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Everything is not gonna be alright: Contributions to a critical perspective on social resilience.

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PhD in Sociology

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Resumo

A dissertação oferece uma trajetória de investigação sobre a emergência e afirmação do conceito de resiliência social nos campos académico e político. A noção foi popularizada nas ciências sociais com o estudo dos impactos socioeconómicos e das práticas de enfrentamento dos sujeitos durante a crise financeira. A crise forneceu assim o contexto para o surgimento da resiliência e para a sua apropriação política, contribuindo também para a sua afirmação na política europeia. O estudo consiste em cinco artigos científicos que, a partir de uma abordagem metodológica que combinou o desenvolvimento teórico com a análise empírica comparativa dos casos de Portugal, da Polónia e da Irlanda, contribuem para a literatura da resiliência social de três maneiras principais. Primeiro, providencia uma revisão crítica das principais propostas teóricas sobre resiliência, discutindo as suas implicações para o entendimento das crises socioeconómicas, das respostas dos indivíduos e dos processos de mudança institucional. Segundo, propõe um conceito de resiliência social informado pelo conhecimento sociológico, combinando os modos de vida dos indivíduos, que dão conta dos processos de reajustamento das condições e estilos de vida para responder ao choque, com as relações dinâmicas e complexas ao nível das estruturas sociais, que permeiam e moldam os arranjos institucionais, as relações de poder e a distribuição de recursos. Terceiro, apresenta uma discussão das conexões e compatibilidade entre a ideologia implícita das interpretações dominantes da resiliência e o aprofundamento e institucionalização do neoliberalismo nas políticas económicas e sociais na Europa, discutindo o seu papel na legitimação desta agenda política.

Palavras-chave: resiliência; crise financeira; pobreza, políticas sociais; estado social; Europa.

Abstract

The dissertation offers an investigation trajectory on the rise and affirmation of the concept of social resilience in the academic and political fields. The notion becomes popular in social sciences for the study of the socioeconomic impacts and coping practices of individuals during the financial crisis. The crisis provided the context for the emergence of resilience and for its political appropriation, contributing also to its assertion in European strategic policy. The study consists of five scientific articles, and it is based on a methodological approach that combined theoretical development with comparative empirical analysis, considering the cases of Portugal, Poland and Ireland. The results contribute to social resilience literature in three principal ways. First, it provides a critical review of the main theoretical proposals on resilience, discussing their implications for understanding socioeconomic crises, the responses at the agential level and the structural processes of change at institutional level. Second, it proposes a concept of social resilience informed by sociological knowledge, combining the ways of life of individuals, which account for the processes of readjustment of conditions and lifestyles to respond to contexts of hardship, with dynamic and complex relationships at the level of social structures, which permeate and shape institutional arrangements, power relations and resource distribution. Third, it also proposes a discussion of the connections and compatibility between the implicit ideology of the dominant interpretations of resilience and the deepening and institutionalization of neoliberalism in social and economic policies in Europe, discussing its role in legitimizing this political agenda.

Keywords: resilience; financial crisis; poverty, social policies; welfare state; Europe.

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Part I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This dissertation is a sociological investigation into the evolution of resilience from a notion to a concept, then to a theoretical perspective, eventually emerging as a field of research, and currently very much in vogue in the post-crisis political agenda of international organizations, such as the European Union (EU) or the World Bank (WB), among others. It is also a sociological investigation into the 2008-2015 financial crisis, which turned into an economic, social, and political crisis, which experienced multiple stages of evolution, different interpretations of their political causes and solutions, and ultimately set the framework and terms for the EU's contemporary political agenda and institutional arrangements.

It's about each of these phenomena, but also about their intersections and compatibilities. In this sense, it aimed to understand how the emerging theoretical perspective of resilience allows interpreting the crisis, the experiences of individuals facing adversity and hardship, and the political responses and their implications. And, about how the financial crisis created the favourable context for the emergence of resilience, how the transformations in the institutional structure of the EU fostered its political appropriation, and how the post-crisis political agenda embraced it as a doctrine.

The dissertation follows the model of compilation of articles. It is structured in three parts. Part I consists of the Introduction, where are outlined the problematics, the objectives, the research design and the internal coherence of the study. Part II consists of the five articles published in indexed scientific journals, which correspond to the scientific products of the research. Part III consists of the Conclusions, which include the main findings from the research, the discussion of some of its scientific and political implications, and the future directions of sociological research in resilience.

The articles were produced and published throughout the entire trajectory of the research, the first being published in 2017 and the last in 2023. It is important to note that all articles were prepared by several authors. All authors contributed in an invaluable and enriching way to the production of each article. Although the dissertation has only one author, the scientific products of this study are part of a more robust work about social resilience, by the various authors. Thus, dissertation is the expression of the path of maturation of my sociological perspective on resilience and its relationship with the financial crises.

The dissertation is composed of five articles. Articles 1 and 2 are essentially dedicated to theoretical development of the concept of resilience. Article 3 is a historical synthesis study based on the analysis of secondary statistical indicators, focused on the Portuguese case. Finally, articles 4 and 5 aim to test and develop the theoretical findings in the first two articles through empirical research based on comparative analysis of cases of cases from three countries, namely Portugal, Poland and Ireland. The articles[1] that make up the dissertation are:

Article 1, titled "Resilience: Moving from a "heroic" notion to a sociological concept" (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017), presents a specific sociological theoretical framework to the concept of resilience. To do so, we reviewed the main theoretical proposals on resilience, focusing our attention on the development of a "heroic" perspective of resilience. We point out its several pitfalls, and counter it with a concept of resilience grounded on sociological theory and poverty studies, presenting a definition for resilience, the conditions, and characteristics of this social phenomenon; as well as a model of operationalization based on two major dimensions: mobilization of resources and shifting of risks.

Article 2, titled "Structural foundations of social resilience" (Dagdeviren, Capucha, Calado, Donoghue & Estêvão, 2020), is a first explicit attempt on the intersections of resilience and poverty. It contributes to the emerging literature on resilience in two ways. First, it provides a critical analysis of how distinct resilience approach is in comparison to the views in the poverty literature and whether it improves our understanding in that area significantly. Secondly, it considers the possibility of a distinct role for resilience approach to understand the dynamics of hardship in exceptional times (e.g., crises), rather than explain the long-term trajectories of poverty. This is based on the development of a conceptual framework, highlighting the social, political, and institutional foundations of resilience in such turbulent times. The paper uses the economic background related to the 2008 crisis as a microcosm to place the discussion within a real context.

[1] The description of the articles presented below consists of the published abstracts.

Article 3, titled “Welfare state development in Portugal: From “stage zero” to the post-crisis “leftist” compromise against austerity” (Calado, Capucha & Estêvão, 2019), relates to the break with austerity policies in Portugal, carried out after 2015 by a Socialist government supported in parliament by parties on its Left, famously named the “contraption”, that has gained widespread attention throughout Europe and beyond. This is primarily because the “reversal” of austerity has been successful in restoring living standards while maintaining the State’s financial balance. The emergence of this innovative political solution cannot be understood without reference to the history of the Portuguese welfare state and the debates regarding its future. For this reason, this article covered how the Portuguese social model took shape after the democratic turn in 1974, the political and social consensus that underpins it, and the political forces that vie for its transformation.

Article 4, titled “Fighting poverty in times of crisis in Europe: Is resilience a hidden resource for social policy?” (Calado, Capucha, Gray & Wódz, 2022), relates to the growing interest in applying the concept of resilience to address socioeconomic hardship, sparked by the financial crisis. This research used qualitative secondary analysis of three emblematic cases to examine resilience processes in countries with diverse welfare regimes: Poland, Portugal, and Ireland. The goal was to undertake a comparative analysis of the lived experiences of households in situations of hardship, while addressing the influence of socio-political frameworks in social agency. Under an economic recession and reduced social investment, findings show that resilience processes had only marginal positive effects, consisting mostly of survival practices to cope with increased levels of poverty and social risk, regardless of national setting. Instead of leading to sustained improvements in their lives, resilience processes increased the vulnerability of individuals. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, we discuss why resilience remains an attractive social response to crises and how it is shaping EU’s social policy.

Article 5, titled "Labour relations under duress in Europe: Contributions for social resilience theory" (Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023)[2], follows a theoretical approach founded on socio-ecological research on resilience. It presents a comparative analysis of the reconfiguration of labour relations in Portugal, Poland and Ireland during the financial crisis. It argues that the crisis opened an opportunity for the convergence and liberalization of labour market models across Europe. It proposes a critical understanding of social resilience, that captures both the organization of the system that emerges post-crisis and its underlying dynamic power relations. Finally, we discuss how resilience is being incorporated in European policies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

The Introduction is structured in two parts. The first part is dedicated to the research framework, in which are contextualized the problematics of the study, the research object and the theoretical framework, and is discussed its relevance to the current scientific and political debate. The second part is dedicated to the research design, in which it is explained the research objectives, the structure of the work plan and the methodological approach. This part also includes the presentation of the articles that make up the dissertation and the discussion of its internal coherence.

[2] Article 5 has been submitted to publication and is waiting for acceptance.

CHAPTER 2

Research foundations

2.1. Background and research object

In fact, the thesis research began even before starting the PhD program in sociology. In early 2014, a research team composed by Prof. Luís Capucha, Dr. Pedro Estêvão and me is formed, in response to an invitation to participate in the international project Patterns of Resilience during Socioeconomic Crises among Households in Europe (RESCuE), which aimed to study the resilience patterns of European populations during the financial crisis. The project ran between March 2014 and February 2017 and was funded by the European Commission (EC), under the 7th Framework Programme[3].

Structured as a collaborative and multidisciplinary research, it included teams from universities in nine European countries, namely: the Institute for Employment Research, in Germany; the University of Silesia, in Poland; the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, in Spain; the University of Hertfordshire in the United Kingdom (UK); the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, in Greece; the Middle East Technical University, in Turkey; the University of Lapland, in Finland; the National University of Ireland Maynooth, in Ireland; and Iscte - University Institute of Lisbon, in Portugal.

During a period when the hardest effects of austerity policies were being felt across Europe, the proposition to study the resilience of households was intriguing and challenging. Intriguing because it intended to study resilience rather than poverty, clearly separating itself from a field of research with a vast academic and political tradition, which was extraordinarily influential in guiding the various generations of the EU's European Anti-Poverty Policy (Gordon D., 2002; Room, 1995; Vanhercke, 2012).

[3] The RESCuE project grant agreement ID is 613245. It was funded by the FP7-SSH - Specific Programme "Cooperation": Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities, under the topic: SSH.2013.5.1-1 - Citizens' resilience in times of crisis.

The resilience approach was just the adoption of a fashionable notion, or did it suggest a new direction for European policies to combat poverty? Challenging because it proposed a new concept for sociology, for which the existing literature was scarce and very recent. What is resilience as a sociological concept? What are its features? Is it a phenomenon, an attribute, or an analytical approach? Does resilience concern individuals, social groups, institutions, communities, or societies?

From the beginning of the project, we found that this mix of enthusiasm and concern was shared by the members of the research teams from the other countries. Like the concept itself, the investigation into resilience presented itself as an opportunity in the face of an uncertain and intangible future. Unsurprisingly, the first project meetings were dominated by discussions about its definition and characteristics, and what was distinctive or particular about it. It was a rich, intense, and dynamic discussion, with many advances, but which did not necessarily come to an end. In fact, this debate not only characterized the beginning of the research work but became a feature of the project itself.

It is important to clarify that the RESCuE project did not start with a theoretical void. On the contrary, its preparation was thorough and guided, including an elaborate discussion of the concept of resilience, its premises and its analytical scope. RESCuE starts from a heuristic perspective on the concept, defining resilience in the following terms: "some households when exposed to socioeconomic risks, perform social, economic, and cultural practices and habits in mobilizing economic, social or cultural resources which protect them from suffering and hard ship and support sustainable patterns of coping and adaptation" (Promberger et al., 2014: 10).

The research aimed precisely to identify and characterize these practices at the household level. They may consist of "identity patterns, knowledge, family or community relations, other cultural and social as well as economic resources and practices, be they formal or informal, tacit or explicit" (Promberger et al., 2014: 7). These practices are framed by welfare arrangements and economic and social policies, at the meso and macro levels, which establish the context or "environment" for resilient behaviours.

From this initial definition, RESCuE identified four guiding premises for the investigation, particularly for the articulation between the theoretical development and its applicability to social policies. First, welfare institutions are not the only social protection instruments against crises, arguing that "citizens, their families and households should not be treated as passive social agents who are exposed to unemployment and poverty". In addition, "at least some of them have access to useful assets and resources that have been developed over time, such as knowledge, social networks, strategies, habits and practices that saved them from deprivation or reduce their exposure to socioeconomic hardship". Second, given the scarce scientific literature on socioeconomic resilience, "the results of such investigation may be crucial for welfare states to develop innovative approaches for maintaining the inclusive principles of the European social model under difficult economic conditions". Third, most individuals are resilient, although not all, thus social policies for its development are "not an alternative but a complement to the welfare state or a new field of action for it". Finally, given the public investment limitations to combat the rising levels of poverty, the "crisis could also open an opportunity for the institutions of welfare states to learn from the resilience of their citizens, families and households and find new ways of reducing socioeconomic risks, supporting households in their respective practices by creating a positive political framework, and providing aid to those without means of resilience" (Promberger et al., 2014: 8-9). Effectively, the research agenda proposed in these premises fit with the main concerns in that period about the future of social policies and welfare states, characterized by the retraction of public investment and the increase in levels of unemployment, deprivation and poverty (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2020).

However, these premises are equally revealing of the political agenda in which the concept of resilience emerged and is currently inserted. Later we will expand this discussion. For now, it is important to enunciate some of the concerns that arose from the RESCuE research and influenced the development of a critical perspective on resilience (Calado et al., 2020). The first point on the political agenda is the establishment of the idea that welfare policies have treated individuals as passive subjects, incapable of freeing themselves from social constraints. By contrast, the resilience-based approach values the agency of individuals facing poverty, which involves recognizing that they develop strategies for coping with crises through their own resources or that they manage to acquire on their own. Therefore, the focus of social policies is the individual. And its aim is to develop mechanisms to recognize what they already do to endure hardship, while also creating conditions for them to continue to do it effectively.

The reorientation towards individual agency fits with the second premise. Here we highlight the need to reconcile the inclusive principles of the welfare state with an economic growth model that creates adverse socioeconomic conditions, diverting these responses from an exceptional context of crisis to an ordinary condition of deprivation. If the previous premise relates to the future challenge for European welfare states, the following premise establishes its paradigmatic orientation. Resilience oriented policies should constitute a complement, if not an entirely new field of action, for the welfare state. Finally, the promotion of crises as learning opportunities for public policies points to the reflective quality of resilience analysis. Its analytical proposal is that socioeconomic crises generate a learning context, reorienting prevention strategies from crisis avoidance to recover from their impacts, through the development of a positive political framework that supports individuals to deal with the next socioeconomic crisis.

In this framework, the RESCuE project defined as its main objective "to identify and understand the specific resilience practices of different households at risk and analyse the conditions they require within and around themselves and the institutions, markets and regulations they interact with" (Promberger et al., 2014). Although the study included objectives of deepening the knowledge about resilience and contributing to its conceptual development, or the elaboration of a multidimensional analytical strategy capable of capturing the complexity of the individuals' resilience, it was predominantly guided by pragmatic concerns of operationalizing the concept within the scope of the development of new social policies. In this sense, the various work packages are structured at the intersection between resilience and the social dimensions and institutions that can enhance or limit it, namely: socioeconomic practices; cultural practices; the spatial dimension; community, participation, and politics; welfare institutions; the social economy; and gender, ethnicity and migration issues.

As mentioned, the theoretical foundations of the research project were a constant subject of questioning and discussion. The analysis of empirical data and the elaboration of work packages made the debate even more relevant, given the ambiguous results of resilience practices on the living conditions of households in the nine countries. If several stories of resilience were identified, their ability to drive the protagonists to reverse the trajectories of poverty remained largely undemonstrated. Resilience, more than a strategy to overcome hardship, seemed to consist of a need for survival.

Thus, a critical perspective on resilience emerged. The deeper the knowledge gathered from empirical evidence, the greater the questioning whether resilience meant recovery or deterioration. How is success determined in resilience strategies and practices? What are the costs and risks associated with these practices for households' living conditions? What are the implications of dependence on own resources in the strategies of individuals and households?

These were some of the issues on which it was difficult to reach consensus, resulting in different definitions and analytical approaches to the concept of resilience in the research team, although not necessarily opposed. This diversity was recognized in the book published with the RESCuE results, which includes both a chapter of conceptual development (Boost et al., 2020) and a chapter with a critical perspective (Calado et al., 2020).

Simultaneously, during this period, the resilience agenda was institutionally recognized, progressively integrating the post-crisis policy rhetoric of the EU. However, the political investment in resilience contrasted with the weak and speculative results obtained in the RESCuE project. The scientific literature that was being published, even the more enthusiastic, revealed the same difficulties in finding "extraordinary results in the ordinary" (Masten, 2001).

But none of this affected the growth of resilience. Why has resilience gained such centrality in post-crisis European political discourse? Why is resilience so appealing for policy development? What are the implications of incorporating this theoretical framework into the European social agenda? As we will see in the next sections, resilience quickly evolved from a scientific concept or approach to a political discourse or agenda. Considering that the RESCuE project itself started from the EC's need to better understand this concept and its possible usefulness for European policies, the upward trajectory of resilience on the European agenda became a research question itself.

In short, this research has its origins in an ambitious international research project, dedicated to deepening knowledge about resilience. But the critical reflection on the results of the project and the evolution of the political context opened new paths for its study. Two lines of questioning shaped the research plan. First, the possibility of building theoretical models that integrate the complexity of resilience processes, and how they help to understand the experiences of individuals and structures in crisis contexts. Second, whether its implicit ideology contributed to its attractiveness in European policies during and in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Additionally, the research questioned the implications of resilience for social policies, and what this tells us about institutional responses to the most recent crises.

2.2. Theoretical framework

The conceptual development of the notion of resilience is one of the main objectives of the dissertation. Theoretical reflection on what resilience is, its scope, its object of analysis, its foundations, its properties, and its mode of operation, were both starting and ending points of the dissertation. As discussed, the research starts from the intrigue surrounding a notion and the search for a social phenomenon that corresponds to its definition. But it evolves from dissatisfaction with the empirical findings of the RESCuE project, where it was difficult to find distinctive practices, behaviours or innovative actions on the part of resilient individuals. Resilience was shaped as an enigma, in which the definition precedes the phenomenon, and the result precedes the process.

The origins of resilience as a scientific concept go back to the beginning of the 19th century, in physical engineering, referring to the ability of a material to absorb energy when it is deformed and release this energy when unloading (Hellige, 2019). This interpretation was eventually appropriated by psychology, which from the 1950s onwards has used the concept as a framework for studying people's ability to cope with traumatic experiences, such as the survivors of Nazi concentration camps and victims of child abuse (Bonnano, 2004; Eitinger, 1964; Frankl, 1959; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1999; Werner, 1977). In the 1970s, human ecology also used the concept to study how and to what extent ecosystems can regenerate in the face of serious external disturbances, such as droughts, pollution, or overexploitation of natural resources (Adger, 2000; Berkes, Colding & Folke, 2003; Folke, 2006; Holling, 1973; Holling et al., 1995; Waller, 2001). From the 21st century onwards, particularly with the onset of the financial crisis, resilience began to gain interest in social sciences, quickly generating a relevant literature that sought to integrate this notion into the study of the impacts of socioeconomic crises on populations (Canvin et al., 2009; Davidson, 2008). When applied to social phenomena, resilience generally refers to the ability of individuals, groups, or communities to withstand and respond positively to disturbances or contexts of adversity, using their own means (Batty & Cole, 2010).

The interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary trajectory of resilience contributed to its development as a "boundary object" in the scientific field (Baggio, Brown & Hellebrandt, 2015), which is defined as a concept or notion shared by several disciplines or fields of study, but which are defined and/or used differently between each one. If frontier objects allow the coordination of different groups in search of consensus on objectives and research interests, they also create a false idea of shared language, analytical continuity, and theoretical consolidation. Thus, the meanings of the notion of resilience have been negotiated and adjusted over time, depending on the disciplinary interest and the research topics, which implies that there is no single agreement on a definition between the various disciplinary fields.

Hence, the concept of resilience has an ambiguous and plastic quality, which integrates diverse and even divergent perspectives, within and between fields of knowledge. In general, resilience is a characteristic or set of characteristics that can be applied in different ways to individuals, families and communities, cities, nations, and different systems, such as ecological or social (Brown, 2011). The term has been applied to emphasize the adaptive capacities of individuals to crises or adversity, but it also represents the ability of ecosystems to recover from external large-scale shocks. The concept tends to be focused on individual agency, but it has also been widely used to describe communities, cities, economies, societies, nations, or ecosystems.

One of the areas where the notion of resilience reveals greater conceptual ambiguity concerns its ontological condition. The most common interpretation is that of resilience as a resource, where it is framed as a strategy or a practice. Resilience here is understood as the materialization or expression of the adjustments that individuals or systems must make to face socio-material insecurity or overcome the context of crisis. Another frequent interpretation is that of resilience as an attribute, serving to describe people, families, communities, or systems. In this sense, the resilience held by the individual explains the practices and makes them successful. Not being a fixed attribute, it can be developed or enhanced in people. But it also accepts that certain people or systems do not have resilience. Finally, another common interpretation is that of resilience as a process. This serves to describe the dynamic social relationships that happen in situations of crisis or sudden and accelerated systemic transitions, which relate agency strategies to structural factors.

Despite the diversity and malleability that characterizes resilience, there are several elements that are shared by multiple definitions. The first element is the idea that resilience is originated or activated by a shock or disorder, which will trigger responses to cope with it. This idea leads to an interpretation of how processes of change work in critical situations, at the individual or systemic level. The assumption is that they initiate adaptation processes or behaviours to the impacts and/or new circumstances created by the disorder.

The second element is the idea that shocks are not always negative. Even if they create adverse circumstances to people or jeopardize the functioning of the system, they are also opportunities for beneficial change, if they are taken advantage of. In other words, the context of difficulty created by the systemic crisis has the potential to stimulate people to be creative and innovative, the same applying to the design of policies.

The third element is the idea that resilience is a property of people or systems. Regardless of the form it takes or the function it performs, their ability to respond to disturbances stems from the development of their resilient property.

The fourth element concerns the positive outcomes of resilience, whether associated with individuals as an attribute or with practices or strategies as a process. Resilience inevitably results in a version of success, which can be described as beating the odds, performing better than expectation, returning to pre-shock state, or emerging to a new stage of development.

Within the framework of conceptual development, we discussed two prominent interpretations of resilience in social sciences, which have been extremely influential in shaping its meaning in other areas of social life. The first interpretation focuses on the individual, approaching it from an agency point of view, while the second interpretation focuses on systems, approaching it from a structural point of view. The individual perspective is the one that arguably corresponds to the immediate and intuitive image that people have of resilience, which reveals its penetration in popular discourse, and which has also been increasingly influential in policies to combat poverty and social vulnerability. The structural perspective, not being so explicit in popular discourse, has contributed to shaping how we think about contemporary societies and future challenges, having gained vast influence in policies and strategic investment, in areas such as the environment, the economy or security.

