, as they know that I never complain, it was good."(LO/L/R1)

Secondly, how she supported by the hospital and insurance company:

"I went there, I went to the Lusíadas hospital. I had been there receiving treatment in 2013, 2014, until when I opened the house in 2014. I open it on 1st of April. It was still being followed at the hospital. (...) They discharged me, in November 2013, with 20% of inability to see if I could stand it. Lie. The leg bone does not heal. I had an injury so big that even have a cure. And it hurts. The thing it's all this way, all dark. Instead of being all white, it is not. It's all dark. It's all dented. They even ~~me~~ did a leak with my own blood, neither that worked. (...) No, but they said - is cured without devaluation. He prescribed me a huge amount of medications. So if it's without devaluation why they passed that prescription? I even took pictures, copies of all, before dispensing the prescription, of everything. And I put them in court. And I gained the cause, naturally. I will get the money now. " (LO/L/R1)

The type of turning point that breaks this trend is precisely the breaking up of relationships or divorce. In this type there's a much greater emotional and identity investment, in that collided with clearly implied social norms, even when occurring after long periods of clear domestic violence. As mentioned above, these cases are described as difficult processes. In various situations even desperate and lonely, frequently challenging their own immediate family. In all cases, they represented a response to a need for women to be able to control ~~your~~ their life and determine their future. Accordingly, they have a key symbolic role in their life narratives.

TE/G remembers the struggles about the decision of leaving her partner at the time:

"I remember, on the day I change to the administrative services, I was going through a break up. I already had put in my head that, however difficult it may be ... but I never thought it was so difficult, that this journey would be so painful ... I'm leaving out my comfort zone. It was to

left behind a good car, a good house, a good life and I will leave all that and I'll have to start alone. But it's the way it is, it is still not easy, because they are six or seven years of our life that we invest in that relationship, where we still believe that everything is still possible. Right, I was still young but there are dreams and it is normal people wanting to start a life and wanting to be happy. And when I assume this relationship I meant it to be. And then, something changed in me, I didn't wanted anymore and I went there battling against material goods, you know? Against everything I believed. "(TE/L/R1)

CL/L talks about the long and painful process of leaving her first partner:

"I was in a situation so complicated that either I left or I'll die. Waking up in the morning and while making the bed, finding a gun under the pillow is not very easy. Live with a man who tries to rape you, and just doesn't do it because he has his daughters knocking at the door, yelling at him, also isn't easy. Go to sleep to my daughter's room and he didn't let sleep anyone, keep knocking on the door and doing God knows what to the point I had to take out the door handle and put a dresser in front of it and still not being able to sleep, it's not easy. . Either I leave or I'll die. The house was mine, but I don't care, I'm going to take my daughters and leave to my mother's house. During three years he made my life a living hell. He destroyed me two cars, he put salt on the gasoline tank. If I didn't have a car, if I didn't have a job, if I didn't have any kind of support, I had to go back to him. Bad luck for him. A friend of mine lent me the car. At the same time my mother gave me money to buy a car. A friend of mine lent me some more. From one person that I didn't expect. I told him "I do not have how to pay you", "I don't care, I know you'll pay me, I know you, I know you won't be due it to me." And I paid it. Once I got the money from the house, I paid him. He lent me and I bought a car. On the day that my daughters and my mother were going to the homeland I was to pick the car and take them to the bus; I had the four tires on the ground. He cut the tires, he cut the spark plug wires, he stole my radio, he cut me the seats, etc. I had to put the car in the garage to get it to work again. This over 3 years. Until a good friend of mine ... at the time I already had a relationship with my husband and he confront him for him to leave me. "Leave, she is my wife," and he just said "my girlfriend has no husband" . Of course he didn't like it. Meanwhile, I have a good friend of mine which I call the boulder because he's two meters high and it look likes some of one of those Sumo men, well build up, so to speak. I called him boulder because he could carry a washing machine on his back from a second floor.[laughs]. It was Antonio. On that day, he showed up and it was complicated. We were making the house change. Before he bought that house he lived in a rented house whose owner was the godmother eldest daughter. And his sister had problems in justice and could not have lease agreements in its name and the landlady let her stay there with the contract in my name. But she failed to pay, didn't release the house and the landlord asked us to release the house and take off everything from inside because otherwise we would go to court. Ok. I spoke with this young man, Antonio "can you get me a van?" "Of course" "That's great." We started to take things. He showed up and began to mistreat my friends. One of them was black belt in tae kwon do [laughs]. The thing didn't go very well, so he took a bit of beating. This friend of mine, Antonio, turned to him and said "Mess with Claudia again and I'll kill you." My friend looked down and he looked up [laughs], it is a scene I'll never forget. From that day he never got into me, it was holy remedy. "(CL/L/R1)