The individual perspective is what we called “heroic” resilience. It refers to the ability of individuals to withstand and respond positively to contexts of adversity or risk, instead of being defeated by them (Batty & Cole, 2010). For example, these shocks can be material deprivation, pandemics, illnesses and addictions, psychological trauma, job loss, etc. These approaches thus favour the agency of “ideal” subjects, who, because of their attributes or the resources they are able to mobilize, develop attitudes, behaviours, strategies or solutions that make them capable of facing adversity.

By focusing specifically on positive responses, these approaches give the term an additional meaning of “beating the odds” (Seccombe, 2002). Crises or hardship are, in this context, presented as opportunities to overcome and change the condition, but only reserved for those who know how, or are daring to use their resilience (Brockner & James, 2008).

If this interpretation sounds quite familiar and is applicable to the most varied contexts and situations, it has also been the object of various criticisms as a sociological concept. When conceptualized as an individual attribute, it tends to naturalize social agency, which is understood as the result of the resilience held by each individual, disregarding the social, economic, and cultural factors that facilitate or constrain it (Dagdeviren, Donoghue & Promberger, 2016).

The burden of responsibility for overcoming constraints and hardship thus passes to individuals, as they just need to use or work on their resilience to achieve good outcomes. Heroic resilience implicitly restricts this attribute to a select few, who do not let pessimistic outlooks weigh them down, and this has consequences in social policies (Harrison, 2013). Insofar as resilience proposes that individuals have the capacity to overcome crises and that they will do so with their own resources, the role of policies is to "get out of the way" and allow individuals to express their resolve, entrepreneurship, and diligence.

Considering that logically most individuals cannot beat the odds, this view establishes a broad audience to whom these measures are not applicable because they do not have enough resilience to justify the investment (Promberger et al., 2019). Once again, the onus of policies shifts to individuals, insofar as the success of interventions depends on the development of their resilience, devaluing the responsibility of the welfare state.

Alongside this individualist perspective on resilience, another perspective has gained traction that addresses this phenomenon from a structural or institutional point of view. This line of research is dedicated to the study of resilience in social systems in contexts of socioeconomic crises (Endreß, 2019; Meyen & Schier, 2019), inspired by social ecology approaches and studies of the impacts of environmental disasters on human communities (CARRI, 2013).

These approaches assimilate social structures in the analysis of resilience processes of socio-ecological systems in situations of sudden and accelerated change, while they readapt to new environmental conditions. Resilience does not only depend on the action of individuals and their ability to mobilize resources, but on the fact that these are inserted in institutional contexts that frame behavioural standards, rules and norms that govern societies. In this sense, Adger (2000: 354) states that "social resilience is institutionally determined, in the sense that institutions permeate all social systems and institutions fundamentally determine the economic system in terms of its structure and distribution of assets."

Socio-ecological approaches tend to develop conceptual models from two different perspectives, which are often confused. One that addresses resilience as an analytical perspective and another that addresses resilience as a property of systems. The implications that result from the choice of perspective, from the point of view of academic research or political discourse, are different and must be considered separately.

The first interpretation refers to an operational approach that defines resilience as the process through which macrostructures absorb shocks and initiate processes of internal reorganization, which allows them to stabilize their components and reduce their vulnerabilities. The uniqueness of these processes is precisely due to the nature of the shocks, which tend to be characterized as external, unforeseen, and sudden. The second interpretation refers to an evaluative approach, in which resilience is defined as a property that manifests itself in the adaptation processes of systems to shocks, pointing out what should be its desired outcomes.

Socio-ecological approaches have also been subject to various criticisms. They tend to promote a perspective that naturalizes financial and economic crises, equating them with natural disasters (Neocleous, 2013). The triggering of financial and economic crises is both unpredictable and inevitable, against which we can do nothing about, but to be prepared to respond after it happens. Another criticism is the normativism related to the analysis of adaptive processes. Generically, resilient systems are those that can respond positively to crises, so it is the interpretation of the outcomes of adaptive processes that will determine its resilience (Walker et al., 2004). In turn, this property is the explanation for the results, forming an analytical circularity.

Furthermore, anchoring resilience to a positive response from systems marginalizes those who are not able to overcome crises, implicitly justifying these results by the lack of resilience (Donoghue & Edmiston, 2020). This view also tends to devalue the quality of relationships within social systems, establishing the stability of social structures as the goal of these processes. Thus, resilience processes aim at recovering the social order, reducing conflict, and regaining control of mechanisms for redistributing resources and power. Finally, these approaches tend to hide the costs and risks associated with adaptation processes.

In short, the dissertation has its genesis in the attempt to conceptualize an omnipresent but elusive phenomenon. If the notion of resilience was everywhere, supported by a growing and dynamic scientific literature, the exercise of identifying a specific and distinct sociological phenomenon became no less demanding. In the social sciences, the concept seems to precede the existence of the phenomenon, which raised the question about the soundness of its theoretical foundations.

Thus, this study aims to deepen sociological knowledge about the concept of resilience, starting from the critical analysis of these two interpretations that have influenced most research in social sciences. The review of the foundations of these definitions and the theoretical development of resilience are structured according to the following research questions. What are the properties and distinctive features of this phenomenon from a sociological point of view? How can we operationalize these concepts in the context of sociological research? What are the implications of these analytical approaches for our understanding of the responses of individuals and social systems to shocks?

2.3. Pertinence and current debate

In the study of resilience, it is important to distinguish between the concept, as it has been defined in the scientific field, and the resilience discourse or the resilience agenda. This relates to appropriations of the concept, and the theoretical perspective that embodies it, in other areas of knowledge such as the media field, the political field, or the business field (Meyen & Schier, 2019).

Discourse refers to scientific definitions, giving it substance and legitimizing the interpretation of reality, but they should not be confused as the same. They are not direct and faithful interpretations of this knowledge, not least because within each disciplinary field there are divergent and even conflicting analytical and theoretical perspectives. Rather, they are mediated and adapted appropriations for the social field[4] in which they are used, integrating norms, power relations and the specific language of each field, and for the recipients to whom they are directed.

Therefore, we can speak of a process of adaptive reflexivity[5] to each specific context of discursive production. Within the scope of the dissertation, the discourse of resilience in the political sphere is also a research problem. We are not so interested in understanding to what extent these processes of appropriation of scientific knowledge are correct, but rather exploring how resilience has been interpreted in the political field and what are the possible reasons for its emerging status.

In this sense, this dissertation is also about the experience of the financial crisis in Europe. The crisis not only provides the social context for the empirical analysis. Indeed, the financial crisis between 2007/08 and 2015 presents a set of characteristics that are relevant to understanding the rapid rise of resilience in political discourse, as well as its role in the responses of national governments and European institutions to the crises that followed, notably the COVID-19 global pandemic.

[4] The notion of social field as used in this study follows the Bourdieu conceptualization, who generally defines it as arenas of production, circulation, appropriation and exchange of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive relationships between actors to accumulate different kinds of capital (Bourdieu, 1983, 1993b).

[5] The notion of reflexivity as used in this context follows the Giddens definition, as "the routine incorporation of new knowledge or information into environments of action that are thereby reconstituted or reorganised" (Giddens, 1991: 243).

As argued in the previous section, the notion of resilience had some tradition in the scientific field, mainly in psychology and social ecology. With the turn of the century, resilience began to proliferate in public and media discourse. The notion gained a buzzword status, integrating the common lexicon in the most diverse contexts and defining the most varied phenomena (Meyen & Schier, 2019).

During this period, resilience became part of the glossary of scientific research and the political agenda in the most diverse areas of knowledge and strategic intervention. These trends are highlighted in two studies, based on bibliometric analysis of the notion of resilience in academia and its intersection with "policy-making".

The first study, by Xu & Marinova (2013), shows that 2007 represented a turning point in terms of interest and visibility of the concept of resilience in academic production. Since the 1970s there has been consistent scientific production, but with a slight growth trajectory. From the advent of the subprime crisis, there was an abrupt and sharp rise in interest, reinforced in the following years. The analysis also identifies that the fields with the greatest growth were the study of socio-economic systems and research on the sustainability of socio-ecological systems, related to the financial crisis and climate change, respectively.

The second study, by Baggio, Brown & Hellebrandt (2015), updates and reinforces the results by Xu & Marinova. Likewise, the turn of the century marks an increase in the interest of academia in the notion of resilience, albeit predominantly within the disciplinary areas in which it was already consolidated. The advent of the financial crisis ignites a period of growth and expansion, with a general increase in interest in the notion and into areas where it had no tradition. The authors present two main conclusions. First, that the increased interest benefited all disciplines, with social ecology and psychology remaining the most prominent. However, they point to the social sciences as the area with the fastest and most accentuated growth. Second, they analyse the appropriation of the notion of resilience in areas of policy production, to test the usage of the notion in the political field. In this regard, they point to a growing trend of use of resilience in the political agenda, pointing to management and response to natural disasters and poverty alleviation as the areas with greater relevance and visibility.

The advent of the financial crisis represented a "social turn" towards resilience (Brown, 2014), which gave it a new and emerging status in social sciences. However, in most cases, the expansion of these approaches to social phenomena did not imply the redefinition of the theoretical foundations of resilience, and in some cases, there was even a process of conceptual simplification. For example, social ecology approaches showed a high level of sophistication when compared to socio-economic approaches.

The social resilience approach thus started from a set of theoretical principles appropriated from other disciplinary fields, and was developed through research in the most varied areas and themes, such as poverty and social exclusion (Adger & Winkels, 2014; Athwal, Brill & Chesters, 2011; Burchardt & Huerta, 2009; Dou et al., 2020; Hickman, 2018; Hickman et al., 2013; Mullin & Arce, 2008; Okech et al., 2012), social work (Aburn et al., 2020; Kearns & McArdle, 2012; McMurray et al., 2008; Wódz, Faliszek & Trzeszkowska-Nowak, 2018), employment and the labour market (Assmann et al., 2021; Doran & Fingleton, 2016; Fugard, 2011; Longstaff, 2011; Sedmak, 2011), local governance and community development (Harrison, 2013; Korosteleva, 2020; Lowndes & McCaughie, 2013; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2016; Robinson & Carson, 2016; Shaw, 2012; Shaw & Maythorne, 2011), environmental and climate change (Adger & Brown, 2009; Bahadur, Ibrahim & Tanner, 2013; Brown, 2014; Pelling, Manuel-Navarrete & Redclift, 2012; Moritz & Agudo, 2013), national and regional economies (Bristow & Healy, 2015; Christopherson, Michie & Tyler, 2010; Giannakis & Bruggeman, 2017; Sedita, Noni & Pilotti, 2017; Wink, 2012), urban studies and planning (Christmann, Kilper & Ibert, 2019, Evans, 201;; Lang, 2011); management and recovery from natural disasters (Akter & Mallick, 2013; Barrow, 2018; Parsons, 2019); security (Cavelty, Kaufmann & Kristensen, 2015; Chandler, 2015; Coaffee & Fussey, 2015; O'Malley, 2010), among others.

Empirical research was greatly influenced by the context of social, economic, and political crisis that defined that period, approaching resilience from the point of view of its operationalization as a policy concept. In this regard, most academic research followed a path of conceptual validation. Given the open and malleable quality of the concept of resilience, it was not difficult for empirical studies to identify and classify the most diverse practices or behaviours to cope with the crisis as resilient (Batty & Cole, 2010; Canvin et al., 2009; Hickman et al., 2013). A vast literature quickly emerged that associated the characterization of social resilience with the presentation of models and proposals for its development among vulnerable people or groups.

In contrast to the effervescence shown by the volume of publications, the operationalization of this research into policy soon revealed some practical difficulties. First, it turns out to be easier to find resilient subjects than resilient practices. The process of identifying the phenomenon basically consisted of signalling subjects with actual or perceived success in the way they coped with the financial crisis, collecting their success stories and retroactively decomposing them as resilient strategies or practices.

The question of the transferability to other people or contexts thus remained a problem, aggravated by the fact that research has revealed great difficulty in finding innovative or exceptional strategies or practices. Other perspectives emerged in this debate, pointing to the risks and dangers of appropriating this concept for the study of socioeconomic crises, namely the devaluation of the influence of structural factors on the individuals' opportunities, the legitimization of the retreat of the State's social investment and the implicit promotion of a given political agenda (Harrison, 2013; McKeown, Bui & Glenn, 2022).

Whereas the increase in popularity of resilience in the scientific field was accompanied by debate and controversy, it quickly emerged as a priority strategy in the political field. It started to be increasingly used in political responses to social, economic, political, and ecological challenges, framed both as a preventive or responsive strategy for adapting or overcoming crisis contexts (Donoghue & Edmiston, 2020).

The financial crisis thus provides the socio-political context for resilience to evolve into a "bridge concept" status (Baggio, Brown & Hellebrandt, 2015). The notion came to serve as a link between the scientific and political fields, simultaneously sustaining the exponential growth of research in this area and being strategically used to formulate and legitimize policy agendas.

Accordingly, most national and international organizations began to include objectives explicitly related to resilience in their institutional mission. In the United States of America (USA), the Agency for International Development now includes a specific agenda dedicated to resilience[6], while the Department of Homeland Security has established the security and resilience of the nation's critical infrastructures as one of its core objectives[7]. In the UK, the Cabinet Office published, in 2011, the *Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience*, to help enhance the resilience of communities in the face of natural disasters, terrorist attacks or pandemics, by supporting people's ability to help themselves to themselves to overcome crises.

[6] For more information, see: https://www.usaid.gov/resilience (last accessed: 16/11/2022).
[7] For more information, see: https://www.dhs.gov/topics/resilience (last accessed: 16/11/2022).

Since the beginning of the decade, the WB had been producing literature focused on resilience in areas such as housing, climate change or poverty in developing countries. The crisis has prompted an increased focus on economic resilience, as exemplified by reports, such as: *Will FDI be resilient in this crisis?* (Calderon & Didier, 2009), *Economic resilience: Definition and measurement* (Hallegatte, 2014)*, Socioeconomic resilience: Multi-Hazard estimates in 117 countries* (Hallegatte, Bangalore & Vogt-Schilb, 2016), among others. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has a similar investment profile in operationalizing policy resilience. This agenda is presented as a preventive and mitigation strategy in the face of various forms of risk and vulnerability[8], focusing on areas such as poverty, the economy or climate change (OECD, 2012, 2014, 2016).

In the EU the concept of resilience also became part of political rhetoric. The characterization of its applications in the European agenda during the 2010s is particularly revealing of the evolution of the understanding of this concept and the way in which it was politically framed. In 2012, within the framework of its humanitarian aid programmes to "development countries", the EC stipulated the guiding principles of resilience, defining it as "the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, cope, adapt, and quickly recover from stresses and shocks such as violence, conflict, drought and other natural disasters without compromising long-term development" (European Commission, 2012: 3). In 2013, still in the context of humanitarian aid, this perspective evolved into a greater emphasis on reducing poverty in "crisis-prone countries" (European Commission, 2013: 1), being problematized in the relationship between the (in)ability to governance of States and their vulnerability to economic crises, military conflicts, or natural disasters. In this formulation, the instability of the social systems of these countries is established as a condition for resilience.

The advent of the financial crisis eventually represented a reorientation of these approaches towards the interior of the EU. The financial crisis was constructed as a systemic shock (Hermann, 2014), which jeopardized the stability of European economic and financial systems (Vis, van Kersbergen & Hylands, 2011). In this context, resilience is presented as a safeguard for European populations to withstand the effects of economic recession and austerity policies, but also as a solution for European societies to recover and re-emerge more prepared in the future.

[8] For more information, see: https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/risk-resilience (last accessed: 18/11/2022).

Resilience thus asserts itself as a "key concept" in the EU narrative, "as a response to increasing uneasiness about potential shocks that would test the limits of the coping capacities of individuals, regions, countries and institutions, and that we cannot hope to eliminate (e.g., digital innovation, demographic change, climate change, globalization or immigration)" (European Commission, 2018: 5). Following this understanding, the *Reflection Paper on the Social Dimension of Europe* claims that "at a time of rapid and constant change, the focus should be on empowering individuals and building more resilient societal structures able to adapt successfully over time" (European Commission, 2017: 22). Likewise, the EU's *European Pillars of Social Rights* calls for a "stronger focus on employment and social performance [which] is particularly important to increase resilience and deepen the Economic and Monetary Union" (European Union, 2017: 8).

The path of resilience on the EU's political agenda is not limited to the financial crisis. On the contrary, it gained greater centrality with the COVID-19 global pandemic (Barbier-Gauchard et al., 2021; European Commission, 2020b; Sánchez et al., 2021; Wagner & Anholt, 2016). At the turn of the 2020s, resilience is at the heart of financial instruments to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic crisis suggests a new metamorphosis in the appropriation of the notion of resilience in the context of the EU political agenda, in alignment with international organizations, as we will discuss later.

In sum, the financial crisis provided the opportunity for the discourse of resilience to gain prominence in the political and academic agendas, especially in combating socio-material insecurity, in crisis management and in stabilizing and sustainability of economic structures. Although the substance of the notion and its use in political discourse has understandably been questioned, in what the writer Parul Sehgal has called the "deep emptiness of resilience"[9], it would be rash and wrong to reduce it to a rhetorical device. As we saw in the different uses of the notion in the EU's political agenda, its use is not devoid of meaning, much less of intention (Wagner & Anholt, 2016). On the contrary, it attributes ideological orientation and programmatic objectives to policies, even if these are not explicit or evident for citizens.

[9] The full article was published in the New York Times on December 1, 2015, and can be read here: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/magazine/the-profound-emptiness-of-resilience.html (last accessed: 16/11/2022).

In the appropriation of resilience to other areas, namely culture or politics, there is a process of conceptual metamorphosis, moving from an analytical model to a way of thinking and acting. In this framework, resilience assumes a simultaneously totalizing and malleable form, in the sense that it constitutes a solution to the present disturbances and is applicable in different areas and intervention plans, which makes it an equally effective message for individual and structural levels (Neocleous, 2013).

On an individual level, it promotes the ideas of agency, control, and recursion. Dealing with uncertainty and social risk can be mitigated by taking the initiative and exploiting one's own resources, by transforming crises into opportunities. In this context, the notion began to frame political responses to social and political challenges, refocusing social policies on individual agency. Structurally, it reinforces the ideas of prevention, adaptability, and instability. In a world characterized by social risks and constant and accelerated change, the need for prevention and the adaptability of social structures has become a central priority in contemporary societies. The development of resilience emerges here as the solution that allows not only to deal with and manage future crises, but also guarantees the recovery of the conditions prior to the advent of the shock, if not even the transition to a better state or situation.

The relationship of mutual influence between the development of resilience as a scientific field and its appropriation by the political field in the context of the financial crisis is included in the research's guiding questions. What are the characteristics of the experiences of resilience in facing the financial crisis on the part of European households? What are the characteristics of the financial crisis and what are the main effects on institutional change processes in European countries? Did the financial crisis influence the rise and characteristics of the resilience agenda in the context of European policies?

Also considering the increased centrality of resilience in the resilience agenda in the EU's strategic priorities, it is also important to question the metamorphoses of the concept since the financial crisis and its implicit ideology. How has the appropriation of the notion of resilience evolved in the context of European policies? What are the implications of incorporating this theoretical framework into the European social agenda? How are resilience policies compatible with mainstream EU policy trends? Does the analysis of this discourse help us to understand the meanings of post-crisis political responses?

CHAPTER 3

Research design

3.1. Research objectives

This dissertation describes a scientific trajectory that aimed to provide answers to a set of questions (listed in the previous chapter) that initiated and guided the research. To fulfil this purpose, the research questions were operationalized into research objectives, that were organized in three analytical dimensions: (i) the theoretical dimension, (ii) the empirical dimension, and (iii) the political dimension.

The theoretical dimension is dedicated to assessing the potential and usefulness of the concept of resilience for understanding social phenomena. It includes two objectives:

i. Deepen sociological knowledge about resilience, starting from a critical analysis of two prominent theoretical approaches to the concept in social sciences;
ii. Propose a definition of resilience for the study of social phenomena, contributing to the consolidation of this field of research in sociology.

In this context, we attempted to develop theoretical instruments for the analysis and understanding of resilience processes through empirical research, both at agency and structural levels. This exercise aimed to test the versatility and usefulness of studying resilience at different levels of analysis, considering the implications for the conceptual definition, for the analysis models and for the understanding of the phenomena.

The empirical dimension consists of the operationalization and testing of the resilience theoretical models, to examine the effects and impacts of the financial crisis on populations and social structures. It includes three objectives:

i. Critically understand the experiences of resilience at individual level, through the analysis of strategies and practices for coping with the crisis;
ii. Understand and evaluate the role of the financial crisis on the processes of institutional change in Europe;
iii. Test the influence of institutional frameworks, through comparative analysis of resilience processes in three countries with different capitalist and welfare models.

In this context, we assessed the social and political implications of the transition if resilience-based research and models to the design of public policies. Considering the increased centrality of the resilience agenda in the EU's strategic priorities, as manifested in post-pandemic crisis agenda, we also addressed the metamorphoses of the concept since the financial crisis and the implicit ideology conveyed in this discourse. This analysis aims to contribute to the discussion on the orientation of post-pandemic crisis recovery plans and the future of the European social and economic agenda.

3.2. Research plan

Once the research objectives were established, a work plan was defined consisting of four phases of research development:

i. Literature review and theoretical development;
ii. Methodological approach and empirical testing;
iii. Data analysis and elaboration of research products;
iv. Progression of the final dissertation.

The sequential logic of the phases does not refer to the research project as a whole but follows the path for the elaboration of each of the articles included in the dissertation. Thus, each phase is revisited in different time periods and with different objectives and analytical approaches, contributing cumulatively to the final dissertation. This strategy made it possible to maintain a dynamic structure, which was easily adjusted to the research options and needs, also contributing to the learning process and the maturation of scientific knowledge.

Figure 3.1: The dynamic phases of the research plan.

The literature review and theoretical development is mainly focused on two topics: resilience and the financial crisis. The analysis was based on scientific and technical literature review; the analysis of quantitative and qualitative information; the discussions with the co-authors of each article and with members of national RESCuE teams in each country; and unstructured interviews with specialists in the research topics. The issues and topics of each article were defined in the initial design of the project but were revised and adjusted according to the findings produced from the elaboration of each article.

The preparation of the methodological approach and the empirical testing consisted of three main tasks: (i) case study selection; (ii) preparation of the methodological strategy, and (iii) fieldwork.

Insofar as the RESCuE project was the starting point for the investigation, the empirical research was based on a European comparative analysis. Considering the accessible resources, the number of countries included in the study was adjusted to three, namely: Portugal, Ireland, and Poland. The choice of this approach aimed to benefit research in three areas. First, the continuation of the work with the RESCuE project's research teams in these three countries, benefiting from their knowledge of the research object and issues. Second, the engagement with the RESCuE teams in each country was fundamental for the selection and access to empirical data. Third, the research aimed to analyse the relationships between experiences at national level and policy responses at European level, thus the selection of case studies within the EU benefited testing hypotheses and consolidation of research findings.