6.2. Aspirations and expectations for the future

Against a backdrop of strong social class reproduction, households invest in formal education as a means of personal development for social mobility. The valorization of formal education is done on two levels. Firstly, by referring to the reintegration processes in the education system of the adult members of households, either through modalities to complete interrupted school trajectories, either through vocational training program. Secondly, by focusing on discourses and family strategies the frequency and success at school of the children, mobilizing a large share resources of the household to this area.

However, this discursive valorization is accompanied by little confidence in their instrumental efficacy. There's not a direct expectation that formal education will help obtaining, in the short term, better employment opportunities, due to the systematic external contingencies that frame the space and opportunities for action. In particular, if the frequency of training programs is valued in terms of learned contents, it's also followed by frustration, due to the lack of consequence in terms ~~of~~ employment. Regarding the long-term future, there is recognition that formal education is the main tool that will allow their children to climb socially and provide them with better living conditions and life aspirations.

In the next quotes EL/L and PA/G talk about their experiences of leaving school early and in the case of PA/G the personal gains that he felt from returning to school.

"I left school at the age of the eldest. When I got pregnant of her I was more or less 13 years old. (...) I studied very little and I see that is much needed. If I had continued, who knows if I could be more ahead on my studies and of course I could have a better job. And today I think, if I return to ~~school~~, could I do it again? Can I? I think this due to the worries of everyday life or I think if I still would have the mind to do it. But I had and have desire to take courses." (EL/L/R1)

"I only had the fourth grade, I knew that I couldn't go anywhere. I thought in going to study. I did the 6th, the 9th and the 12th grades in a row. "Since I started this, I will finish it." I finished the 12th grade and I have about five or six courses but no job. Life financially is bad. [I'm] in the same situation as before, always with debts and more debts. Now, at the personal aspect, I think that I was able to evolve in the middle of this. The studies were a very good thing. I got knowledge of more things. And I think it's very important." (PA/G/R1)

LO/L and PE/L share their experience of returning to the education and training system:

"I liked [doing the New Opportunities Program], I liked it so much that I put on an effort and I was always there on time. And even if I was tired of my job, I left running from one side to the other to take the course." (LO/L/R1)

"I asked for a professional training course and I had it there. And I went there, for the interview, and that, after some time, they asked me for the documents. I handed the documents and I began attending the course. [Industrial maintenance] It lasted two years. (...) I love it! And today I have my diploma, and that's it – it's unfortunate. The employment market is in the state that it is. But, at least, what I have, no one can take it from me, right?" (PE/L/R1)

Due to the structural constraints that limit the scope for social agency, families concentrate its symbolic investment in their younger members, protecting them from material limitations arising from hardship and focusing particularly on their school trajectories. In fact, children are

emotional lynchpins in the lives of families, giving direction and objectives for coping strategies. They are presented in the interviews as focal points in the organization and embodiment of resistance and the hopes of a better life. Thus, the future aspirations of households are projected for the long term through children.

EL/L and LO/L talk about how their children are central to their actions and how they provide comfort and a direction to their future:

"My goal was to give a better life to my children. So I thought "I'm going to, I'm going to work, I'm going to try to see if I give a better life for my children," but there are certain things I saw that I couldn't do it. It was not the way I imagined, the way I thought, but well. (...) Of course I suffer due to the issue of not being able to achieve that goal of mine of leaving and having a home to live with my children. But in another case I think that if I'm going to suffer, be there and not be able to help my children, then I'd rather be here alone, knowing that if I'm working, I could send them something and help them . Of course it's not easy, it's hard." (EL/L/R1)