The selection criteria for the case studies aimed to encompass the heterogeneity of experiences of the financial crisis and types of institutional models within the EU. For this purpose, it was used the typology of varieties of capitalism by Hall & Soskice (2001), which classifies the growth models of developed economies based on a comparative analysis of their institutional foundations and the complementary relationships between them. It provides an overview of the different economic and institutional models in Europe, which correspond to different geographic areas, allowing the cases to be both representative of certain groups of countries and diversified for the European continent (Amable & Palombarini, 2009; Becker & Jäger, 2012; Bohle, 2018; Nölke & Vliegenthart, 2009; Rapacki et al., 2020).

It is also important to note that the varieties of capitalism, not referring specifically to the social models of each country, correspond generically to the welfare state models identified in Europe (De La Porte & Heins, 2016; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Schubert, de Villota & Kuhlmann, 2016). Thus, we consider three varieties of capitalism in the sample: Ireland represents the Anglo-Saxon or Liberal model; Portugal represents the model of Southern Europe or the Mediterranean model; and Poland is part of the Post-Communist model, specifically the Visegrad model.

The preparation of the methodological instruments was carried out according to the research object for each article and the empirical data accessible in each country. Empirical research was based on the national level, both in relation to the analysis of the household-level experiences of hardship (article 4) and the analysis of the implementation of the adjust measures and its implications to institutional change (article 5).

The focus on household experiences and policy change aimed, on the one hand, to explore and test the potential and limitations of models for operationalizing the concept of resilience at agential and structural levels, and on the other hand, to explore the interactions between practices and social structures in defining the processes and outcomes of resilience. The fieldwork, which will be detailed in the methodological guide, was supported by the RESCuE teams in each country, namely in terms of providing access to interviews, access to documents and field reports, linguistic support, analysis of information collected in the field, and monitoring and sharing ideas regarding research development.

The data analysis and elaboration of the research products consisted of the analysis of the empirical data collected in the previous phase and its articulation with the theoretical development. Thus, this phase is dedicated to the elaboration of each of the five articles that comprise this dissertation. It is important to underline that the logic of knowledge development about the realities studied was cumulative, since the articles have different topics and goals and were developed at different stages of the research. The five articles intend to express a scientific trajectory, in which each one of them represents a phase of development and maturation of the investigation, while also trying to integrate the most recent literature and current debates on the research topics and problems.

The final dissertation is the result of the articulation of the entire trajectory of the investigation in a common and integrated perspective. Although the various research tasks had been previously programmed, their results were not determined, nor how they would contribute to the scientific knowledge produced within the scope of the research project.

Thus, it is the moment of the research where the articulation of the various contributions to the dissertation and the critical reflection of the results took place, an exercise revisited in each cycle of the research plan. In the dynamic logic established for this research, each new article was integrated into the general conclusions of the thesis, which in turn guided the next steps to be taken. This phase also allowed for the inclusion of important research findings that, for some reason, was not possible to incorporate in the articles.

3.3. Methodological guide

In general terms, considering the general objectives of this study, the work program was based on a multimethod approach. The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches has the benefits of greater ability to include and combine different types of data and analysis techniques, greater flexibility to adjust to any new questions to be worked on or empirical materials that are pertinent to include, and by fostering a more sustained understanding of research problems (Morgan, 2017; Pearce, 2012; Woolley, 2009).

The investment in methodological plurality thus aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the research object, combining information collected from two perspectives: (i) the development of knowledge about resilience processes, which was based on the analysis of household narratives and policy measures implemented during the financial crisis; (ii) the development of knowledge about the financial crisis, its effects and impacts in Europe, which was based on statistical data, document analysis, interview analysis and literature review.

The general approach to empirical collection and analysis was indebted to the RESCuE project. This option was quite natural, given that the construction of the work plan, the initial part of the collection of information and the elaboration of the first products of this dissertation, were carried out during this project. Furthermore, this project mobilized a substantive empirical apparatus, both in terms of the quantity and quality of the data collected. Added to this is the fact that, as a researcher on the Portuguese team, I was involved in the production of the instruments for data collection and in the fieldwork of the project. In turn, the supervisors of this dissertation were the coordinators of the national teams from Portugal, Ireland and Poland. Finally, it allowed efficient management of the resources available for the development of the work plan.

The empirical collection specifically carried out within the scope of the dissertation work plan served essentially to complement the information obtained through the RESCuE project, mainly due to three orders of necessity: (i) the data already collected needed updating or deepening; (ii) there were gaps in the information worked on in the RESCuE project; and (iii) the work program included dimensions of analysis not worked on in the RESCuE project. Thus, the empirical data from the RESCuE project constituted the basis for the research, and the collection of additional materials was oriented towards the production of the articles.

The methods and techniques used had an eminently instrumental status in this study. This means that their selection and mobilization was made according to the research object of each article. In this sense, the thesis does not include specific methodological objectives. Yet, in certain situations, I had an explicit intention to experiment with approaches I was less familiar with, such as secondary analysis of qualitative data. Thus, the methodological guide essentially consists of the descriptive memory of the methods used in the collection and analysis of the empirical data, articulated with the reasoning behind those options.

Considering that the first two articles included in this dissertation are essentially theoretical, the presentation of the methodological approaches will be based on the remaining three articles. First, we are going to address more the strategy followed for article 4, which is directly related with the RESCuE methodological approach, and then address articles 3 and 5 together, which followed similar strategies.

For article 4 ("Fighting poverty in times of crisis in Europe: Is resilience a hidden resource for social policy?"), the empirical component consisted of a comparative analysis of the experiences of hardship of three families during the financial crisis, one for each of the countries included in the research. The research used emblematic cases (Tarrant & Hughes, 2019), based on life history methods that use the individual case as a "key to unlock the social" (Henderson et al., 2012).

The approach followed to carry out this study was a qualitative secondary analysis (QSA), using as primary data interviews collected for the RESCuE project. In social sciences research, QSA aims to reuse previously collected qualitative data, critically reanalyse and recontextualize them, to develop new perspectives on social phenomena (Hughes & Tarrant, 2019).

The choice to use QSA in this study was due to the research needs and a set of benefits associated with this method. From a practical point of view, the use of secondary data facilitated the efficient management of resources available for the research, also allowing to overcome linguistic and cultural limitations that would eventually arise with using primary data from Poland and Ireland. Another reason is related to the quality of data collected within the scope of the RESCuE project. To respond to the various work packages included in this project, the interviews were extensive and multidimensional. Furthermore, the criteria and instruments used were rigorously defined and monitored, so that the comparative analysis could be carried out. The type of analysis intended for this article was also a reason that justified the choice. It was intended to demonstrate that when moving from an analysis of practices to an analysis of processes, and from the identification of benefits to a comprehensive analysis of the effects, we could, from the same empirical basis, obtain quite different portraits of resilience.

For this reason, it is important to characterize the methodological procedures that were at the origin of the primary data. The RESCuE project developed a qualitative approach based on 40 household interviews, carried out in nine European countries between October 2014 and June 2015 (Promberger, 2017). In each country, at least one urban case study and one rural case study were selected. The sampling strategy included a set of criteria to increase diversity: household composition, gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic circumstances, duration of poverty, or types of income (Boost et al., 2020). It was predetermined that these criteria would be covered in at least one of the selected cases, but there were no fixed proportions, to allow the sample to adjust to cultural and social specificities of each country and case study.

Based on this sample, in-depth interviews were conducted to 24 households in each country, divided equally between urban and rural environments. At a later stage, follow-up interviews were carried out with 16 households, also equally divided by territorial typology. Interviews could take place individually or in groups, depending on the composition of the household or the practical circumstances in which the interview was carried out. The authors of this article were actively involved in the collection of the primary data, as they were part of the national teams of Portugal, Poland and Ireland.

The first series of interviews followed the biographical method, collecting life stories and the experiences of resilience of the participants, in a longitudinal approach. This option allowed framing the narratives around the financial crisis period, within personal, cultural, and historical contexts (Gray & Dagg, 2019). A written interview guide was produced, functioning as a systematic interface between the life stories and the analytical interests of subsequent work packages. It included topics such as accessible resources, restrictions and the socio-economic and cultural practices of the interviewees were addressed; people's family history and life trajectories; local contexts, sociability networks and the community; the role and influence of spatial dynamics; involvement of welfare services and local organizations; constraints related to gender, migration and ethnicity inequalities and discrimination; their perception of the crisis, the policy measures to combat it and society in general; their social role and life circumstances; among others.

The second series of interviews used the photo elicitation technique (Revilla, Martín & de Castro, 2018). Following the first round of interviews, cameras were given to the interviewees so that they could photograph their lives and perspectives of the world. Although there was freedom of interpretation of the exercise, a guiding script was created to help the interviewees. The script was composed of simple and open topics, so as not to be too prescriptive. Examples of these topics are: "my home", "my favourite things", "family meals", "my beliefs", "what makes me happy", "my obstacles", among others. The photographs served as clear visual clues for the second round of interviews, which were structured according to the presentation and explanation of the photos by the interviewee.

For the purposes of Article 4, the empirical analysis was exclusively based on the biographical interviews of the first phase. Thus, an in-depth secondary analysis of interview was carried out, aiming to capture the unique and comprehensive resilience experiences of specific families. The objectives were to understand the resilience processes and their effects and consequences on the households' ways of life. In addition, through the analysis of cases from different national contexts, we assessed the role and impact of the social environment in these processes.

The initial identification of the cases was made based on the analysis of the main conclusions of the RESCuE national reports Working Package 4 of each country and two auxiliary analytical tools: (1) the list of profiles of the households and (2) practical sheets, on the employment's themes, goods, and consumption. From a first selection of several household interviews that met the criteria, it was selected one family per country using the purposeful sampling technique (Emmel, 2013).

This technique favours the selection of cases that provide data to answer the research questions, while also being flexible to adjust to the research resources and limitations. It was important that the selected cases were illustrative of household resilience experiences (typical cases) and that they shared characteristics in some key areas (homogeneous cases), establishing connection and continuity in terms of contexts and themes. Contextual links refer to geographic context, household composition and socio-economic context, while thematic links refer to their poverty trajectories and experience of a recent shock/crisis in their life.

The analysis of the interviews was guided by a typology of socioeconomic resilience practices, developed for the RESCuE project (Dagdeviren & Donoghue, 2015). The use of the typology helped to identify areas of interest and delimit dimensions of analysis, also allowing this exercise to be placed within a broader substantive and theoretical context, questioning, and elaborating resilience as a dynamic process. This option aimed to gain a comprehensive and coherent understanding of household resilience experiences by giving participants a voice. It also avoided two frequent errors in qualitative research: (i) making the researcher's interactive empirical collection process the centre of the study in question; and (ii) transforming the analytical process into a vehicle for the uncritical reproduction of the interviewees' statements; in both cases revealing a lack of analytical sophistication (Nico, 2016).

Regarding the methodological approaches, articles 3 (“Welfare State development in Portugal: From “stage zero” to the post-crisis “leftist” compromise against austerity”) and article 5 (“Labour relations under duress in Europe: Contributions for social resilience theory”) follow a similar strategy. They consist essentially in synthesis exercises based on the review of scientific and technical literature, complemented with analysis of secondary statistical data (article 3) and exploratory interviews with experts (article 5).

In article 3, the empirical component consisted of the historical analysis of the evolution of the welfare state in Portugal, from the 1974 Revolution to the aftermath of the 2015 legislative elections. The analysis of the characteristics and evolution of social policies in Portugal was based on a scientific literature review, combining the various phases of development of the welfare state with the cycles of governance. This exercise is complemented with the analysis of Portuguese social and economic performance between 1974 and 2015, through the analysis of secondary statistical data. The sources used are the WB, the OECD and Eurostat.

In article 5, the empirical component aimed to analyse the impacts of the financial crisis on labour structures in Poland, Portugal, and Ireland, between 2008 and 2015. Labour structures are defined as the relationship between three pillars: labour law, industrial relations, and employment policies. The empirical objectives of the analysis consisted of understanding how the financial crisis and the resulting adjustment measures shaped labour market relations in Europe. The criteria used for the selection of countries used in the study was the typology of variety of capitalism (Hall & Soskice, 2001), aiming to simultaneously emphasize the heterogeneity and representativeness of the case studies. In this typology, Ireland integrates the Anglo-Saxon or Liberal model, Portugal integrates the Southern Europe or Mediterranean model, and Poland integrates the Post-Communist model, specifically the Visegrad model.

The empirical analysis essentially consisted of a comparative review of scientific literature and policy documents on the effects of the financial crisis on labour structures, and the impacts of the measures of adjustment in institutional change. The literature review covered these topics at case study level and the European level. The national literature provided information on the impacts of the crisis, the response strategy, and the consequences of its implementation, also allowing contextualization with the socio-political context. European literature provided context for the national strategies, as well as information on the EU's strategy to mitigate the crisis, general trends, and exceptional cases in the rest of Europe.

The literature review was also framed and contextualized by interviews with academic experts, carried out in the three countries between 2018 and 2019. The interviews focused, for each country, on the evolution of social and economic models, the impacts and effects of the financial crisis, the political responses implemented, and the economic and social performance in its aftermath. The purpose of these interviews was very diverse, including collecting relevant bibliography, gathering information on more up-to-date developments and trends, discussing some aspects of the literature reviewed, and flagging areas of interest to develop the empirical analysis. The empirical data collected in this context was used as background information in the article.

3.4. Presentation and internal coherence of the articles

As previously mentioned, this dissertation is composed of five scientific articles dedicated to studying the concept of resilience from different analytical perspectives, with the financial crisis having a dual status as a research object and an empirical framework for the analysis. The articles aim to achieve and/or respond to the objectives established in the research design, which

determined its format, analytical focus, and methodological approach. Thus, the first two articles are essentially of theoretical development, the third article is a historical synthesis for the Portuguese case, and the last two articles are based on comparative empirical analysis. The five articles will be presented synthetically, based on the following parameters: (i) context of production, in which we consider the concerns that were at its origin and the external relevance and the questions that guided the research; (ii) the research objectives and analytical approach; and (iii) the main findings of the investigation.

Article 1: Resilience: Moving from a "heroic" notion to a sociological concept (Estêvão, Calado, & Capucha, 2017)

The concerns that were at the origin of the first article were twofold. Firstly, the combined effects of the economic recession after the subprime crisis of 2007 and the widespread adoption of austerity policies in Europe from 2010 onwards had a profound impact on the peripheral countries of the EU, leading to a significant reduction in household income and increased vulnerability to poverty. Secondly, and given this adverse socioeconomic context, references to resilience became more visible in popular and political discourse. These references to resilience invariably carried a strong positive connotation, but their meaning was ambiguous. Even more, how resilience could be a useful concept for studying socio-material insecurity or individuals' responses to crises was far from clear.

For these reasons, the study proposed an analytical approach to the theoretical construction of the concept of resilience, informed by a sociological perspective. The theoretical elaboration was based on two main objectives: (i) to define the main pillars of a sociological concept of resilience; and (ii) to propose an analytical operationalization model for the concept, that brings new insights into the effects of economic hardship on families.

The analytical strategy was based on a review of the scientific literature on the concept of resilience, its origins, and applications to social phenomena. In a first approach, resilience is presented as a diffuse and malleable concept. In one case, resilience is defined as the result of an action, in others it appears as an innate ability that some people have, and others do not. What unifies the different perspectives is the emphasis on practices and individual skills, under the promise of overcoming hardship. This is the basis for the "heroic" notion of resilience, which has been the dominant interpretation of the concept when applied to social phenomena.

From the critique of this "heroic" perspective, it was proposed a definition of resilience that addresses the concept as a complex and dynamic process, through which societies, institutions and individuals respond to systemic shocks. The elaboration of this perspective was inspired by the concept of ways of life, which combines objective and subjective dimensions of poverty. For the operationalization of the concept, resource mobilization and shifting of risks were identified as key dimensions. The key insight that this sociological perspective brings to the resilience debate is the shift in focus from the individual to the social, and from individual actions to creating the conditions for them to occur.

Article 2: Structural foundations of social resilience (Dagdeviren, Capucha, Calado, Donoghue, & Estêvão, 2020)

The second article was written in the aftermath of the financial crisis. At this stage, the main issue that motivated the article was the continued interest in resilience-based approaches in the literature on social policies. The continued popularity of "heroic" resilience was counterbalanced by a critical view who highlighted its conceptual inconsistencies and its potential to justify certain ideological narratives. Still, there was a persistence of a gap in scientific production regarding the incorporation of the social structures in its conceptual framework.

As a contribution to this debate, this article takes an analytical approach to the theoretical development of the notion of resilience, informed by the sociological perspective. Therefore, following a critical perspective to resilience, it aims to identify and define the structural parameters that frame and condition social agency. In addition, it presents a proposal for understanding the mechanisms and logic of structural processes of social resilience.

We began by underlining the problematic nature of the concept when it is classified as an intrinsic attribute of the individual, highlighting, alternatively, a perspective based on social processes, which combine diachronic and synchronic dynamics that promote change or lack of change. We then presented a framework for analysing social resilience, unpacking socioeconomic and political factors that can facilitate or hinder resilience during sudden change processes, considering the role of rules, power structures and resource distribution structures. Against this background, we seek to integrate the dynamics of social structures in the definition of conditions for the development of individuals' resilience.

In the discussion, we rejected the idea that social resilience approaches should be considered an alternative perspective to structuralist studies on poverty. Instead, we propose that poverty studies have distinct advantages for explaining long-term structural deprivations, while the resilience view can be useful for exploring the changing dynamics of hardships and how to combat them in times of crisis. This proposal is complemented with a rights-based approach for policy-making purposes, as collective risk management mechanisms, such as welfare state arrangements, are the most effective means of social resilience against expected, unexpected and unpredictable risks that societies can find.

Article 3: Welfare State development in Portugal: From "stage zero" to the post-crisis "leftist" compromise against austerity (Calado, Capucha, & Estêvão, 2019)

The third article starts with a reflection on the role of the welfare state in Portugal, in the aftermath of the austerity programs applied throughout Europe during the financial crisis. As in many other countries in Southern Europe, the welfare state in Portugal has a relatively recent existence and very limited institutional development and consolidation. However, the progress achieved since the 1974 Revolution is unavoidable and profound, especially if one considers its role in promoting convergence with the living standards and economic performance of the countries in central Europe. With the onset of the financial crisis, the convergence process was interrupted.

The main impact of the crisis was felt from 2010 onwards and was the basis for an eventual request for foreign aid and the signing of an "adjustment programme" with a troika comprising the European Central Bank (ECB), the EC, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The agreement promoted a package of austerity measures with the aim of balancing public accounts and correcting the structural imbalances considered the main causes of the State's problems, mainly regarding the flexibility of the labour market. The ultimate political effect of the implementation of this program was a shift to the Left in the composition of the Portuguese Government, after the 2015 legislative elections.

The article is thus a summary work, which proposes to analyse the most distinctive characteristics of the welfare state in Portugal, from its origins to the present day, indicating the main stages of development and transformation. The analytical focus is redirected from resilience to social policies and institutional arrangements, to deepen the knowledge about the trajectory prior to the financial crisis, its impacts on social indices and national policies. The study also aims to address the innovative political solution in 2015, of a minority government of the Socialist Party supported in parliament by the two main parties to its Left, the Portuguese Communist Party, and the Left Bloc, which was dubbed "contraption". The exercise thus sought to articulate the review of scientific literature, with analysis of secondary statistical data on voting trends, economic and financial performance, State investment and the evolution of social indices.

In the discussion, we argue that understanding the political process that was at the origin of the "contraption" is a way to, on the one hand, highlight the social and economic impacts of the financial crisis and what they represented in the processes of convergence in living standards in Europe, and, on the other hand, to discuss the austerity measures implemented during the crisis and their consequences on the role of the State and social policies.

Article 4: Fighting poverty in times of crisis in Europe: Is resilience a hidden resource for social policy? (Calado, Capucha, Gray, & Wódz, 2022)

The fourth article begins by addressing how resilience has become a key concept in political discourse in Europe on solutions to the global recession, in the aftermath of the financial crisis. National and international organizations began to include objectives explicitly related to this agenda in their mission statements, framing the development of social resilience as a priority to increase societies' capacity to respond to the crisis. Following this trend, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has caused a resurgence of resilience in EU policy responses.

The objective of the study was to capture the scope and multidimensionality of social resilience processes, developing a comprehensive analysis of the experiences of hardship of households, based on an understanding and operationalization of the concept in article 1. The comparative dimension analysis had three purposes. Firstly, to provide some diversity and heterogeneity to the case studies, so as not to link the conclusions drawn to a particular case and/or conditions. Secondly, to obtain a broader view at the level of Europe, to capture the potential continuities and differences that the social environments could generate in households' experiences. Third, to assess how different social models influenced the development and success of resilience.

The methodological approach was based on comparative analysis of biographical interview to families, one for each country, using QSA. These interviews aimed to collect resilience narratives, contextualize them with their life story and the socio-political environment in which they are inserted, to develop a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis of the participants' lived experiences. The analysis shows that socioeconomic resilience practices have, at best, marginal effects on households' ability to cope with crises, regardless of the national environment. The potential of resilience as a strategy for overcoming socio-material adversity is conditioned by limited social investment. Thus, resilience processes entail worrying social costs, leading to increased social vulnerability of households and greater inter-generational risks.

Furthermore, the political rhetoric's emphasis on resilience, even if well-intentioned, has helped to legitimize further liberalization of social policies in Europe. The promotion of these approaches has served as a political "remedy" to reconcile the need for a social response and, at the same time, defend the continued retraction of the welfare state. The dissociation of policies to promote social resilience from trends towards the liberalization of social protection is crucial to avoid the high negative social costs and increased vulnerability evidenced in families' experiences during the financial crisis.

Article 5: Labour relations under duress in Europe: Contributions for social resilience theory (Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023)

The fifth and final article explored a second interpretation of academic studies dedicated to resilience. Indeed, the financial crisis stimulated the popularity of resilience in various fields of knowledge production and its "social turn" in academic research on resilience. Given the socio-political context, "heroic" perspectives of resilience asserted themselves as the dominant interpretation in public discourse. However, another interpretation of the concept emerged, based on the analysis of structural or institutional changes. Inspired by social ecology studies, this perspective follows the principles of the processes of adaptation of ecological systems to external shocks and seeks to apply them to social systems. It was quickly adopted in scientific studies to characterize how societies respond to crises and to understand the resulting systemic change processes.

From this framework, this article aimed to critically analyse the structuralist perspective of social resilience and test its potential and limitations through the analysis of the adjustment processes and transformation of institutional arrangements in Europe, during the financial crisis. Given the systemic nature of the crisis, we chose to focus the empirical study on labour market structures, justified by the centrality that internal devaluation had on austerity measures and structural reforms. To this end, a comparative analysis of the cases of Portugal, Ireland and Poland was carried out.

The analysis shows that resilience-based approaches are useful for understanding institutional change, but the scope and applicability of the concept has been limited by certain assumptions arising from the appropriation of principles used in socio-ecological studies. Based on the empirical analysis, we propose a more dynamic definition of resilience as processes of institutional recomposition in the face of systemic crises, emphasizing the dialectic relations of power that influence norms, institutional arrangements, and the distribution of resources.

Mobilizing this theoretical proposal for the analysis of the labour market structural changes, we conclude that the crisis triggered processes of convergence in Europe with a view to liberalizing labour law, decentralizing collective bargaining, and strengthening active labour policies. The logic and orientation of the adjustment measures did not respond to the specific systemic vulnerabilities of each country; on the contrary, it followed a common European strategy of internal devaluation of labour costs in peripheral countries. The crisis was thus seized as an opportunity for EU institutions, in conjunction with national governments, to reinforce the institutionalization of the neoliberal model in European regulations and institutional arrangements.

Internal coherence of articles

At the top of the Introduction, the dissertation was presented as a compilation of articles that expresses a sociological journey on the topic of resilience and its relationship with the financial crisis. The implementation of this proposal did not follow a traditional monographic structure. Instead, it was achieved through the construction of a dynamic and flexible research program, structured in five articles, which addressed different aspects and perspectives of the proposed issues. Despite the relative autonomy of the articles, they contribute to an integrated investigation and to the general conclusions and final discussion. The clarification of the internal coherence of the investigations aims to highlight the connections between the articles and with the research objectives.

Table 3.1: Classification of the articles

Number	***Title***	***Type***	***Year***
Article 1	"Resilience: Moving from a "heroic" notion to a sociological concept"	Theoretical	2017
Article 2	"Structural foundations of social resilience"	Theoretical	2020
Article 3	"Welfare State development in Portugal: From "stage zero" to the post-crisis "leftist" compromise against austerity"	Summary work Empirical analysis	2019
Article 4	"Fighting poverty in times of crisis in Europe: Is resilience a hidden resource for social policy?"	Comparative empirical analysis	2022
Article 5	"Labour relations under duress in Europe: Contributions for social resilience theory"	Comparative empirical analysis	2023

Articles 1 and 2 are fundamentally dedicated to the theoretical development of the concept of resilience. With the financial crisis serving as a background for the analysis, a critical review of the literature on resilience is carried out, which was at the base of the development of a critical definition to the concept anchored in poverty studies. The first article focuses on building a theoretical model of resilience at the level of social agency. The second article seeks to explain the foundations and dynamic relationships at the structural, which establish the conditions and opportunities for social action. Its proposals have a progressive and cumulative logic, aiming at building a multidimensional and comprehensive concept of social resilience, which contemplates and integrates the agency and structure perspectives in an integrated theoretical model.

The two first articles thus constitute the starting point and the pillars for fulfilling the theoretical objectives of the dissertation, namely the deepening of sociological knowledge on this topic and the proposition of a definition of resilience that provides the analytical instruments for the analysis and understanding of resilience in social phenomena. Article 2 also contributes to the empirical objectives, particularly to the deepening of knowledge about the socio-economic impacts of the financial crisis and the processes of change in political-institutional models. The explanation of the theoretical proposals uses the financial crisis and its impacts as an empirical illustration, characterizing a set of global trends that are later developed in article 5.

Articles 4 and 5 seek to consolidate the theoretical developments of the first two articles. The analytical perspective of these articles starts with a review and critical analysis of the two most influential interpretations of resilience applied to social phenomena, namely "heroic" resilience inspired by psychology studies (article 4) and the resilience of systems inspired by social ecology studies (article 5), thus contributing to the objective of deepening sociological knowledge on this topic.

Furthermore, these articles incorporated the theoretical principles developed in articles 1 and 2 for the empirical testing, aiming at the operationalization of the proposed concept of social resilience. Article 4 focuses on agency dynamics, analysing the resilience processes of households, in a comparative perspective. Article 5 focuses on structural dynamics, analysing the processes of institutional change in labour structures in Portugal, Ireland, and Poland. In turn, the two studies contribute to the theoretical objectives of consolidation of this field of research in sociology, both by theoretical development and empirical research.

The two articles also contribute to the knowledge of the socio-economic impacts of the financial crisis in Europe. Article 4 contributes to the knowledge of the experiences of individuals and families during the financial crisis, through the analysis of experiences of hardship during the crisis. Article 5 contributes to the assessment of the effects of the financial crisis on the processes of change in political-institutional models in Europe.

Both articles test the influence and seek to determine the role of institutional frameworks in resilience processes, through comparative empirical analysis based on welfare state models (article 4) and on the varieties of capitalism (article 5). In short, articles 4 and 5 communicate with the first two articles, to incorporate the theoretical principles developed in this phase. But they also communicate with each other in the empirical testing of resilience approaches at the agential and structural levels of analysis, responding to the research objective of reconciling these two perspectives, both in the conceptual construction and in the empirical analysis.

Article 3 has a particularly relevant contribution to the empirical dimension of the research objectives. This article is the only one that does not have resilience as an analytical focus, instead addressing the evolution of the welfare state in Portugal. Even so, it has an instrumental and substantive importance for the study. In the case of Portugal, it contributes to understanding the impacts of the economic recession on social indices and the effects of adjustment measures on public investment and the functions of the welfare state.

This analysis was mobilized for the characterization of the social and economic models used in articles 4 and 5, also serving as a reference for the similar exercise carried out for the Polish and Irish cases. Furthermore, it laid the foundations for the analysis of processes of institutional change generated by systemic shocks, and for exploring the idea of the financial crisis as a window of opportunity for the reorientation of economic and social policies in the peripheral countries of the EU, a topic explored further in article 5. The elaboration of article 3 also stems from the desire that this work program contributes to the knowledge of the Portuguese reality, and the national debate on the present and future of the welfare state and social policies.

The objectives related to the political dimension cross-cut the five articles, constituting the starting and ending point for the development of the concept of social resilience in articles 1, 2, 4 and 5. In fact, all these articles have their own origin in the observation of the growing appropriation of this notion in the European political agenda, both by national governments and by international organizations. A chronological reading of the articles shows how this notion gained greater scope and centrality in its use in the EU's political agenda, from its emergence in humanitarian aid programs to post-pandemic crisis plans.

The relationship between resilience studies, its political implications and European social policies is a common feature of these articles. If articles 1 and 2 seek to provide conceptual and analytical tools that contribute to the design of social policies that incorporate a more complex and useful resilience perspective; articles 4 and 5 directly question the usefulness of integrating resilience perspectives into the European political agenda. In article 1, the discussion of resilience was framed within the scope of poverty studies, followed with the proposal of a research agenda. This proposal is reinforced in article 2, which also presents a set of recommendations for the development of a rights-based approach to social resilience. The analysis of the appropriation of the notion of resilience by the political field is a focus of analysis in articles 4 and 5, where the implicit agenda of resilience and its compatibility with the European political agenda are also discussed.

Part II

ARTICLES

CHAPTER 4

Resilience: Moving from a "heroic" notion to a sociological concept

4.1. Introduction

The combined effects of economic recession in the aftermath of 2007/08 global financial crisis and the generalized adoption of austerity policies in Europe from 2010 onwards has had a profound impact on peripheral EU countries such as Portugal, Spain, Ireland or Greece, leading to significant decline in household income and increasing vulnerability to poverty (Matsaganis & Levanti, 2014).

This situation is concomitant with a trend of structural weakening of the bargaining power of wage labour, stemming from the transition to a neo-Hayekian political economy of democratic capitalism where the crucial welfare state duties of redistribution and regulation of labour relations are severely curtailed (Streeck, 2013), with an ensuing contrast between growing capital returns and decreasing economic growth levels (Piketty, 2013).

It is against this backdrop that references to resilience have become increasingly visible in political and popular discourse, and one that invariably carries a strong positive connotation. It is particularly recurrent in policy documents on natural disasters, as is the case of the EC's document "EU Approach to Resilience", where resilience is defined as "an ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks" (European Commission, 2012: 2).

But the notion of resilience is further stretched to encompass other fields. It has been called upon when dealing with problems such as poverty. This is the case of the United Nations' "Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience" launched in 2013, which "embraces the international momentum to use 'resilience' as a common outcome that integrates poverty reduction, disaster risk reduction, sustainable livelihoods and climate change adaptation, as integral to sustainable development" (United Nations, 2013).

Yet the actual meaning of the concept is far from clear. In one instance, resilience is defined as an outcome of action, in others it appears as an innate ability some people and communities possess, and others don't. Furthermore, the stress on abilities seems to imply voluntaristic overtones, underplaying the role of social structures in how people deal with the consequences of large-scale economic and social shocks.

This article will thus try to offer a different take on the concept of resilience, one that is informed by a sociological perspective. It will do so by trying to answer two key questions: What should be the main pillars of a sociological concept of resilience? And, specifically, how can such a concept bring new insights into socio-logical studies on the effects of economic hardship on households?

4.2. Literature review

The meaning of resilience in physics seems clearer: it refers to the ability of materials to absorb strain energy when it is deformed and to release that energy upon un- loading without breaking or being disfigured (Gordon E., 1979). Resilience could thus be understood as the ability of an object to recover its original shape after undergoing some sort of external shock — like a stress ball after being squeezed.

It was the idea of recovering from a shock — particularly an extreme and traumatic one — that was behind the first uses of resilience in other sciences. From the 1950s onwards, psychology turned to the concept as a framework to study the experiences of Nazi concentration camp survivors (Frankl, 1959; Eitinger, 1964). Later it was appropriate in the study of child poverty and child abuse (Werner, 1977) and recovery from loss and traumas (Bonanno, 2004), research lines that are still active and developing into new areas, such as neuroscience (Greenberg, 2006).

By the 1970s, ecology was also importing the concept to study how and to what extent ecosystems are able to regenerate when facing severe disturbances to their equilibrium (such as drought, pollution or overexploitation of natural resources). In ecological research, resilience has been no longer conceptualized as a mere attribute of the materials or subjects, and gained a relational and systemic focus. Hence, resilience is defined as the capacity of persistence of functional relations in a system, in the context of profound environmental imbalance caused by external forces (Holling, 1973).

It is through human geography and studies of environmental disasters that resilience has made its way into the social sciences. These studies have explored how local communities (Wilson, 2012), economic sectors and individual firms (Rose, 2007) have recovered from such disasters, emphasizing how elements such as social capital play an integral part in such processes (Aldrich, 2012) and how these processes are shaped by pre-shock vulnerabilities (Akter & Mallick, 2013) and involve significant environmental, social and economic costs as well as transfer of risks between social actors and between these and the environment (Sapountzaki, 2012).

These perspectives highlight the integration of social structures in the analysis of the conditions for the development of resilience at the group and community level. In this sense, Adger argues that "because of its institutional context, social resilience is defined at the level of community rather than being a phenomenon pertaining to individuals" (Adger, 2000: 349).

The focus of the study of resilience concentrates on the reflective dimension of communities to deal with external shocks in their social structure and bounce back, strengthening their internal cohesion, their resources and sustainability to future shocks. Resilience thus refers to the community's capacity to survive and regenerate with its own resources and means (Mileti, 1999); to the capacity to contain the effects of disasters and resume activities without social disruption (Bruneau et al., 2013), to the role of alternative mediation structures and contexts (spaces of collective participation, such as the church, sports clubs, extended family, etc.) in attenuating the impacts of oppressive systems and in upholding the community's identity and cohesion (Sonn & Fisher, 1998); or to the capacity of systems to effectively mobilize their natural, social and economic resources in post-shock recovery processes (Paton & Johnson, 2001).

Through the development of the reflective dimension, the focus on learning and resource management capacity in recovery processes, these approaches emphasize the collective agency dimension of resilience, learning processes and creation, (re)distribution and management of resources, thus not limiting resilience to the outcome of activation of an intrinsic attribute belonging to the individual or object.

However, resilience also began to take on an additional meaning in human sciences, closer to the second one referred to above in physics: that of "thriving against the odds". This is most evident in medicine and epidemiology, where a resilient individual is one who fails to show the symptoms of a disease or behaviour in a context where most others do (Bonita, Beaglehole & Kjellström, 2006).

This perspective is transported to the approaches of psychology, where the concept is used to explain how individuals are capable of adapting positively to adverse circumstances or contexts (Masten, 2010) or high-risk situations or prolonged traumas (Egeland, Carlson & Sroufe, 1993).

The first approaches of resilience-oriented perspectives to poverty phenomena were greatly marked by this second approach, which we will call "heroic". We will take a closer look at this perspective, as we feel that it encapsulates many of the problems faced in the task of bringing the concept of resilience into sociology.

4.2.1. The rise of "heroic" resilience

A considerable number of resilience-based approaches to poverty phenomena are heavily influenced by this latter meaning of a "heroic" notion of resilience. This comparative motive is very much on the backdrop when Davidson claims that resilience is "an increasingly valuable construct facilitating understanding of why some individuals thrive despite traumatic experiences and deprived backgrounds whilst others flounder" (Davidson, 2009: 115). In turn, Batty and Cole (2010: 8) emphasize that resilience concerns "those individuals and households who, when faced with various risk factors associated with financial and social exclusion, manage to negotiate these adverse conditions rather than be overcome by them."

For these approaches then, resilience is defined as a positive *attribute* of individuals or families. This attribute enables them to respond to traumatic events — e.g. job losses, illnesses or the death of a family member — in a creative fashion, building solutions which allow them to eschew their expected harmful consequences and even turning such events into an opportunity for beneficial change. In this "heroic" framework such solutions are built on a predominantly individual basis and take place in settings — such as poor urban neighbourhoods or isolated rural communities — whose features would a priori rule out or severely hinder their realization.

This "heroic" perspective of resilience also focuses heavily on individual everyday practices for creating or harnessing previously hidden or overlooked resources and restoring self-esteem — culminating in the metaphorical notion of "ordinary magic" presented by Masten (2010). Examples of such practices could be engaging in training and professional reconversion, volunteering, setting up a business or careful collecting of discount vouchers and loyalty points in stores and supermarkets.

Now, this perspective of resilience immediately raises a number of questions from a sociological point of view. Some of these pertain to problems of conceptual nature. The first is conceptual ambiguity. "Heroic" resilience, though being defined as an internal property of individuals, is described through practices. It is thus not clear if resilience refers to the will or effort of the individuals or is instead the result of a set of practices set in motion to cope with socioeconomic hardship. A second set of problems stems from the coupling of normativism with social and ethnocentrism. Emphasis is placed on specific practices without a clear account of the results, costs and pertinence of replicating such practices in different contexts. Moreover, and as Harrison (2013) denounces, many of the examples of practices of resilience put forward in the literature that makes use of a "heroic" concept of resilience seem to have been selected owing more from the ways of thinking and life-style of the actual researchers than those of the affected persons and households.

A further problem with this perspective of resilience is analytical triviality. Indeed, it is unclear what being "overcome by adverse conditions" means. Unlessone is considering extreme situations — such as death — one will never be completely overcome by conditions, as some sort of adaptation is always going to takeplace. In this sense, everyone — barring the dead — is resilient.

But the biggest problem with the "heroic" notion of resilience is its non-social character. Indeed, "heroic" resilience seems to ignore the relationship (constraints and resources) between institutions and individuals or social structures and socialpractices (Dagdeviren, Donoghue & Promberger, 2016).

Furthermore, the problems with the "heroic" version of resilience spill over the borders of strict scientific discussion. "Heroic" resilience is a concept that is uncannily compatible with a neoliberal agenda for the welfare state — a problem already pointed out by authors such as Joseph (2015) or Tierney (2015). Indeed, a "heroic" notion of resilience can become a helpful tool in legitimizing retrenchment in social policies in several ways. Firstly, *by fueling the idea that household resilience is a sort of "hidden resource" to be explored by public policy*. Exploring this "hidden resource" would then be a somewhat costless — or at least more efficient — alternative to welfare state intervention in dealing with poverty and other social risks.

Secondly, by suggesting that risks can be effectively addressed mainly at an individual and household level and with individual and household resources. This stand may result in the downplaying of the crucial importance of the idea of socialization of risks, something that is at the heart of welfare state institutions.

Thirdly, by suggesting that *resilience is an attribute unevenly distributed between human populations*. For starters, this implies the naturalization of social features. On the other hand, particularly in the two extremes of the distribution, it brings with it significant consequences if it were to serve as a yardstick for the design and evaluation of social policies, since the burden of their success would be transferred to the individuals.

Therefore, by focusing almost exclusively on individual practices and on the "ordinary magic" of everyday practices, a "heroic" concept of resilience may be used to downplay the importance of collective action and public intervention.

4.2.2. From the social and economic studies on poverty to an analytical framework to resilience

Given the numerous problems of the "heroic" definition of resilience, one could be tempted to dismiss the usefulness of the concept for sociological studies of poverty altogether. We defend instead that there is an important place for a concept of resilience in sociology — and particularly for studying poverty and the effects of large-scale economic crisis. But it has to avoid the pitfalls presented above. The best way to do so is to take into account the theoretical and empirical findings of research on poverty (Promberger et al., 2014).

Studies of poverty have long stressed the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon, residing in a complex interaction between a large number of objective factors (such as living conditions) and subjective factors (such as social representations, attitudes and lifestyles). These factors interact along various social layers from the individual to society as a whole. One of the main drivers of the discussion is about addressing not only the description of economic and other material living conditions, but also the active part that the poor may play in relation to those conditions.

The notion of resilience therefore follows a well-established focus of poverty studies on the living conditions of the poorer social classes that goes as far back as Engels' (1993 [1845]) study on the living conditions of the English working class and their relation with capitalist exploitation, or as philanthropic authors concerned with precarious way of living of working classes, such as in Summer's work (1883).

A key feature of the studies on poverty is the idea of its multidimensionality as a comprehensive social phenomenon with multiple interacting causes and with consequences and manifestations in several spheres of social life. First put forward by Walker (1897) when discussing the relation between industrialization, law and some behaviours of the working classes, the question of multidimensionality was subsequently tackled by Rowntree and Lavers (1951), who specified six basic human needs: food, income, clothing, fuel and light, various domestic appliances and personal equipment. Sen (1999) would later propose the inclusion non-monetary indicators to offset their predominance in the construction of poverty indices, reflected precisely in the incorporation of indicators on health (life expectancy, infant mortality) and education, in addition to income. These developments converged to an encompassing definition of poverty as the deprivation of access to income, work, education, health and housing, proposed by Room (1989).

Through the work of authors such as Townsend (1954, 1962) another key concept was developed in the study of poverty, which was to become dominant: that of relative poverty. The new concept was based on the notion of inequality, asserting that the poor are people, families and groups whose resources are so scarce that they prevent access to standards considered dignified in the societies in which they live. The notion of relative poverty also evokes the idea of social participation. Poverty is not merely the lack of material means, but rather extends to other dimensions, such as those of subjective perceptions and social links and identities (Ravaillon, 1997; Gordon D., 2000; Levitas, 2000).

In a different theoretical direction, authors such as Paugam (1991) and Castel (1995), blowing new life into the term coined by Lenoir (1974), further developed the notion of "social exclusion" to stress the importance of social relations and their breakdown in a social and economic context undergoing change, particularly the weakening of labour relations and, consequently, the relations of individuals with other social networks and institutions, with impacts on the personalities and attitudes of those excluded. The authors would name this breakdown "disaffiliation" (collapse of social ties) or "disqualification" (loss of relational skills), conducive to social exclusion.

However, all these perspectives pay scant interest to agency, but rather highlight the conditioning, constraints and even some determinism of the paths, status and identities arising from the social, economic and political institutions and structures, where people are perceived, at the very best, as reflexes or products.

In opposition to this view, the concept of "culture of poverty" was used by Lewis (2011 [1961]) in his studies on poor neighbourhoods in Latin America. The culture of poverty is seen as a defence inside these communities with a view to survival and resistance against opprobrium, indignity, discrimination, scarcity and insecurity at all levels and realms of life. Hence, this involves a cultural standard, including values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviour standards, social and family networks, relations with work and the State, structured in the difficult living conditions of these communities enabling them to bear and adapt to these conditions. Hoggart (1970) and Brébant (1984), among others, developed important work in this line of research. However, the concept was criticized for reducing the culture of the poor to a single universal standard and, primarily, for giving way to a certain "racism against the poor", blaming them and their culture for the way they live.

Recently, the proposals by Sen (1999, 2009), inscribed in a more overall movement to go beyond the old dichotomies in social science, focus the problem of poverty not only on the deprivation of individual capacities but also on the absence of opportunities, i.e. on the unfair way that institutions operate such as the market and State.

It is possible, without an undue stretch of imagination, to stress the similarities between this perspective of synthesis and the arguments used by Bourdieu (1979) on the two modes of existence of societies, one objectified on institutions and social fields, and another incorporated into people in the form of provisions and schemes of appraisal which form the habitus. Bourdieu's proposal is based on the theory that the system of dispositions and taste preferences incorporated in agents is structured by the objective conditions of existence in which it is generated, but it is simultaneously structuring of these same conditions, in that it produces conduct adjusted to it, without any necessary conscious intentionality. Thus, even without deliberate search, individuals recognize their living conditions, including the resources and interdictions inscribed in social, economic and cultural structures, and act in a coherent fashion accordingly, through the dispositions producing the action.

We can also assume the existence of resources objectively inscribed in the structures of distribution of the different forms of capital, which the individuals are differently capable of recognizing, preventing some social classes from accessing them. It could also happen that provisions acquired at a given time of the capital distribution structures are activated at times when these structures have changed, producing what Bourdieu called "hysteresis of habitus", creating maladjusted conduct in relation to the objective conditions.

This is likely to occur more frequently, for example, in intergenerational relations, in social trajectories that imply changes in social positions or, regarding what is of concern herein, in times of crisis, when the limitation of resources clashes with lifestyles formatted for conditions prior to that crisis. The effects of crises on trajectories are capable of producing situations of this type, leaving agents either more or less capable, sometimes better prepared to perceive risk, at other times disarmed of this capacity to identify adverse contexts and react to them.

As illustrated in the intensive study of biographies of people in situations of poverty (Bourdieu, 1993a), the objective conditions of "misery" determined by a dominated position held in the structures of distribution of social, cultural and economic capital, added to the impossibility of reproducing lost living conditions, are incorporated by the poor in the form of provisions and schemes of appraisal generating lifestyles of survival which, in turn, interfere in the processes structuring those objective conditions, according to whether they point towards conformism or to an individual reaction of "insubordination."

In fact, provisions and schemes of appraisal include attitudes, preferences, tastes, capacities and inhibitions, values and representations adjusted to the poverty of the social networks, economic means and cultural skills that people can use to their avail. This means that individuals, even the poorest, develop an active relationship (of nonconformity or conformity) with their conditions of existence, a "lifestyle" which varies according to these conditions (volume and type of capital possessed) and "ways of life" which reflect internalized dispositions and preferences.

Ways of life can thus be defined, on one hand by the interaction between a set of structurally designed resources and constraints, and on the other hand by the system of regulated activities and lifestyles adopted by the agents (Curie, Caussad & Hajjer, 1986). The concept of "ways of life", combining "objective" and "subjective" dimensions of poverty, can be of extreme usefulness for the scientific research on poverty. It can work as a mediating element that articulates the resources and constraints associated with a specific position in the social structure, underlined by the socio-economic conditions underlined by the concepts of relative and absolute poverty, and the systems of everyday life practices, evaluations, representations, social and cultural references and strategic choices of families and individuals in the context imposed by those constraints as proposed by the culturalist traditions. This view can thus help finding a way of integrating the notion of resilience into social theories on poverty.