"Everyone at school and everyone still underage. But at that time... then, there, I began to seek for a job. I went to search, I got a job at a private school. (...) Kitchen. I mean, I wanted the best for my children. I mean, they studied there. And I paid with the meals. I cooked at my house and provided. I paid their education and I still received something more. When I came [to Portugal] in 2004, they lost immediately the [school] year. They repeated the year. They began from there to here. Then they entered in school, they began to stay behind. They hadn't the will to study, they hadn't... I rented a house there [near the] private school. It was just to deliver the food. Just cross the road. [From then] Their path until today was excellent. I have no reason to complain." (LO/L/R1)

Regarding aspirations for themselves and family, the majority of respondents say that they don't have set any concrete future projects or are even able to prepare the future through savings or strategic investment. Resources are mobilized for daily survival strategies. Another factor cited in the interviews is the inability to see a turning point in terms of structural constraints, thus living an indeterminate period of suspension of family projects. Also, it is worth to consider how class background reflects itself in the visions of self and social order, as well as in the aspirations for the future, shaping prospects and limiting the ambition for life projects. We highlighted how the interviewees projects for the future – on the cases where they could articulate them – clustered around the notions of being the owner of one's home, getting a steady job and emigration. PE/L, TE/G and EL/L are typical illustrations of these cases:

"[My project for the] future ... is to have a job. And be able to face this 12th grade to open doors to get an institute or something like that where I could do a more [advanced] training. And in the future, even yesterday I was thinking: I intend to translate my diploma in English. If things don't go right, well. And if I have the nationality on my hand, look. Let's see if we follow the Prime-minister's advice! [referring to the former-PM advise to young unemployed adults to migrate to other countries and find jobs there]" (PE/L/R1)

"I don't know if I'm going to be here [laughs], but if I am, I wish I could achieve a dream, have my own house. I don't know if it will be possible. I already tried. But because I hadn't guarantor, I couldn't make it. But I've tried. I'm going to fight. I lose a battle but I won't lose the war [laughs], I keep going. A house, I was at the bank, I said "this is good; I'm going to get information." I go where I can go. And I would pay the same as this house. But well, it didn't work. So I, by 2020 ... So in 2020 I hope I have achieved my house." (TE/G/R1)

“Within five years ...I’d like very much to achieve my dream of battling, working and having a house.” (EL/L/R1)

But, even this simple aspirations clash with objective constrains and expectations of changes to their situations in the future. Two factors are usually mentioned in the interviews. Firstly, the more urgent character of immediate needs over future projects. Most households struggle daily to find responses to meet their basic needs, not being able to put aside resources to plan long term. On the other hand, the lack of projections or turnaround tendencies in social and economic indexes, coupled with a political discourse that continuously postpones the austerity measures, keeps families in a frame of mind of uncertainty about the extent and duration of this crisis. Evidence of this skepticism towards developing mid or long-term projects can be read in the following quotes:

AS/L and CA/G talking about how urgent needs in the immediate overlap with future plans:

“Oh, it’s not from here to five years on, it’s really for today [laughs]. I really need it... It’s what I say to my husband, that I’m going to begin to bet to see if something appears. Have luck in some place, because all this is complicated and if it continues much more time, I don’t know... And the head! Right yesterday I told him that I can’t bear my head just of thinking. It’s complicated and I hope that something appears from another side.” (AS/L/R1)

“I see people really are without money. I see and I see, for instance, nowadays we earn, even not being on the situation I am, nowadays we earn just to pay bills. We look to one water bill or to one electric bill – to the consumption alone, we don’t have much. After that it’s one fee from this, IVA from that, I don’t know else, and something more from nowhere. All this makes one bill. I think – I don’t follow – I think it’s always the same thing. They always say the same thing. I see the reality of things. I see people on necessity.” (CA/G/R1)

JU/L and FA/G wondering about the turning around point in this crises:

“I don’t have plans because with this crisis, I don’t know. It looks that I’m afraid that my daughter won’t find a job or something like that.” (JU/L/R1)

“I am a very positive person, to me everything is very positive, And to me the crisis is... the only thing that really affects me it’s my son doesn’t have a future... on a job level... after so many years of study and an excellent student and an excellent person... being unemployed... with an education, with everything, and he can’t be able. And apply, and apply, and apply. There’s were the crisis affects me. There’s where the crisis concerns me. Because I’m educating a young woman and I’m worried a lot about her future, these are the two only points that I can’t think as positive points of the crisis.” (FA/G/R1)