4.3. Building up a critical notion of social resilience

4.3.1. A critical definition of resilience

Benefitting from this theoretical framework, we can put forward a critical notion of resilience. Resilience should be understood as one of the different possible processes by which the poverty ways of life mediate responses to systematic social and economic stresses — such as mass unemployment, severe deteriorations of working conditions or large-scale retrenchment of social transfers and social services — and how, in turn, these ways of life are impacted by these responses.

The family is a particularly pertinent unit of analysis for capturing these processes, since the family is the basic framework for accessing and sharing resources, defining strategies and incorporation of basic values which orient actors' behaviour. The result of resilience processes is open-ended, potentially leading to either transformation — whether improvement or degradation — or reinforcement of pre-existing ways of life.

Resilience should thus not be understood as an attribute that is inherent to some families or individuals but as a process in which several features of the natural and social worlds are called into play. Indeed, a key point in our perspective is that resilience practices are neither created nor operate in a social or environmental void. Like any type of human action, the space of possibilities for resilience is shaped by both the social structure and the natural environment, even if such practices may in the long run influence and transform the latter two.

The existence of an external shock of systemic nature in social structures is another distinctive feature of resilience processes. These processes are activated not only when individuals, families or groups undergo a shock which alters and constrains their objective conditions of existence, but when this shock also causes the reconfiguration of social structures, namely in three areas: in the allocation of the existing resources; in the distribution of risk; and in its power structures. Thus, social structures are not of a static nature, whose transformation arises from the action of social agents in processes of resilience. On the contrary, they are also affected by the external shock and consequent effects, creating a new and unique social and economic context for individuals and institutions alike.

We thus propose a dynamic perspective of the structural context and also a reflexive agency by those affected by changing hardship conditions. When looking at social resilience as a process which implies the reconfiguration of mechanisms of adaptation of the income and resources generated by individuals and families and their consumption needs in a scenario where the social structures themselves also undergo a process of reconfiguration, as a result of systemic socioeconomic stresses, we are able to establish a unique and qualitatively distinctive dimension for this phenomenon in view of the coping strategies or other forms of response to shocks which drastically affect the living conditions of individuals, simultaneously conferring pertinence to their study in the current context of crisis.

Resilience processes comprise two major dimensions: the mobilization of economic, cultural, social and natural resources; and the shifting of risks in time and space.

4.4. Main dimensions of resilience processes

Having defined the concept of resilience and its scope, we should now turn to the operation of resilience processes in more detail. In our perspective, resilience processes comprise two major dimensions: the *mobilization of resources;* and the *shifting of risks*.

4.4.1. Mobilization of resources

Resources that are relevant to resilience processes can be classified for analytical purposes into four major groups: economic, social, cultural, and environmental. Economic resources include, among others: financial resources provided by access to credit and availability of savings; non-mercantile economic phenomena like gift and redistribution networks and self-production practices; or technical means of production, such as agricultural tools, industrial machines or computers.

In turn, social resources refers to networks of kinship, friendship and acquaintances; collective action instances, such as political parties, trade unions, interest groups or NGOs; and public resources, such as public facilities, public services and welfare provisions.

Cultural resources refers in this context to informal or codified knowledge — such as science, technology or law — as well as the diversity of beliefs, values and attitudes present in a society.

Finally, environmental resources include basic life-supporting resources such as arable land, water or air; raw materials such wood, metals or stone; wildlife such as fish, game or plants; full ecosystems such as swamps, forests, rivers or seas; organic requisites and outcomes of agricultural practices such as seeds, livestock or crops.

Mobilization of resources then refers to the forms by which such resources are made available for resilience processes and how they are effectively used. It follows from this definition that differences in the constitution and operation of a social structure and diverse relations of said structure with the natural environment add up to very different degrees of access to resources and also very different ways for societies, institutions and individuals to make use of them. That is to say, resilience processes are heavily influenced by prevalent social inequalities and power asymmetries within a society.

4.4.2. Shifting of risks

The second main dimension of resilience processes is the shifting of risks in time, space and across the social structures and the environment. Taking inspiration from Luhmann (1993), we will define risk as an eventual situation that entails a loss of some kind for someone and whose actual occurrence is at the same time uncertain and avoidable by human action.[10]

By social risks, we take those risks that are related to the workings and interplay of economic, political and cultural systems in a society and with the environment. In the case of resilience, we are interested in the social risks associated with the specific types of shocks mentioned above in section "A critical definition of resilience". We will group these risks thematically, for a matter of easier presentation and illustration. However, it should be noted that there is not an exclusive correspondence between types of risks and types of shocks. On the contrary, large-scale shocks are likely to affect societies, institutions and the environment at multiple levels and thus to give rise to risks and losses of multiple types. Having this caveat in mind, we will consider in our reasoning: *socioeconomic risks* such as unemployment, labour precarity and poverty; *physical risks* such as hunger, physical and psychological violence and physical and mental health decline; *political risks*, such as organized discrimination of social groups; and *environmental risks*, such as pollution, erosion of arable land, lack of water and climate change.

[10] It could be argued that some geological phenomena of severe disruptive potential, such as earthquakes or volcanic eruptions would fall outside this definition of risk, as their occurrence is not a result of human action. However, we contend that the consequences of such phenomena over societies, institutions and individuals can be influenced to a large degree by social artefacts — such as patterns of settling, spatial planning, building regulations or civil protection mechanisms.

Also following Luhmann's notion of "strategic distribution of risk" (1993: 29), we will take shifting of risks to mean the substitution of a specific immediate risk — the primary risk — by another risk — the secondary risk — distanced from the current context of decision across time, space and/or the social structure. Thus risks can be shift across a person's lifetime, within and across institutions.

Risk can also be shifted within institutional spaces. The family provides two classical examples of this. In contexts of mass unemployment — such as those in Southern Europe after the 2008 crisis — pensioners become the mainstay of their families, through money transfers, food gifts and payment of bills for children who either lost their jobs or suffered significant wage cuts. In this case, one can see the primary risks of hunger, lack of housing and indebtedness of children (and grandchildren) being shifted to parents and grandparents, and converted into a secondary risk of poverty for the elderly. Child labour provides another example, albeit in the opposite direction. Parents who send a young child to work as a means to increase family income may be trying to avert the primary risk of hunger. Yet, the forfeiting of education and the psychological and physical strains placed by work upon a growing child generate enhanced secondary risks of poverty and illness for the child in his/her adulthood.

An interesting insight by Luhmann is that the very nature of the secondary risk may actually increase the chances of the primary risk actually occurring. Emigration is a good case at point. A decision to emigrate by an individual or a family can be made to avoid the primary risk of low wages and unemployment in one's home country. Yet, in most destination countries, immigrants are precisely one of the groups that is more vulnerable to extreme forms of exploitation at work (ILO, 2015). Thus, emigration can be seen as creating a secondary risk taking place in a different space — from the country of origin to the destination — and time of the primary risk.

In all, shifting of risks will likely occur along the lines of major social structuring processes, such as class, gender, age or race. For instance, risk-shifting practices such as budget juggling may operate by disproportionally burdening women with housework or with a lower share in the distribution of food in the family (Harrison, 2013). Overreliance on social networks — such as those based on kinship or acquaintances — to compensate for lowering wages or lost access to services puts at increased risk those who are outside such networks — such as refugees, internal migrants or newly arrived immigrants (Hossain et al., 2011).

4.5. Relationship between resilience dimensions

Yet the relationship between resilience processes, on the one side, and social structure and the environment on the other side, is a double-edged sword. Resilience processes, like all types of human action, actively contribute to the reproduction and transformation of the social structure and environment. On the one hand, resilience processes draw on finite stocks of resources that may not be easily (or not at all) replenished or whose exploitation may imply significant personal, social and/or environmental damage. On the other hand, they can make use of power relations and mechanisms of social inequality, thus contributing to their reinforcement.

This can be illustrated with a few examples. A family's home budget adjustment efforts may result in a less varied diet — such as switching from fresh fruit and vegetables to ready-made meals or "junk food" (Griffith, O'Connell & Smith, 2013). This may have the undesired consequence of declining future health among family members. Increased reliance on extended family networks to provide for services hitherto supported by paid or state-provided services — for instance, childcare — may lead to burdening extended family members and result in increased tensions and eventual breakdowns in family relations (Pleasence & Balmer, 2012). The same goes for natural resources: illegal tapping of groundwater by families to make up for the deterioration of public water supply in drought affected areas may result in further ecological degradation and aggravation of water shortages (Sapountzaki, 2012).

Finally, and as becomes apparent in the examples discussed above, it is important to take into account that both dimensions of resilience processes are often interdependent and can be mutually reinforcing in practice. Thus, mobilization of resources frequently entails the shifting of risks, such as in the case of pension-dependent elderly supporting their children or grandchildren through financial transfers, themselves incurring increased risk of poverty. Likewise, the ability to shift risks often entails the mobilization of resources. One example is emigration. In itself a risk shifting strategy, it often implies the mobilization of kinship and acquaintances networks both for travelling (e.g. for funding) and for support on arrival in a new country (e.g. for housing or finding work).

In sum, a critical perspective of resilience seeks not only to identify and describe coping practices in crisis contexts at individual level but to identify their place in wider social and environmental resilience processes. This implies looking at resilience at the same time as: (a) an outcome of ways of life, (b) an element of their reproduction, but also (c) a potential source for their transformation.

4.6. Conclusions

In this article, we have developed a critique of a "heroic" notion of resilience that has been dominant on the application of the concept to social phenomena, such as poverty. In its place, we propose an alternative, sociologically-grounded, definition of resilience. Such definition does away with the notion of resilience as an attribute unevenly distributed between individuals that manifests itself through individual practices for coping with hardship. Instead we look at resilience as a complex and multilevel process through which societies, institutions and individuals respond to sudden and large-scale environmental, social and economic shocks. The key insight that this sociological perspective brings to the resilience debate is the shift in focus from the individual to the social and from individual actions to the creation of conditions for them to take place.

On the basis of this assumptions, we believe that a sociological research agenda on resilience is fully justified. On the one hand, sociology should not give up the fight for the meaning of concepts in the public sphere. This the more so, when a particular version of the idea of resilience — the "heroic" notion — is being pushed forward to legitimize the retrenchment of the welfare state and the reprivatization of risks — that is, the shifting to the individual of risks that were previously dealt with through collective means.

On the other hand, sociology requires more adequate concepts to deal with the workings and social consequences of phenomena stemming from abrupt and large-scale shocks. In this vein, a sociological agenda for resilience should proceed along two different but related paths: the identification and study of actual resilience processes; and the study of the role that different institutional configurations play on resilience processes. To do so, this agenda will have to rely strongly on a comparative outlook, as this will point out to the effects of different configurations of the social structure have on resilience processes.

One prime example for study of resilience processes — in fact, the one that led to our initial attempts to develop the concept — was the Great Recession that followed the 2007-08 global financial crisis, coupled with the experience of wide- spread austerity policies devised to answer it after 2010 in Europe. Indeed, this coupling of a major economic crisis with a major policy shift constitutes a prime example of a major multi-layered shock in several European countries. Economically, it generated long periods of economic depression or stagnation leading to surges in unemployment and poverty. Politically, it was used as an opportunity to press for the retrenchment of social transfers and public services.

If we look at the level of a particular institution, the family, identifying resilience processes implies understanding how ways of life were reconstructed or reinforced in response to the Great Recession and to austerity. From a sociological perspective, this requires proceeding along three lines. The first is to identify which resources were used and how they were mobilized for this reconstruction, as well as the reasons that led to the non-use of similar resources in similar contexts. The second is to identify, in the course of the deployment of these strategies, which risks were shifted and to whom, as well as which other new risks may have replaced them. Particular attention should be given to the shifting of risks through life courses, as often the consequences of a decision are only felt several years later. The third is to study how families ascribe meaning both to the shocks and the transformations in the ways of life themselves, paying specific attention to how they perceive their future and that of their family.

CHAPTER 5

Structural foundations of social resilience

5.1. Introduction

There has been growing interest in the concept of resilience in social policy literature, especially against the backdrop of recent crisis and recession and their impacts on people's lives. The concept is often defined as the ability to bounce back, overcome the odds and make savvy use of resources, networks and support structures. This has given rise to a heroic notion of resilience which has been criticised extensively by scholars who highlight the conceptual inconsistencies in resilience analysis and its potential to justify certain ideological narratives. There is, therefore, a need to incorporate the social foundations of resilience into its conceptual framework to unpack the dynamics of resilience.

This article aims to contribute to the development of the resilience approach by conceptualising it from a critical perspective. We start by stressing the problematic nature of the concept when it is framed as an intrinsic individual attribute. Instead, we highlight that the fundamental role of social processes must be adequately accounted for in studies of resilience. In this stride, we reject the idea of resilience being an alternative to poverty studies, which is misleading and not always justified. Instead, we propose that poverty studies have distinct advantages in explaining long-term structural deprivations while the resilience view may be helpful in exploring the changing dynamics of hardship and how to counter it in times of crises. We then proceed to present a framework for the analysis of social resilience by unpacking socio-economic and political factors that may facilitate or hinder resilience in times of crisis and other major adversities.

In the next section, drawing on the literature, we provide some conceptual and methodological clarifications. We then present a discussion of structural foundations of resilience at three different levels. These are described as rule-based, power-based and resource-based foundations. For a more concrete understanding of their relationships with resilience, we discuss each of these elements in connection to the developments in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis. This is followed by policy implications of the discussion in the article and then a summary of conclusions in the final section.

5.2. Conceptual clarifications in the relation to the existing literature

The emerging literature on resilience has established itself in contrast to poverty studies (Mohaupt, 2009). The basic criticism is that poverty studies emphasise a 'deficit model' which defines the poor in negative terms and views them as passive victims, rather than actors with some control over their circumstances (Aldrich, 2012; Canvin et al., 2009; Harrison, 2012).

Resilience studies, on the other hand, largely emphasise processes of turning crises into opportunities, making positive changes following setbacks and showing the ability to survive multiple pressures (Mullin & Arce, 2008; Seccombe, 2002), although some studies have framed resilience in less heroic terms (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017), such as 'getting by' in the face of hardship (Batty & Cole, 2010).

Our argument is that the distinction between the two is not so much about viewing the poor in a positive or negative light but more to do with the method of analysis. Firstly, the positivity associated with resilience in some studies is a dubious imagination (Hickman, 2018). Not all risk management efforts and responses to shocks result in positive outcomes for wellbeing (Arnall, 2015; Walker et al., 2002). Recovery from economic shocks, seen as resilience, may be related to efforts and/or outcomes that are undesirable both individually and socially (Burchardt & Huerta, 2009). Cutting down on essential consumption such as food or heating, selling assets to cope with hardship, long hours of work and illegal work are some of the negative, and in some cases harmful, practices hidden behind the term resilience (Dagdeviren & Donoghue, 2019).

Secondly, studies of poverty focus on what they see as a social problem (Nolan & Whelan, 1996; Rowntree & Lavers, 1951; Townsend, 1998). Overemphasis on individual responsibility in the resilience approach, on the other hand, depoliticises poverty and social inequality. Hence, without an appropriate framing, it may shift the attention away from social realities of life by focusing on individuals and their positivity (recovery, striving, success against setbacks, etc.) while downplaying the importance of improving material conditions of life and widening opportunities at a societal level. More importantly, framing resilience as an individual trait can result in those living in poverty being divided as resilient and non-resilient. So those in the latter category would still be victimised and treated with negativity within a resilience framework.

There is growing recognition, however, that resilience cannot be considered in isolation from historical, structural and social conditions. Some scholars argue that resilience is neither a personal trait nor an attribute, reflecting invulnerability. Instead, it is seen as contextual and domain specific. People may be resilient in one domain but not so in another or they may be resilient in a certain context but not in another (Bercht, 2013).

Some scholars view resilience as a social and collective phenomenon (Revilla, Martín & de Castro, 2018). There are calls for social power and rights to be integrated into the framework of resilience (Walsh-Dilley et al., 2016). Social resilience for Keck & Sakdapolrak (2013) is directly linked to politics, participation and power. Adger (2000) argues that social resilience should be defined at the level of community rather than being a phenomenon pertaining to individuals. For Milne & Rankine (2013) resilience is explicitly social as well as economic, requiring the development and maintenance of robust social networks for the acquisition and deployment of resources and skills.

This article aims to contribute to this critical literature by developing a framework for the structural foundations of social resilience. A few conceptual clarifications are due before we set out to explain what this analytical framework looks like.

First, we argue that the resilience concept would be useful in investigating and understanding the impacts of, responses to and recovery from *unexpected or expected but unpredictable* (in terms of timing and/or nature, severity of shock) *systemic or large scale* natural, social, economic and political *adversities* in line with Martin & Sunley (2012, 2015).

This means the resilience approach is not intended for long-term, persistent trajectories of disadvantageous states of living. Instead, it is used in the analysis of transitional dynamics of economic hardship in times of crisis (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017). This is because such profound disruptions can fundamentally change the economic trajectories of not only poor but also non-poor households.

Downward social mobility in times of crisis implies that previously well-off families may slip into poverty through job, activity or business losses. There is evidence that this has been happening in some countries in Europe (Dagdeviren, Donoghue & Meier, 2017; Vandecasteele, 2011).

Second, while we propose that the resilience approach should focus on crisis periods, we are also aware that resilience as a capacity is developed over longer-term periods (e.g. through investment in education and skills, health systems and social welfare). Hence, we highlight the structural foundations of resilience. Third, while some shocks (e.g. some natural disasters) may be unrelated to the workings of the social system (i.e. exogenous), it is important to recognise that most shocks in social contexts arise endogenously, directly or indirectly from the way societies function. For example, there is considerable consensus that the 2008 crisis arose due to excessive risk taking by financial institutions. These distinctions are relevant for policy-making purposes. For example, while exogenous shocks may not be avoided, shocks arising from the fault-lines of social systems can be eliminated or ameliorated with appropriate interventions.

Finally, we refrain from using what economists call methodological individualism which often amounts to the generalisation of stereotyped individual experiences or explaining social phenomena with reference to individuals (Arrow, 1994; Hodgson, 2007; Lukes, 1968). In our view, resilience as a unique and inherent individual attribute is neither identifiable nor useful for policy purposes.

Distinguishing people as resilient and non-resilient in this way is scientifically difficult, if not impossible, and normatively of little use (Dagdeviren, Donoghue & Promberger, 2016). Dissection of individual resilience does not help us to fully understand resilience at a wider scale (groups, communities etc.) despite the interconnections between them. Furthermore, for practical and policy making purposes, wider shocks such as economic crises with societal impact cannot be effectively solved through individual action but require political action.

Overall then, four different conceptual clarifications are necessary for the purposes of this article: a) the focus is not on resilience as an individual attribute, b) resilience is not viewed as an alternative to poverty studies, c) resilience is most appropriate for unpacking the dynamics of economic hardship in times of crises rather than long-term deprivations, d) resilience capacity is developed in the long-term: hence, it is important to understand the structural foundations of resilience. This article focuses on the last point, which is developed in detail in the next section with reference to the developments in relation to the 2008 crisis.

5.3. Structural foundations of social resilience

The resilience approach in social theory draws heavily on the theories of socio-ecological resilience[11] and psycho-social resilience[12] (Revilla, Martín & de Castro, 2018; Sapountzaki, 2012; Welsh, 2014). While we recognise the valuable contributions these views have made, we also acknowledge their limitations. Theories of socio-ecological resilience usually suffer from absence of intentionality (involving cognition, reflexivity and consciousness in human action) that is embedded into social relations, including social hierarchies and power relations as well as their historical evolution (Giddens, 1984). Psycho-social resilience, on the other hand, takes social conditions as given.

The major proposition in this article is that social resilience analysis must take account of rules and resources together with power relations that bind and are bound by the two. The rules can be formal and informal but in the context of social resilience they include civil and social rights and entitlements and rules about social protection and operation of markets. Resource related aspects of social resilience require emphasis on distribution of wealth and income that is conducive for individuals to weather shocks and crisis, public investment in training and education that enhance access to and mobility in the labour market and provision of social protection that sustains individuals until recovery. The configuration of rules and distribution of resources determine power relations and are determined by them. Together these three elements of social systems can shape the nature of social resilience against major economic crises. This broad conceptualisation provides a basis for recognising the fact that resilience in times of crisis is likely to be uneven across different social groups.

Any analysis of social resilience should consider the given structure as well as the change and adaptation it may go through when subjected to a major shock. While the former reflects path dependence in the process of change the latter carries potential to diverge from it. In other words, resilience outcomes depend on existing as well as changing structure of rules, resources and power relations.

[11] This view emphasizes systemic and structural aspects of resilience, involving continuous adaptive cycles of growth, accumulation, restructuring and renewal (Berkes & Folke, 1998; Holling, 2001; Rose, 2007).

[12] Psycho-social resilience is about how individuals cope with risk through positive adaptation (Bercht, 2013; Werner, 1995).

Archer (2010) provides a more concise conceptualisation of these aspects which should be relevant for understanding the nature of social change in times of crisis and its implications for resilience. She highlighted diachronic and synchronic aspects to differentiate historical/cumulative from emergent structures. In the context of the discussion in this article, these could be considered as:

a) Diachronic underpinnings of change (or lack of change) after a crisis to highlight path dependence. These reflect the influence of initial conditions of rules, resources and power relations and their impact on resilience.
b) Synchronic aspects of change (or lack of change) to emphasise the struggle for hegemony to maintain or re-shape the rules, distribution of resources and power in the aftermath of crises, with consequent impacts on resilience.

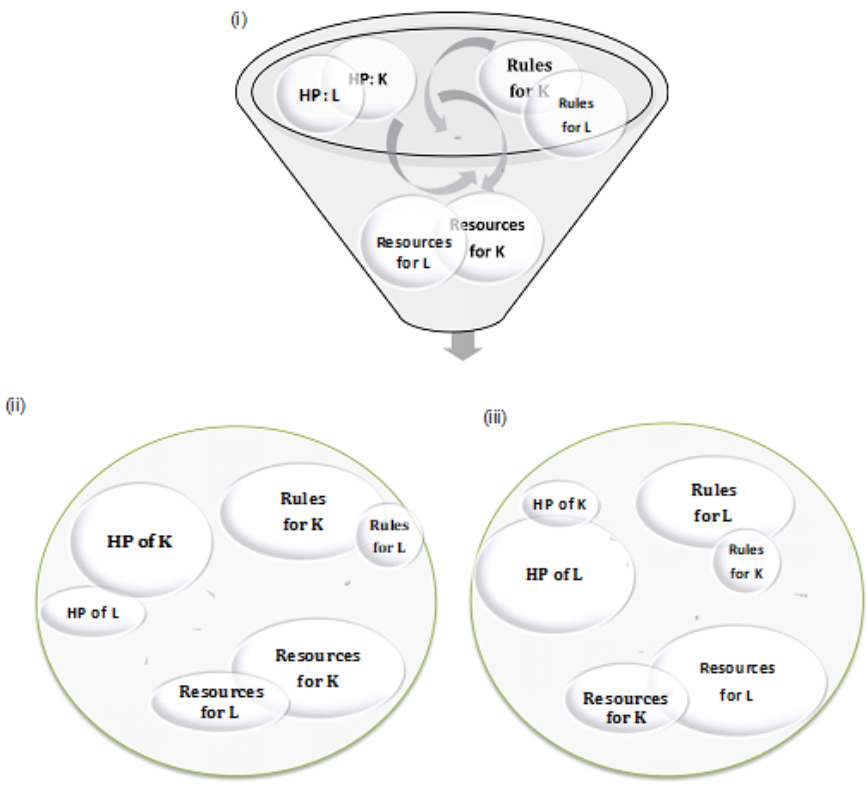

Figure 5.1: (i) Initial conditions, shock, action and struggle (ii) and (iii) Alternative social structures emerging after the shock. *Note*: HP is an abbreviation for hegemonic power. K and L denote capital and labour, respectively.

The ways diachronic and synchronic underpinnings of change work in reaction to major shocks generate variable impacts on different socio-economic groups and hence can create winners and losers. This is because they determine not only the nature of future rules and resource distributions but also how the cost of crisis is distributed.

Figure 5.1 reflects a simple picture of how societies can arrive at different structural outcomes following a potential reshuffling of power relations, rules and resource allocation in times of crises with different impacts on social resilience. For simplicity of illustration let us assume that there are two social groups which can be classified without difficulty in a homogenous way: workers and capitalists. Consider furthermore that power-based (or political) foundations of social resilience reflect the space for hegemonic power of capitalists and workers, rule-based (institutional) foundations of resilience reflect the relative strength of rules that protect workers' and capitalists' interests and the resource based (economic) foundations of social resilience are reflected by the resources allocated to workers and capitalists.

Figure 5.1 (i) represents the process of a potential restructuring/reformation, following a major crisis, of the initial conditions. Here HP is an abbreviation for hegemonic power and K denotes capitalists while L workers. Overlapping spaces of circles reflect power, rules and resources that serve common purpose. Let us start with an initial structure that is relatively balanced with similar strengths of workers and capitalist in terms of their power and resources as well as a relatively egalitarian structure of rules.

Crises can change the initial conditions in infinite ways given the complexity of class structures in modern societies. Again, for simplicity, we focus on two contrasting outcomes here, leaving the varieties of transitions in-between to readers' imaginations. Case (ii) reflects a transition in which strength of power, rules of socio-economic conduct and allocation of resources changed in favour of capitalists. Case (iii), on the other hand, reflects a different transition in which social structure transitioned in favour of workers. Case (ii) would promote recovery of the conditions in favour of the capitalist class at the cost of the working class with longer term disadvantages for the latter group. Case (iii) reflects the opposite.

Let us now discuss this simple picture in the context of the 2008 crisis for more concrete reflections on social resilience.

Recall the point made in the previous section – that economic crises are not exogenous (independent of social systems) but arise from the functioning of social structures. For example, the 2008 crisis reflected the faults in the initial conditions of financial markets that generated instability through financial innovations (e.g. securitisation) and subprime lending which clearly played a significant role in the emergence of the crisis (Dymski, 2010; Rajan, 2010).

The crisis threatened the existence of some financial institutions (Lehman Brothers, Northern Rock, etc.) and the viability of others. Repossession of houses led many families to lose the roof over their head, thus damaging their resilience and increasing their vulnerabilities. The initial conditions of rules and resources resulted in broad impacts, affecting both capitalists and workers, the former through losses in the financial markets and the latter through rising unemployment and unmanageable debt (Basso et al., 2012; Boorman, 2009).

However, hegemonic power relations led to modifications in rules and resource allocation. These manifested in austerity programmes which in many instances were against the working classes and facilitated the socialisation of private risks and losses (Mahnkopf, 2012; Stiglitz, 2012). Such revisions illustrate the reformation in structural foundations of resilience, involving both the diachronic and synchronic aspects of change.

Let us expand on the rule-based foundations of resilience before discussing the revisions made to them in the post-crisis period. These reflect formal and informal rules (including legal ones) with respect to the operation of markets and their regulation, social, economic and political freedoms, workings of the media, etc., in generating stability or instability. For example, while labour markets and financial markets can potentially both create shocks and counteract against shocks, they can also reinforce or weaken resilience.

The importance of initial conditions or diachronic underpinning implies that economies with large informal or deregulated labour markets (lax rules in favour of capitalists) would see mass layoffs, following a crisis and economic downturn. Labour markets regulated to protect workers and conditions of employment, however, limit the scale of such actions. For those unable to escape unemployment, entitlements to social insurance and pension schemes have been probably the most important social resilience instruments in modern societies. This is also true for other types of social rights and social protection such as disability and sickness benefits and various sorts of income support.

Two contrasting examples may assist in illustrating how diachronically developed rules regarding social protection can synchronically be designed in ways that enable shocks to be absorbed with or without major social impacts. The first is the case of Germany which experienced one of the deepest economic contractions (around 6%) in Europe in 2009. Despite this, the unemployment rate continued to decline from around 10% in 2006 to 5% in 2014. Researchers point to the importance of ‘short-time’ working allowances. This scheme existed in some form previously but was modified post-crisis. Under this system, temporary reductions in work hours and pay, resulting from companies’ declining sales, have been partly compensated by the government.

This intervention has not only prevented a significant rise in unemployment but also enabled continued recovery in labour markets (Chung & Thewissen, 2011). This collective buffer (in terms of its funding and universal coverage) rendered the need for 'individual resilience' redundant.

The second is the case of the UK, which adopted a prolonged austerity programme that involved revisions to the rules of social protection. For example, an aggressive sanctions policy for the provision of social welfare benefits (Watts et al., 2014) has accompanied cuts to welfare benefits (OBR, 2016). These measures have weakened social resilience at a time when the unemployment rate more than doubled (Blanchflower, 2015). Attritions from the welfare system damaged the resilience of a significant proportion of the population as reflected by rising destitution, growing food poverty and the explosion in the use of foodbanks under austerity (Garthwaite, 2016; Dagdeviren & Donoghue, 2019; Dagdeviren, Donoghue & Wearmouth, 2019). What is notable in the case of the UK is that the expectations for resilience are placed on the individual when the conditions that give rise to a need for resilience are structural.

The implementation of austerity programmes by many European countries in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis illuminates the political (power-based) foundations of resilience, highlighting the importance of power, participation and representation. Studies of economics on this subject heavily favour the view that austerity in the form of public spending cuts is counterproductive in times of crises and economic downturns (Blyth, 2013; Keynes, 1937; Krugman, 2012). One of the more notable consequences of austerity was a significant rise in poverty in countries such as Greece, Portugal and Spain where the at-risk-of-poverty rate rose significantly without much economic recovery and reduction in the sustainability of debt until very recently. The Portuguese case shows clearly that recovery was possible only after the end of austerity policies (Alderman, 2018).

The persistent application of austerity despite wide ranging evidence against it reflects a political choice (Blyth, 2013). At an abstract level, this is a manifestation of the hegemonic struggle for maintaining and/or deepening the status-quo of neoliberal governance with its structures of power, institutions and resources in favour of the capitalist class. At a more practical level one may refer to the influence of corporate interests on political decision making as opposed to the lack of influence of unions (Drutman, 2015; Crouch, 2017).

Overall, austerity programmes hampered the resilience of vulnerable groups through policies that favoured the interests of the powerful against the wider population (e.g. spending cuts, public sector restructuring, bank bailouts). While a considerable proportion of the population suffered through job losses, spending cuts and poverty, banks swiftly recovered their losses and registered profits soon after the crisis (The Economist, 2017; Thompson, 2013). The implication of this is that the balance and control over power structures through appropriate rules can prevent instability or help counter it.

Not only are political (power-based) and institutional (rule-based) foundations of resilience interdependent but also together they influence the distribution and redistribution of resources. The way assets, resources, wealth and income are distributed in a country has crucial implications for the resilience of individuals (Olsson, 2007). In principle, the influence on resilience can take effect in two ways.

First, the distributional stance of countries plays an important role in neutralising or aggravating the risks encountered by individuals and social groups. Concentration of wealth amongst a small proportion of the population implies that during a crisis those who are at greater risk (e.g. of losing jobs and shelter) will not have the resources to fall back on to 'beat the odds' or to 'bounce back'. For example, a study of household responses to hardship in post-crisis Europe found that, under austerity, coping through cutting down household expenditure has been the most prevalent practice amongst low-income families (Dagdeviren & Donoghue, 2019). In some cases, participants cut down on food to the point of 'hunger' or ignored medical necessities which clearly reflected a lack of choices (resulting from low incomes and inadequate savings) rather than resilience. Higher incomes for vulnerable groups (e.g. wages and salaries) would provide more opportunity to build up resources such as savings and housing – what Sen (1985) called 'endowments'– for them to fall back on in times of personal, localised or more systemic crises. Such endowments can enhance the potential for coping with the immediate consequences of shocks and help with the transition to a path of recovery.

Second, safety nets in the form of social transfers and social protection schemes provide short to medium term resilience by enabling individuals to absorb shocks to their incomes (for example through unemployment). In societies where poverty is widespread, the vulnerability to shocks is greater. Redistribution of wealth and incomes enhances resilience by improving the initial conditions of the poor and reducing the extent of vulnerabilities in challenging times.

It is well documented that income distribution in the advanced capitalist societies has changed significantly since the 1980s in favour of the top one per cent earners and to the disadvantage of the 99% (Atkinson, Piketty & Saez, 2011; Barba & Pivetti, 2009). Inequality continued to rise after the crisis in countries that pursued austerity (Piketty, 2013). This is not accidental but the direct result of power relations (e.g. insistence on austerity) and configurations of rules (e.g. hegemonic political position against regulation of financial and labour markets to affect income distribution in favour of middle and low-income groups) (Blyth, 2013).

In cases where social protection systems did not provide adequate support, transfers from family and faith-based organisations played an important role (Saraceno, 2017; Watson & Maître, 2013). On the one hand, use of welfare support was stigmatised by political elites (influencing the dispositions of the public and legitimacy of austerity); on the other hand, being dependent on family or community organisations such as foodbanks created a sense of failure and shame amongst the participants (Dagdeviren, Donoghue & Wearmouth, 2019; Garthwaite, 2016).

Limited prospects for new income sources during austerity and downturn led to unsustainable but unavoidable indebtedness. For example, Balasuriya et al. (2019) show that excessive debt for essential needs amongst low-income groups has been one of the consequences of the austerity programme in Britain, which weakened their resilience. Organisations that provide debt advice to heavily indebted low-income groups indicate that another reason for vulnerability to debt on low incomes is the inability to accumulate resources and assets (e.g. savings) that families could draw on in times of hardship.

Overall, in this section we have argued that socio-economic crises often arise from the internal dynamics of social systems and can be remedied even if they are not avoidable. Resilience in such times requires structural underpinnings that are conducive to bouncing back and recovery. We described these as rule-based, power-based and resource-based underpinnings and operationalised these concepts in the context of the 2008 crisis. Two different forms of conflict and struggle in the process of transition after a major shock are particularly important to highlight: the diachronic (initial conditions of the structure before the crisis) and synchronic (hegemonic power struggle during the transition) aspects of resistance and change.

5.4. Policy implications

As we saw, austerity is a specific policy configuration of rules and resources pursued during and after the Great Recession. It is relevant for our discussion in as much as it undermines the conditions for social resilience. It follows that a social resilience approach must be concerned with policy frameworks that, unlike austerity, strengthen the political, institutional and economic conditions for resilience. While drawing policy implications are difficult without reference to a specific context, broader reflections are possible.

For a generic policy framework, we propose the following areas to constitute the primary focus. First, it is important to understand the temporal dimensions of resilience. This means paying attention to initial conditions of rules, resources and power and emerging vulnerabilities in the aftermath of crises and the timeframes of recovery assuming policies will not yield results immediately. Second, the notion of 'capacity' is crucial for resilience. Successful coping with crisis and/or transitioning to a better state requires social systems that protect individuals and enhance their ability to deal with shocks and adversities. Three distinct capacities for resilience are identified in the literature (Béné, Frankenberger & Nelson, 2015; Berkes, Colding & Folke, 2003; Bruneau et al., 2003; Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013).

One is coping or absorptive capacity which can be activated immediately after the shock (short run). The other is adaptive capacity which requires an assessment of what is changing and what adjustments are necessary in the short to medium term. And the final one is transformative capacity that addresses the persistent, fundamental causes of risks through system level changes which in the context of this article involves social protection mechanisms, essential services, public assets etc.

We emphasise the importance of a *rights-based view* for resilience policy as advocated by Dean (2015) rather than ad hoc and irregular interventions to support resilience. In what follows, we aim to demonstrate the significance of such an approach with reference to four major rights – namely, fundamental rights, employment rights, social rights and developmental rights. These rights have been in the forefront of institution building and policy making, especially in the post-World War II era. However, they have been eroded under the neoliberal governance ever since the 1980s.

Assuming that labour markets and social protection systems are the main channels through which resilience can be supported, the arguments for a rights-based approach to institute social resilience can be outlined in the following way:

a) *Social rights*, providing access to welfare benefits such as income or unemployment support, housing support or public health care, are the most prominent institutions of resilience, providing comprehensive support in times of systemic as well as local or personal crises. These public support systems boost the absorption capacity of individuals, families and social groups in the short-term and aid their adaptive capacity in the medium term.

b) *Employment rights* and the right to a decent wage would protect workers against spontaneous hire and fire practices, enable vulnerable populations to build their assets and resources in good times and allow them to fall back on those assets and resources in bad times. The implication is that an economic system, operating with race-to-the-bottom principles, involving precarious work and poverty wages, is damaging for social resilience both in good and bad times. For example, one of the most important sources of vulnerability amongst low-income households is their lack of savings, implying limited absorptive capacity against the impact of minor or major crises. The inability to save is directly related to disadvantageous employment conditions and known to lead low-income families into unsustainable debt (Balasuriya et al., 2019).

c) *Developmental rights* such as right of access to knowledge, education and training are crucial for social resilience and are the most likely source of transformative capacity as they enhance the capabilities of individuals to overcome life's challenges (Backman & Nilsson, 2011; Sen, 1985). They provide general, job-specific and transferable skills, enabling mobility across markets, sectors, space and time as well as faster transition from unemployment to employment or better employment conditions. At a time when access to free education, healthcare and other public services is targeted with the pretext of reducing 'national debt', impacts of these policies on the transformative capacity of potentially excluded social groups are likely to continue into the foreseeable future.

d) *Fundamental political* rights such as freedoms of expression, association and assembly are essential to enhance political participation and counteract against socially regressive changes. Tackling the excesses of corporations, enforcing standards and penalising non-compliance to prevent instabilities and harmful consequences for wider society does not only require institutional capacity but also political balance, which depends on the effectiveness of fundamental rights such as legally grounded freedoms to challenge power and authority and organise for social and political causes. Relatedly, a strong and organised civil society is part of the social fabric that supports social resilience. This is reflected well, for example, by the prominent roles played by the law centres and citizen

advice bureaus under austerity in Britain. They helped thousands of people, who have been affected through the austerity related welfare sanctions, by providing them with free legal advice, assisting with complex procedures and representing them in courts. In many instances, their help to challenge administrative decisions led to the reinstatement of the welfare benefits of affected individuals and prevented them slipping into destitution (Dagdeviren, Donoghue & Wearmouth, 2019).

5.5. Conclusions

In this article, we have aimed to provide a theoretical framework for exploring structural foundations of social resilience. Critically engaging with the existing literature, we argued that resilience research ought to be about developing an understanding of the social conditions that enable individuals, groups and societies to limit and mitigate the negative impact of major shocks and facilitate recovery.

Our argument is that social resilience is shaped by three interrelated structural factors: power relations, formal and informal rules and distribution of resources. For a more practical exploration, the 2008 crisis has been used as a reference point to unpack the relationships between these factors and resilience.

Political (or power-based) foundations of resilience refer to how different forms of access to power, participation and representation boost or damage the resilience of different socioeconomic groups, classes and communities in the aftermath of shocks or crises. Institutional (rule-based) foundations of resilience, in turn, refer to the functioning of markets, law, regulatory rules and organisations, social protection schemes that are important for generating stability or instability and supporting or constraining resilience. These are shaped by path dependence on the one hand and struggles to change the rules and distribution of resources on the other hand. It is important to underline that power and rule-based foundations of resilience are intertwined and both heavily influence distribution of resources. The latter has crucial implications for mitigation or aggravation of the exposure of social groups to risks. The flow and stock of resources vulnerable groups have at their disposal are likely to heavily influence how they cope with crises and how speedily they can recover.

In sum, without conducive power relations, rules and resources for resilience, individuals may be overwhelmed by crises or may survive by coping through what Castel (1995) called 'disaffiliation' (loss of social ties). The outcome in this respect would partly depend on the severity of shocks, how they unfold (sudden or gradual) and the period in which they remain effective. Recovery from adversity, and even better, transforming to a better state of living, requires complementary rules, power structures and resource distributions that support vulnerable social groups to avoid being overwhelmed or stuck in survival mode and enable them to recover and ideally move to a better state. Shifting cost/burden of wider socio-economic risks on individuals cannot be an effective strategy for developing capacity for resilience.

The article highlights a rights-based approach for policy making purposes to enhance resilience, as collective risk management mechanisms such as welfare state provisions are the most effective means of social resilience against expected, unexpected and unpredictable risks that societies may encounter.

CHAPTER 6

Welfare State development in Portugal: From "stage zero" to the post-crisis "leftist" compromise against austerity

6.1. Introduction

As in many other Southern European countries, the welfare state has a relatively recent existence and a rather limited development and institutional consolidation in Portugal.

Nevertheless, the progress that has been made is inescapable and profound, particularly if two facts are taken into consideration. First, convergence with European standards has been a permanent trait of the southern welfare states' development after Portugal, Spain, and Greece joined the European Communities (Capucha et al., 2014). Second, this convergence was possible even though these three countries did not benefit from the extraordinary economic and political circumstances that, after World War II, helped the core-founding group of EU nations become the part of the world with the highest standard of living in human history (Castles et al., 2010). On the contrary, Portugal, Spain, and Greece attained democracy only in the 1970s and thus faced the uphill struggle of erecting Western European-like welfare states at a time of economic recession. At the same time, neoliberalism was moving from the margins to the center of the political stage and pinning the blame for raising inflation and decreasing economic growth rates on strong collective bargaining structures, advanced welfare institutions and general state interventionism in the economy (Harvey, 2005).

From the outset, these countries faced many of the same challenges, including late transitions to democracy, huge educational gaps (particularly in Portugal and Spain), acute territorial asymmetries, and uneven modernization processes. In this context, civil society continued playing an important role in the social protection system, as state institutions penetrated far less into society when compared to other European countries. So much so that some authors saw this group of countries – alongside with Italy – as displaying distinctive characteristics (Ferrera, 1996; Ferrera, Hemerijck & Rhodes, 2000). However, other authors argue these common traits are no more than representations of the delay in the process of welfare state construction, besides failing to point the significant differences among these countries, thus rejecting the notion of a Southern European model (Andreotti et al., 2001; Pedroso, 2014).

When the 2007/08 crisis hit, all four countries were converging with European social and economic indicators. The crisis interrupted that process, as we can clearly analyse in detail in Portugal. In this peripheral EU member state, the main impact took the form of a major debt crisis that peaked in 2010/11. The magnitude of the crisis forced the Portuguese government to agree, in May 2011, to an "adjustment program" with a troika of international institutions composed of the IMF, the EC, and the ECB.

The program was implemented between 2011 and 2014. It fostered an array of austerity measures with the explicit aim of balancing public accounts so that the financial system could avoid bankruptcy, international commitments could be honoured, and Portugal could remain in the Eurozone – even if it meant endangering the performance of the welfare state, economic growth, and the overall well-being of the population. It also explicitly aimed to correct structural imbalances considered the main causes of the State's problems, mostly regarding labour market flexibilization. Even after the formal ending of the adjustment program in June 2014, the centre-right government kept its policies aligned with its principles.

After the 2015 Portuguese general elections, however, an innovative political solution emerged, which managed to successfully break with many of the principles of austerity. This solution was a minority government of the Socialist Party (PS)[13] supported in Parliament by the two main parties to its left, the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP)[14] and the Left Bloc (BE).[15]

This solution – dubbed "contraption" by its opponents on the Right – represented a bold move because, despite their longstanding representation in parliament, PCP and BE had been considered by other parties and by the opinion makers in general as incapable of becoming part of a governing solution. Nor had the two parties themselves considered that possibility before. Despite initial widespread scepticism at home and abroad, the following years witnessed a sharp improvement in most macroeconomic and financial indicators, as well as in social indicators such as the unemployment rate, the labour force participation rate, and the risk of poverty rate, resulting from the "reversal" of austerity policies.

[13] The PS was founded in 1973 and it represents the party of the European social democracy in Portugal, where are included the labour parties, the social democratic parties and the socialist parties. It is a member of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats on the European Parliament.

[14] The PCP was founded in 1921 and is a Marxist-Leninist party, representing the traditional communist parties. It is a member of the Gauche Unitaire Européenne/Nordic Green Left in the European Parliament.

[15] The BE was created in 1999 out of a coalition of Maoist and Trotskyist parties and other 'radical left' movements, including a group who left the Communist Party after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is a member of the Gauche Unitaire Européenne/Nordic Green Left in the European Parliament.

Some attempts have been made to explain the process, but they frequently suffer from glaring ideological bias (e.g. Finn, 2017). Looking closely at the history of democracy and the welfare state in Portugal, one can see the mechanisms that made the solution feasible. There is a vast literature recently produced about the topic in recent decades (Albuquerque, 2016; Alexandre et al., 2014; Capucha, 2016; Silva P. A., 2013).

However, this literature stops at the door of the post-2015 new political arrangement and does not pay attention to the details of the long process that is needed to understand the present situation. Therefore, it is useful to present an overall view of the evolution of the Portuguese welfare state through 2015, in order to understand the refusal of voters to accept the decline in its performance, and the strategies behind a solution of government as innovative as it was unlikely: so-called "contraption".

This article is a work of synthesis. It aims at addressing the most distinctive features of the welfare state in Portugal from its origins to the present day, indicating the main phases of development and transformation.

The result can be seen as twofold. First, as a guide for developing further research on the evolution of the functions, institutional arrangements, and policy orientations of the State in the provision of welfare, considering the main economic and political cycles in the last four decades, under a new perspective allowed by the present experience. Second, as a practical example of the unexplored options that are available to the "left" and "center-left" parties in the rest of Europe.

6.2. Social policies in Portugal before the Democratic Revolution of 1974

Due to Portugal's late industrialization, the beginnings of protection against social risks were only sketched out during the First Republic (1910-26), when legislation was approved establishing this protection along Bismarckian lines. A system of social insurance against old age, sickness, labour injuries, and unemployment was designed, but never enforced (Maia, 1984). The social protection that did exist consisted of a network of local and professional mutualist associations covering a very limited range of risks, while paying out very low benefits (Capucha, 2005; Pereira M. H., 2012).

The First Republic fell in 1926 to a military coup. The ensuing Estado Novo fascist regime suspended basic civil freedoms, prohibited political parties and independent trade unions, and severely persecuted political opponents. It also deliberately weakened the mutualist network – both in terms of its size and its operations (Garrido, 2016). In its place, the regime sought to impose a social protection policy based on the corporatist model of the relationship between labour and capital (Pereira P. T., 2016).

This system changed very little until the Estado Novo's demise in 1974, by which time its institutions provided cover to less than one-fifth of the working population – mostly those employed in the more structured sectors of industry, commerce, and some services. These included the few companies that became a significant economic force following the Industrial Development Plan from the beginning of the 1960s, some commerce, and services such as banking and insurance (Capucha, 2005). The system also covered public servants, whose numbers were rather small, as education, health services, and social protection were extremely underdeveloped at the time. Workers in these sectors benefited from social protection schemes that covered old age, sickness, and disability (Pereirinha & Carolo, 2009).

There were some attempts to develop health, education and social protection systems during the small period of four years after the death of the old dictator António Salazar in 1970, a period called "Primavera Marcelista" (the "Spring of Marcelo", the new dictator). However, the corporatist nature of the welfare regime and the underdevelopment of social policies, in practice, did not change significantly. The main result from this short period of the dictatorship was the emergence of a small elite of young experts and scholars who would play an important role after the revolution of 1974.

In the context of an underdeveloped economy dominated by subsistence-level agriculture, the absence of socially-directed public policies, and the repression of civic and political liberties, around one-third of Portuguese households lived in poverty on the eve of the Revolution of 1974 (Silva M., 1982). This situation was further aggravated by the Portuguese colonial wars in Africa that started in 1961. These wars were mostly fought with a conscripted army, threatening every young male in Portugal with the prospect of forced military service in Africa.

Poverty and the war were thus major triggers for the wave of mass emigration from the late 1950s onwards. An estimated 1.5 million Portuguese left the country between 1957 and 1974, the majority of them illegally (Pereira V., 2012), because the regime tried to stop the process by force. This wave of emigration flowed towards the more industrialized countries of Europe (France at the top, but also Germany, the UK, Belgium, Luxembourg and Switzerland), the USA, Brazil and the African colonies – particularly Angola. Emigration and the wars in Africa were responsible for one of the most durable characteristics of the Portuguese employment system: the large proportion of women in the workforce (Almeida et al., 1998; Almeida, Costa & Machado, 1994). This feature remains a clear difference between Portugal and the rest of Southern Europe.

The industrial development plans that were drawn up from the beginning of the 1950s, in the aftermath of Portugal's limited and reluctant involvement in the Marshall Plan (Rollo, 1994), gave way, in the early 1960s, to a series of investments in heavy industries such as metallurgy, shipbuilding, and chemicals. Traditional industries, such as glass, footwear, furniture, textiles, and clothing export markets. This moderate industrialization and some large investments in infrastructure (such as the construction of Lisbon's first bridge over the Tagus River) provided work for the men and women who remained in the country, while also triggering a significant influx of immigrants from Africa, mainly from Cabo Verde (Lains, 1994).

6.3. The 1974 Revolution and the awakening of the welfare state

In 1974, a democratic revolution brought an end to the fascist Estado Novo regime and restored basic civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and association, and the right to strike. In doing so, it unleashed a wave of social energy. The revolution itself started as a military coup carried out by a group of lower-ranked military officers, dubbed the "movement of the captains". These officers had concluded that the 13-year-long colonial wars had no military solution and could only end through a peaceful settlement with the African liberation movements. Such solution implied decolonization, an anathema to the Estado Novo regime. Therefore, it required a regime change – making the transition to democracy an integral part of the project of the "movement of the captains".

The coup immediately triggered a powerful popular revolutionary movement. During this very intense but short revolutionary period that lasted from April 1974 to November 1975, a series of landmark policies were introduced that served as precursors of the welfare state. These included the creation of a State pension (the first non-contributory and universal social security measure), the establishment of a national minimum wage, the creation of the unemployment benefit, and the institutionalization of industrial relations between the employers' organization and the trade unions (Capucha, 2005). Also, universal schooling of children up to 12 years was enforced, putting into practice a policy measure adopted in 1964 (Rodrigues et al., 2014).

A number of important changes to the country's social and economic structures took place over the following years, including a sharp decline in emigration, which became temporary in nature. In turn, immigration continued to increase. A particularly strong shock occurred when around 500,000 people arrived from the newly-independent former colonies in just over a year between 1974 and 1975 (Pires et al., 1984).

What initially was thought to be a blow that could undermine both the institutions and the social balance of the country, turned into a success story of the incorporation into Portuguese society of a group of immigrants that was younger and relatively well-educated when compared to the Portuguese population (Pires, 2003). In this way, integrating the population that had involuntarily returned from the former colonies ended up reinforcing the country's potential for development.

Economically, politically, and socially, this was a time of heightened turmoil and social conflict. Major enterprises in various sectors of the economy (including the media) were nationalized. In the South, the plantations were occupied by rural workers and turned into agrarian cooperatives, with their previous owners being expelled. Several were nationalized in early 1975 and constituted into collective units of production (the process that became known as "Agrarian Reform"). Strikes and demonstrations became part of daily life in the country. The armed forces were used as instruments by both left-wing and right-wing parties, leading to heightened military and political tension. Successive provisional governments with the exception of the first,[16] the government of national unity, were dominated by the PCP and backed by military sectors attached to this party and to the small but active far-left parties.

[16] The first provisional Government was constituted immediately after the Revolution. Nominated by the President of the Republic that the leaders of the military coup had chosen to ensure the transition to democracy and to put an end to the colonial wars, a 'unification government' consisted of moderate opponents of the fascist regime and representatives of the main parties that existed before the revolution (the Communist Party and the Socialist Party) and those that were founded immediately afterwards, such as the Social Democratic Party and the Popular Party. This government had a short

Following an attempted military coup on the 25 November 1975, a military movement aligned with political forces of the centre-left and the centre-right – the PS and the Social Democratic Party (PSD)[17] – put an end to this period of unrest. The far-left parties that were openly aligned with the mutiny ended up much weakened, while the PCP involved itself very discreetly, thus maintaining the conditions to stay within the institutional system, albeit outside the national government. At the end of this period of unrest, Portugal established a political system similar to other capitalist democracies throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

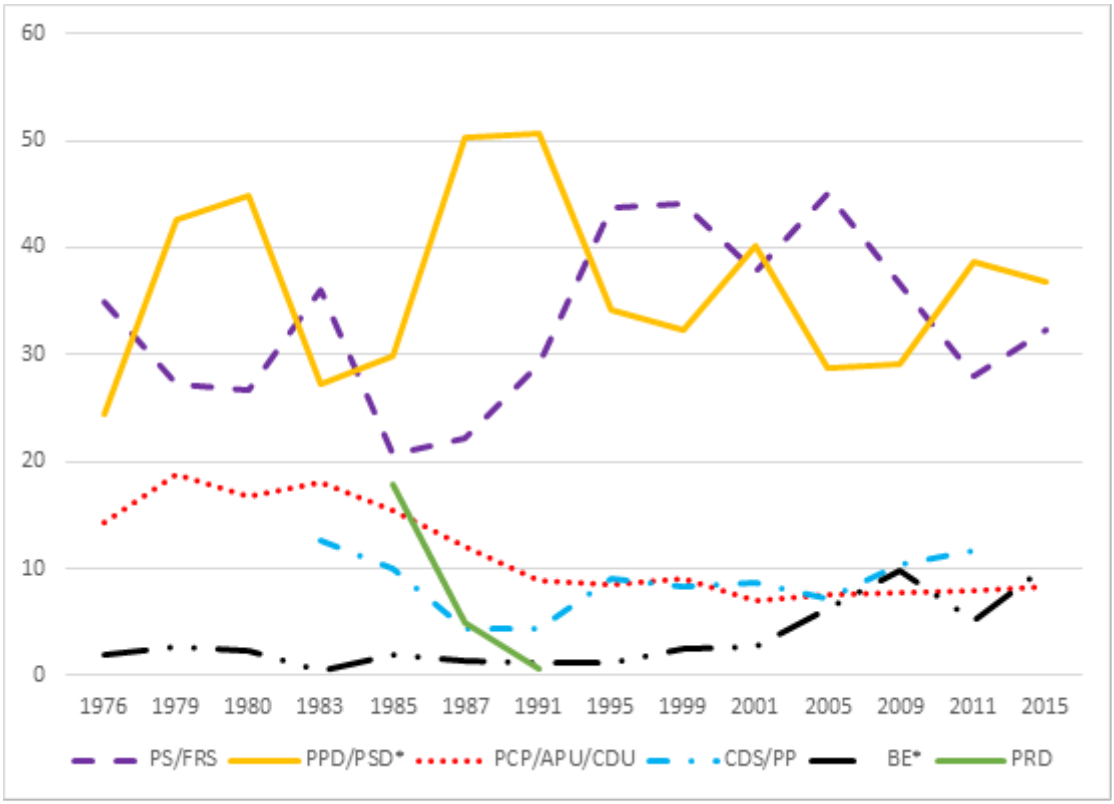

Figure 6.1: Parliamentary elections results, 1976-2015, share of votes, %. *Source*: National Electoral Committee (CNE), http://eleicoes.cne.pt/index.cfm. Retrieved on July 06, 2018.

* PPD/PSD and CDS/PP ran as an electoral coalition in 1979, 1980 and 2015; results for BE before 1999 are the sum of its component parties (UDP and LCI/PSR).

life, due the turbulence that followed the military coup, and the four 'provisional governments' that were in power until November 1975 were controlled by the leftist (Communist and Maoist/Trotskyist) military officers that were part of the MFA (Armed Forces' Movement).

[17] The PSD was founded in 1974 and is a center/right-wing party, with a Christian democratic affinity. It also encapsulates other tendencies on the right, namely the right-wing liberals. The party was initially called Democratic People's Party (PPD), adding to its name in 1976 the designation Social Democratic Party (PSD) – the name by which it is more widely known. It is a member of the European People's Party in the European Parliament.

6.4. The period of preparation for entry into the European Economic Community

A period of retreat from revolutionary movements and toward the stabilization of democracy followed the failed military coup. The confrontation between pro-Soviet and far-left political forces vs. pro-European forces moved into the electoral realm. The victory of the PS was clear in the constitutional elections of 1975 and the legislative elections in 1976, with the party winning 35% of the vote. In second place was the PSD, with 24.4%, followed by the Social Democratic Centre, today's Popular Party[18] (PP), with 16%. Falling to fourth place, with 14.4% of the vote, was the PCP. The most popular far-left party, the Popular Democratic Union (UDP), which later would become a founding member of the BE, gained only 1.7% of the votes and one MP (Figure 6.1).

Soon afterward, in June 1976, presidential elections were held. Ramalho Eanes, the leader of the victorious military forces on 25 November of the previous year, won the election with 61.6% of the vote. The leader of the political-military side that challenged him, Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, only gained 16.5% of the vote. The forces of the far-left that supported him now joined him outside the institutions of power.

After the 1976 elections, the socialist government led by Mário Soares requested admission to the European Economic Community (EEC), in this way affirming a durable pro-European orientation in the development of the State, the economy, and Portuguese society.

The first European funds began to arrive during the period of pre-accession into the EEC. New laws of a "modern European style" were approved as the framework of the national health system (in 1979), the social security system (in 1984), and the education system (in 1986). This set of laws and policies created the foundations of the Portuguese welfare state.

[18] CDS/PP was founded in 1974 and is a conservative Christian democratic and nationalist right-wing party. It is the Portuguese party that is closer to the Popular Parties in Europe. The party was initially called Social and Democratic Centre (CDS), later adding to its name the designation of Popular Party (PP). It is a member of the European People's Party on the European Parliament.

Structures for social dialogue were also launched, in which the communists participated since they were dominant in unions. The General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers (CGTP), founded in 1972, integrated the unions affiliated with the PCP.[19] However, by then, PCP was considered, together with the leftist smaller parties, out of the "arch of governance" – that is, outside the list of parties eligible to enter or to support the national government of a so called "democratic Portugal".[20]

The democratic system of local governments, created also in the revolutionary period, was consolidated in this period as well. The main infrastructures of sanitation, energy networks, and water distribution resulted from local governments' commitment to meeting their populations' needs and desires, and their efforts garnered support and prestige.

The PS and PSD won the elections for a majority of municipalities, but the PCP also dominated a significant number of local governments, mainly in the region of Lisbon and in the South. Together with unions, these were the basic social and political supports of the PCP, therefore, remained in the system, but opposed to the EU and outside of national government coalitions.

The costs of implementing these new policies in such a short period of time, together with the economic and financial effects of the revolutionary period (capital flight, strikes and business strife, low productivity, etc.), created a difficult financial situation that eventually led to two interventions by the IMF and the imposition of austerity programs in 1977 and 1983. The framework of these interventions started the reversal of the "Agrarian Reform" and the beginning of the reprivatization of companies that had been nationalized in 1975.

[19] Although the social dialog was established in this period through the constitution of the Conselho Permanente para a Concertação Social (CPCS) in 1984, it should be mentioned that CGTP initially was suspicious and did not join this council. In fact, through their influence by representing the great majority of unions, they fought their action. CGTP only joined CPCS in 1989, in reaction to the absolute majority of PSD in the 1987 general elections, with the objective of maintaining political influence in a mono-party right-wing government (Lima & Naumann, 2004). The CPCS is the core part of the Economic and Social Council.

[20] It should be noted that there is no legislation or formal norms that limit access to government for these parties. Thus, the 'arch of governance' is an expression for the informal but continued practice from the parties of the center-left, center-right and the conservative right of excluding left-wing parties from national government, regardless of their electoral results.

On the other hand, the introduction of forward contracts into labour relations as well as the increase in practices such as deferred wages, illegal but widely tolerated by the State, date back to this period. Moreover, a durable feature of the Portuguese social model is the contrast between the rather rigid legal framework of the labour market and its real operation. The latter is far more flexible due to the weak regulatory capacity of the state and the systematic failure of employers to comply with the law (MTS, 1999).

Labour relations have always been largely informal and flexible, while the precarity of employment has continued to increase to the present day, in all sectors of activity and at all levels of qualification. Portugal is no exception to what is happening throughout the world. Traditionally, the unions' position with respect to contracts has essentially been a conservative one, seeking to keep in force the legislation achieved during the revolutionary period.

The only unions open to the revision of the labour laws were those affiliated with the PS and the PSD, which were integrated into the General Union of Workers (UGT), established in 1978. CGTP opposed all changes. For their part, employers have demanded, from the revolutionary period to the present, a revision of the most basic labour laws, in order to increase precarity and keep wages low.

In general, labour and social conflicts were institutionalized during the period between 1974 and 1986. This was an era of pacification and of defining a model for the welfare state built on the foundation of the 1974 revolution and subsequently "Europeanized".

6.5. 1986/95: Consolidation and growth of social policies

The distress caused by the implementation of austerity policies during the IMF interventions damaged the image and popularity of the PS, which contributed to them losing the 1985 general election to the PSD. The political institutions seemed to have been consolidated, and popular support for democracy remained strong. In the 1985 elections the PCP obtained 15.5% of the votes and UDP lost the single MP they had sent to Parliament in every election since 1975.

The mandate of the new PSD government, led by Aníbal Cavaco Silva, coincided with a new period of growth of the welfare state and accelerated convergence with Europe.

Portugal joined the EEC in 1986, which brought in additional European funds designed to help with professional development, employment, and infrastructure (highways, hospitals, health centres, schools, etc.). European funds also brought institutional innovation and the development of public administrations skills, including those concerned with planning and evaluation. With the devaluation of the US dollar and the fall in the price of oil, the international economic context became very favourable and led to a reduction in Portugal's public and private external debt burden (Alexandre et al., 2014). As a consequence, real average annual GDP growth reached 5.3% from 1986-91 (Figure 6.2), while unemployment fell to 4.1% in 1992 and 1993 (Figure 6.4).

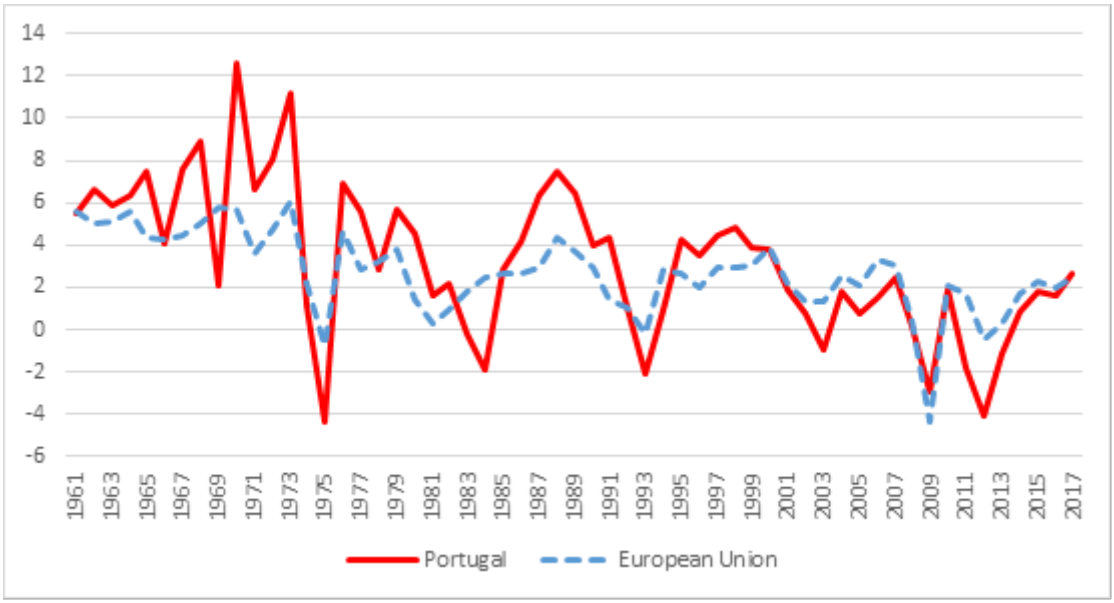

Figure 6.2: GDP Growth, %. *Source*: World Bank, World Bank Data, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=PT. Retrieved on July 04, 2018.

However, this was also a time of large-scale destruction of major enterprises in metallurgy, shipbuilding, and the chemical sectors. Fishing also suffered a strong negative impact. Subsistence agriculture, which was dominant in the economy just 15 years earlier, by this time, had almost disappeared as a relevant economic activity. The exception was under the format of double-employment (in small farming and salaried work in industry and services), and multi-income (from self-consumption, salaries, and pensions), emerging as strategies for helping households increase their income, escape poverty, and invest in their children's education (Machado & Costa, 2000). The abrupt fall in the birth-rate – from 20‰ in 1976 to 11,7‰ in 1990 – was one consequence of these strategies.

The economy remained dominated by traditional labour-intensive industries (such as textiles and footwear) and services (retail, hotels, tourism, and public services), while at the same time construction (14% of employment) and business services – particularly financial services – became more important.

In this new economic environment, the government seized an opportunity to increase the generosity of the still-nascent pension, education, and health systems (Figure 6.3). The network of hospitals and health centres was expanded to cover the entire country, compulsory education was raised to nine years, and schools were built all around the country. The social welfare budget increased, and wages, salaries, and pensions rose, the latter through increases in the monthly amounts and the creation of a mandatory Christmas and a summer holiday bonus, which effectively doubled retired people's earnings in the months of June and December.

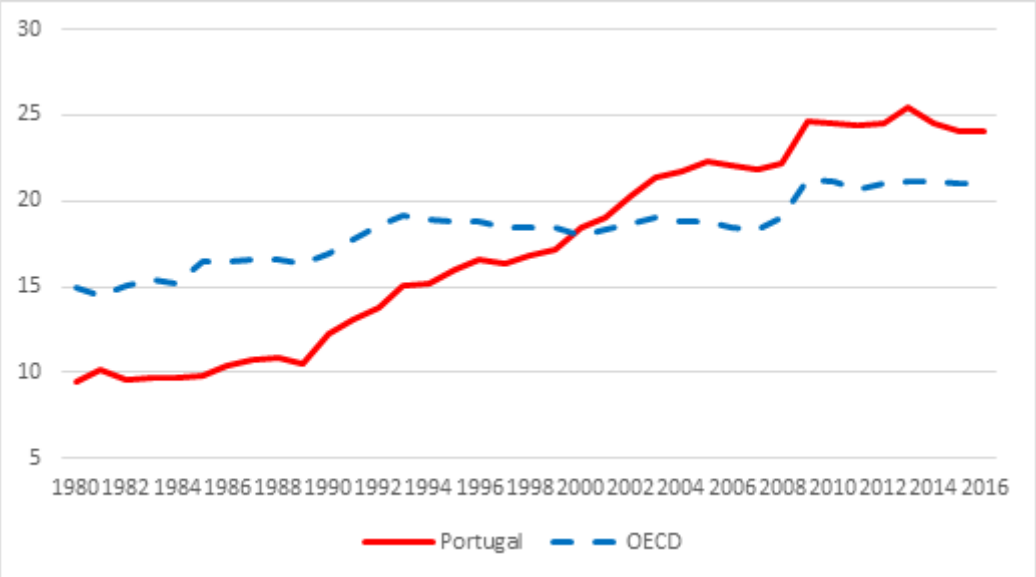

Figure 6.3: Social Expenditure as % of GDP. *Source*: OECD, OECD.stat, https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=SOCX_AGG#. Retrieved on July 06, 2018.

Specific anti-poverty policies also became part of the public policy agenda at this time. These policies sought to replicate across the country the principles and methodologies of the European Union's Poverty 2 and Poverty 3 Initiatives. The increase in household incomes (the result of labour, multiple incomes, and pensions), greater mobility (as a result of a better-educated younger generation), and, to a lesser extent, the anti-poverty projects, had a positive impact on indicators of poverty and inequality.

There was also a considerable increase in the development of social facilities targeted to different categories of vulnerable people. The expansion of partnerships, consecrated in the Constitution of 1976, between the State and institutions of civil society, most notably those connected (directly or through influence) with the Catholic Church, served as an official model for successive governments.

The period from 1986 to 1993 was thus one of convergence with Europe. However, Portugal remained at the bottom of Europe in terms of poverty and income inequality, as well as in other aspects such as productivity, qualifications of the labour force, and the organization of work and management in public and private sectors. The modernization process spread very unequally across state, economic, and social sectors. It was, and still is, possible to find side-by-side modernized and innovative companies, social organizations, and State institutions, and others organized according to old-fashioned arrangements, giving rise to a kind of "unfinished modernity" that characterizes the country (Machado & Costa, 1998).

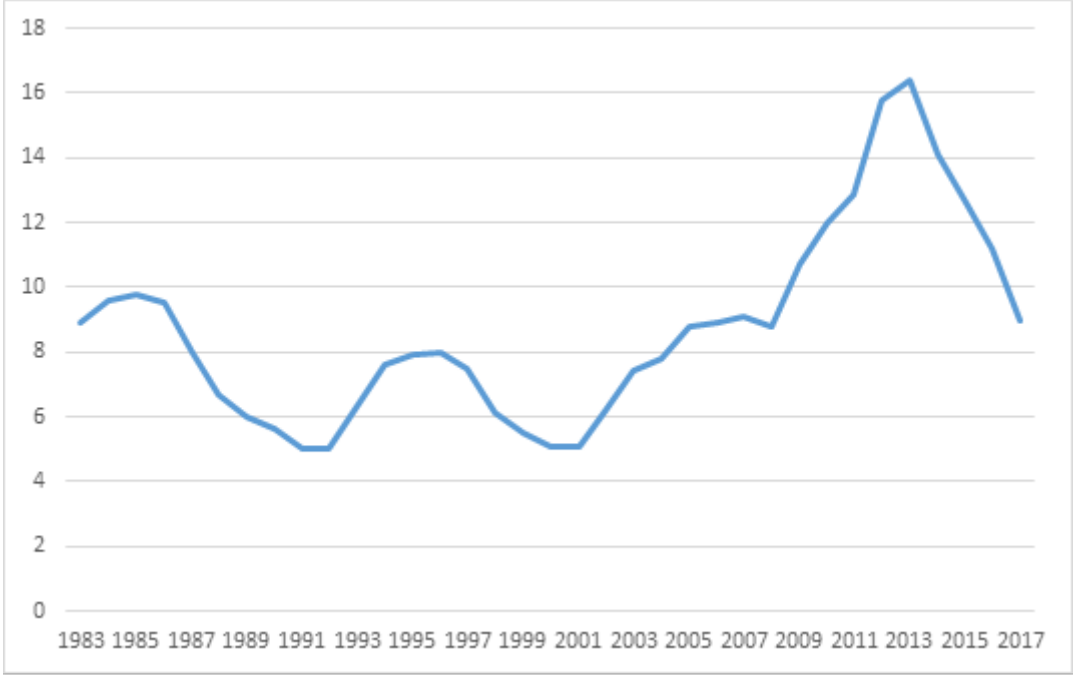

Figure 6.4: Unemployment rate, %. *Source*: Eurostat, table [une_rt_a]. Retrieved on July 04, 2018.

This cycle ended with the 1993 economic crisis. Unemployment began to rise, reaching 7.2% in 1995 (Figure 6.4), just as the aspirations that had previously been encouraged began giving way to stagnation. Economic growth was suddenly either negative or anaemic, and people became disenchanted with the promise of becoming "European" just because they belonged to the EEC. Discontent with the government grew, resulting in the PS returning to power in the 1995 election and inaugurating a new political cycle that would last until 2002.

6.6. Activation policies and positive differentiation (1995-2001)

The new government, led by António Guterres, established education as its main priority. The predominance of low skills in the working population has been considered the main obstacle hindering the development and modernization of the country, as much in the economic as in the political, social, and civic domains (OECD, 1998). Expanding pre-school and higher education were specific priorities that were implemented; however, early school leaving rates continued at an extremely high level throughout the decade, never falling below 40%.

The battle against poverty was another priority, which led to the implementation of a set of policies under the concept of "social development". In 1996, the government introduced the Minimum Guaranteed Income (Matsaganis et al., 2003), promoted the evolution of the social employment market, and launched new programs to support community development projects.

Unemployment and employment became a third government priority. In the context of the implementation of the European Employment Strategy (EES), public employment services were modernized. A new generation of active social policies and employment policies was introduced. In Portugal the "activation orientation" did not seek, at the time, to reduce rights and the levels of social transfers (which remained very ungenerous compared to the average in Europe), but rather to promote qualifications and improve individuals', institutions', and firms' performance and capabilities (MTS, 1999).

Portugal played a very active role in the EES and in launching the European strategy for combating poverty and social exclusion and sustainability of pension systems (Silva P. A., 2013). In this period reforms were adopted that, once again, raised the level of pensions and which, had it not been for the crisis of 2007/08, would have guaranteed the system's long-term sustainability (Silva & Pereira, 2015). For example, the entire career of contributions was taken into account, and not just the final phase as happened previously. Also, the mechanisms by which pension funds were capitalized were reinforced.

All the reforms introduced were supported by agreements with social partners, which created a new impulse for labour policies and social dialogue. Signed in 2001 by all social partners, including the generally absent CGTP, the agreements focused on employment policies, education and training, pensions and social protection, and policies related to health and safety in the workplace (Lima & Naumann, 2004). These measures opposed labour market deregulation; a policy that was being highly demanded by the right-wing opposition as a way to increase productivity.

As a result of these policy developments, poverty and inequality continued to decline (Capucha, 2005).

The government maintained a strong investment in infrastructure. It led, with the support of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), for instance, to the construction of the Alqueva dam, the second bridge over the Tagus at Lisbon and a new one over the Douro river at Porto, new highways, and expansion of the network of social facilities, among others. The Program of Special Rehabilitation (PER), designed to remove slum housing from the Lisbon and Porto metropolitan areas was implemented during this period, having a huge impact on the poorest households and stimulating the already flourishing construction industry. Investment in the area of social facilities continued, consolidating the partnership with institutions of the third sector that has become, up to now, a distinctive characteristic of the welfare state model in Portugal. Third sector organizations provide goods and services, with State funding that finances construction, basic equipment, and operating expenses. Also included are contributions, based on individual or family income, of those who use the services.

Driven by the above-mentioned policies, the unemployment rate fell to a record low of 3.9% in 2000 (Figure 6.4), while the economy grew by an average of 4.1% per annum between 1997 and 2000 (Figure 6.2).

6.7. A threatened retreat (2002/05)

The 2002/03 European crisis brought this cycle to a halt. In the year 2003, GDP growth was negative. The Portuguese economy found itself under the three-fold pressure of joining the single currency (the euro), facing increasing international trade liberalization – with China's decision to join the World Trade Organization in 2001 being a key moment – and the expansion of the EU to Eastern Europe. The growth model, with its strong component of containing wage costs in the traditional industries of textiles, clothing, footwear, and furniture, was showing signs of exhaustion. While higher-value industries such as automobiles and industrial moulds

have emerged and proven to be competitive, they have not replaced losses in other sectors. For its part, tourism was still far from achieving the value that it would come to attain a decade and a half later. The economy found itself at a turning point, with the decline in growth potential of labour-intensive industries, and with activities of higher added value, particularly the production of tradable goods, emerging only timidly. There was some progress made in workforce qualification, but only among younger workers primarily employed by the State and by a small set of large service enterprises. The qualification of employers was, and continues to be, on average lower than that of their workers and, despite technological advances, there was little corresponding modernization in the overall organization of workplaces (Freire, 2002).

In sum, old structural problems were exposed due to the changing context of the new millennium towards the deregulation of the international trade, namely: (i) the low skills of the Portuguese labour force; and (ii) the structure of Portugal's economic fabric, still dominated by small businesses employing obsolete methods of workplace organization and concentrated in sectors of low technological intensity (Mamede, 2014).

The decline in the economic model corresponded as well to the erosion of the reformist impulse of the political left in the realm of social policy. The experiences of privatizing services, particularly in the area of infrastructure and health facilities via public-private partnerships, served as the first signs – in large part influenced by trends that spread throughout Europe and by the imposition of neoliberal recipes that the Socialist government accepted.

After PS lost the local elections in 2001, Prime-Minister Guterres resigned and described the political situation as a "swamp", an apt illustration of the halt in the reformist trend. The following elections in 2002 led to a new government supported by a short-lived coalition of the PSD and the PP. The focus of the new conservative government led by Durão Barroso was the adoption of a labour code, which condensed the labour laws that were previously dispersed, and revised them in order to increase flexibilization, precarity and keeping the wages low. This policy started a period of accelerated deregulation of the labour market, by means of the legal institutionalization of precarity, until then only carried out informally. This measure has otherwise proven durable, even with future Socialist governments.

There were attempts to change the pension system, by means of a cap on contributions with the idea of stimulating a major privatization of the system, but these changes met with strong resistance on the part of labour unions and never became law. During this period, the right-wing parties recognized, for the first time, the right to a minimum income, in spite of changing the name to Social Insertion Income. Nonetheless, they took measures to reduce its scope. On the other hand, the privatization of enterprises providing public services moved forward at an even faster pace.

The PCP, despite having obtained one of their lowest vote totals ever (6.9%) in the elections of 2002, exerted pressure against the trend toward privatization of social policies. They accomplished this through the union structures under their control. In the late 1990's, the BE was founded, gaining immediate popularity, benefiting from a perception of a hole on the political left and a growing qualified urban population. Based on a program on the so-called "fracturing causes", such as those related to sexual orientation, abortion, migration, environmentalism, and others, it made itself attractive to young people, intellectuals, and professionals (journalists and other intellectual jobs), obtaining 2.2% of the vote in 1999 and 2.8% in 2002 (Figure 6.1).

6.8. A new impetus and the emergency of the 2007/08 Crisis

The impact of the economic crisis on employment and the departure of Barroso for the Presidency of the EC left the right-wing coalition in a very fragile state, one that helps to explain the victory of the PS with an absolute majority in the 2005 elections. PCP and BE obtained, respectively, 7.5% and 6.4% (Figure 6.1). These two parties did not support the government, but the majority of the PS in parliament allowed the government to implement its own program.

The new government's main policy was concerned with the so-called "technological shock". This "shock" was noticed mainly in the energy sector (development of green energies through investment in innovative renewables, which reduced considerably the country's dependence on imported energy), in public investment in R&D and, once again, in education. In this regard, the New Opportunities program must be emphasized. This program contained two pillars. The first directed at adults, envisioning their massive "return to school", reaching more than 1.5 million people between 2007 and June 2011 (Capucha, 2013). The second, addressed to secondary school students and their attendance, mainly through the improvement of professional education, which led to a rapid and continuous decline in early school leaving rates, which dropped from 38.3% in 2005 to just 13.7% in 2015.

In the field of social protection, two major measures were launched in this period that are worth noting. One was a new cash benefit, the solidarity supplement for the elderly, which provides income support for the elderly poor. Poverty among the elderly was thus significantly reduced, while the level of child poverty – which has declined only very slightly – has become a growing concern. The second measure was the reform of the social security system with the introduction of a factor linked to average life expectancy into the pension calculation. This structural measure, consisting of an automatic progression of the legal retirement age according to gains in average life expectancy, envisages the sustainability of the public pensions system.

The government also adopted a more rigorous budget cutting down public expenses, which led to the state deficit falling to 3% of GDP in 2007, the lowest level in democratic Portugal's history so far. This is worth noting because this "budgetary adjustment" occurred before the 2007/08 crisis, by the single initiative of the Portuguese government at the time.

However, the trajectory of budgetary adjustments to reduce the State deficit and the development of Portugal's economy – while progressing in tandem and converging with the rest of the EU in terms of the generosity and quality of social services and education – was badly affected by the international financial crash of 2007/08.

6.9. Austerity and the receding of the welfare state

In the face of the crisis and in accordance with a strategy agreed upon in the European Council, the Portuguese government initially introduced "automatic stabilizers" to support the unemployed and those businesses weakened by the crisis. Then – and still in compliance with European decisions – it began bailing out the banking system. This policy led to an extraordinary increase in the level of public debt; while in 2007 it amounted to 68.4% of GDP, by 2011 it had reached 111.4%. This increase took place in the context of extremely high levels of private debt, with non-finance sector private company debt in the order of 155.7% of GDP (Figure 6.5). Still worse, from mid-2010, European economic policy began giving complete priority to guaranteeing the macro-economic balances associated with the single currency (Pedroso, 2014).

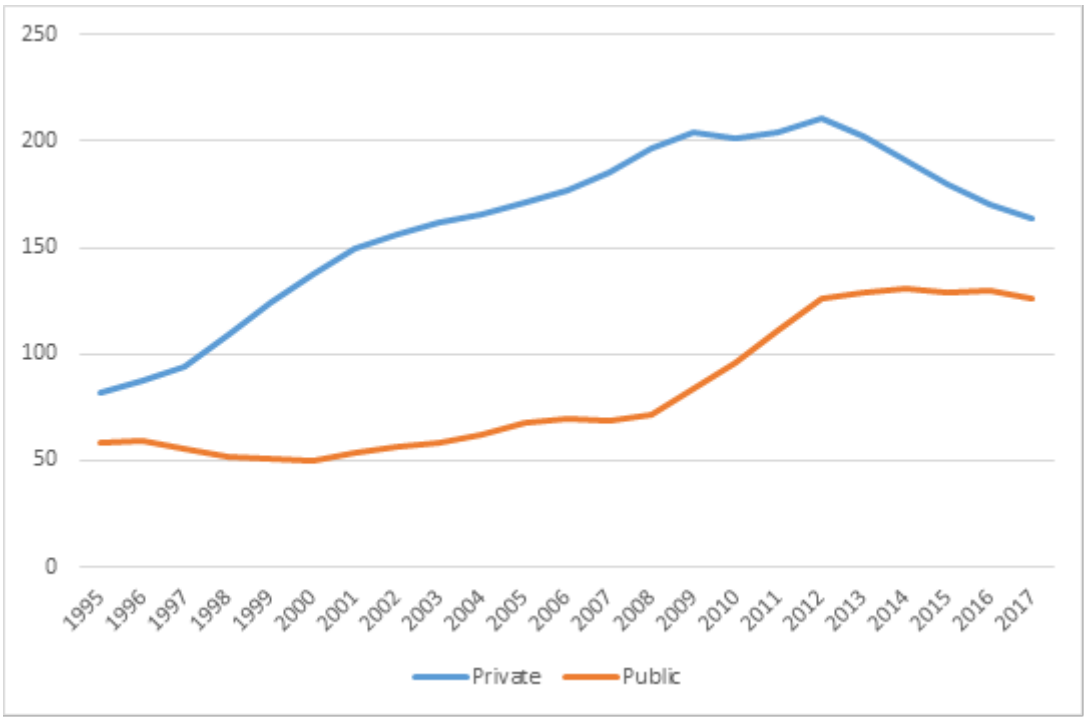

Figure 6.5: Public and Private Debt, % of GDP. *Source*: Eurostat, [tipspd20] table for private debt, [gov_10dd_edpt1] for public debt. Both Retrieved on July 04, 2018.

The EU forced Portugal to introduce a series of austerity measures, including cuts in salaries, mainly in the public sector, cuts in social protection benefits, and, as always, demands for a more 'flexible' labour market (that is, more precarity and lower salaries) and the reduction of taxes on companies. These very unpopular measures were justified by a discourse that blamed the crisis on "profligacy" and "living beyond one's means" – highly moralistic language without empirical foundation. Indeed, in Portugal, labour is cheaper, household incomes and expenses are lower, people work more hours, and the welfare state accounts for a smaller portion of the economy than the average for Europe (Capucha et al., 2014). Nevertheless, this self-deprecating rhetoric was extremely effective and its ideological impact was huge. It created the conditions for the bailout request that led to the signing of the *Memorandum of Understanding* (MoU) between the Portuguese government and the Troika (IMF, the ECB, and the EC) in June 2011. As a first consequence, the PS government fell in the Parliament.

The PCP and the BE voted along with the PSD and the PP to end the PS-led government, justifying this vote with the argument that the PS carried out rightist policies. Nevertheless, both parties also suffered electorally following the 2011 elections. Between the elections of 2009 and 2011, the PS's share of the vote declined from 36.6% to 28.1%, the BE's share declined from 9.8% to 5.2%, and the PCP's share remained below 8% (7.9 % in both 2009 and 2011) (Figure 6.1). These results, along with attacks on the unions and the penalizing of municipalities governed by the PCP, explain in large part why, four years later, both parties were amenable to supporting the PS government in parliament.

Following the 2011 elections, the newly elected PSD/PP coalition embraced enthusiastically the task of implementing the plans in the MoU. The new government seized on austerity as a political and ideological project, not just as a temporary tool for financial adjustment, but often going beyond the measures that had been agreed on (Moury & Standring, 2017). This included public sector wage cuts, even for the already poorly-paid (the monthly minimum wage in Portugal in 2011 was €485, while the average monthly wage that year was €811), whose effect reached the private sector, given that public sector wages are usually used as a main reference point in the collective bargaining. It also included cuts to (even the lowest) pensions; cuts to anti-poverty measures, such as the solidarity supplement for the elderly and social integration income; the termination of education and adult training programs; and, as expected, more flexibility and deregulation of labour markets (Pedroso, 2014). The governments' political agenda was, for the first time, clearly aligned with the neoliberal belief that the solution for economic recovery and growth, balanced finances, and reduced public debt was to be found in cutting social benefits and public expenses (including education), and in reducing wages and labour rights.

These measures did not prevent further deterioration of economic and social indicators. Portugal experienced three consecutive years of negative GDP growth between 2011 and 2013. The public debt increased to 130.6% of GDP in 2014 (Figure 6.5). There was no sign of any improvement in either the budgetary or the financial fronts – the latter of which in the meantime suffered several scandals and the discovery of a number of cases of fraud within the banking system. In turn, the unemployment rate increased rapidly, reaching a record high of 16.4% in 2013 (Figure 6.4).

The combined effect of high unemployment and cuts in wages and benefits led to a strong deterioration in living conditions and an increase in the proportion of the population at risk of poverty after social transfers, reaching 27.5% in 2013 and 2014 (Figure 6.6). This trend affected also a number of middle-class workers, who began to fall into poverty. Emigration also increased dramatically, with 263,451 people permanently leaving the country between 2010 and 2015, surpassing by far the 172,200 people that emigrated from Portugal the previous 18 years.

In sum, during this period the welfare state in Portugal went through a process of retrenchment for the first time since 1974. Likewise, the process of convergence with the EU in economic and social policies performance was interrupted, as it had never been since that year. Granted, such convergence had fluctuated in terms of intensity before, but not to the point of reversing the trend.

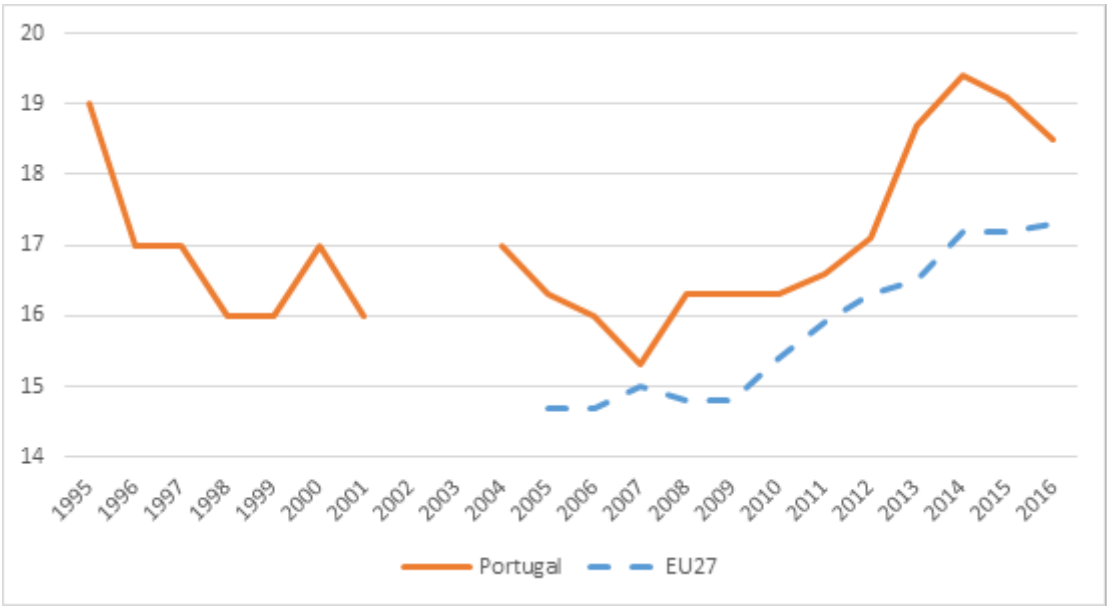

Figure 6.6: At Risk of Poverty rate after Social Transfers, %. *Source*: Eurostat, [ilc_li04] table. Retrieved on July 05, 2018.

The right-wing government, conforming to the narrative of bankruptcy, implemented cuts in income redistribution policies, in salaries and pensions, in unemployment compensation and social supports, in education, and in health. Simultaneously, there were harsh increases in indirect taxes, changes in labour law making it easier to cut workers, and the privatization of public enterprises such as EDP (energy), REN (energy distribution), GALP (oil and derivatives), TAP (air transport), CTT (postal services), and TELECOM (telecommunications). The result was an increase in poverty, a rise in unemployment, the encouragement of emigration, the concentration of wealth, an increase in the deficit and the public debt, and negative growth of the economy. The crisis drove the country into a desperate situation, and austerity led to profound popular discontent.

6.10. The left-wing government and the reversal of austerity

After heading an electoral campaign based on the fear of "falling back into bankruptcy" and on the need to consolidate the policies implemented between 2011 and 2015, the right-wing coalition (composed by PSD and CDS) lost the majority in the general election of October 2015, while still obtaining the bigger percentage of votes (36.9%). Following the Portuguese tradition, the leader of the coalition was invited by the President of the Republic to form a government. However, the parliament rejected the government program, with the votes against of PS (32.3% of the votes), PCP (8.3%) and BE (10.2%), which resulted in the immediate fall of the new government[21] (Figure 6.1). The three left-wing parties voting together in a major issue was something new in Portuguese politics. How was it possible?

On one hand, voters' discontent with austerity was evident, but many of them had not forgotten that under the PS the troika had entered Portugal. On the other hand, the declining institutions led by the PCP (especially labour unions, but also the municipalities) and the pressure of the party's traditional voters prevented its leaders from voting once again against a PS-led government, because the alternative would have implied the possibility of permanent right-wing rule. Although the BE had little presence in political institutions outside parliament – though with a significant presence in the media – it, too, was under pressure not to return the right-wing government to power but to support the PS instead.

[21] In terms of MP, the electoral results followed the percentage of the votes. Thus, the right-wing coalition obtained 107 MP, while the PS obtained 86 MP, the BE 19 and the PCP 17. In addition, the People, Animals and Nature (PAN) party obtained 1 MP. This latter party also voted for the fall of the new minority right-wing government.

But, on its side, the PS also made relevant changes. An internal leadership struggle between two opposite tendencies – one open to forming a centrist government with the PSD and the other appealing for the formation of an anti-austerity government – culminated in the election of António Costa as the leader in November 2014. In the closing speech to the congress of the party in the following month, Costa declared an end to the concept of the "arch of governance"[22], affirming his willingness to build governing coalitions with the parties to his left. Giving this strategy credibility was his history as mayor of Lisbon, where he became well known for his ability to negotiate and pragmatism under urgent financial questions, without giving up on a strong component of public investment. Could it be possible to balance public accounts with the reversal of austerity and the restoration of benefits and initiatives that had been dismantled – that is, with a reconstitution of the welfare state –, a desire that the Portuguese electorate unequivocally demonstrated? The three parties believed in the possibility.

Thus, the PS, the BE and the PCP developed an understanding to support a PS government in Parliament, which did not translate itself into a single signed agreement between the three parties, but in two signed agreements, one between PCP and PS[23] and the other between BE and PS. Given the history of disputes among these parties and the supposed fragility of the compromise, the understanding was dubbed by the right-wing as the "contraption". Later, the left claimed the term and used it as a symbol of its capacity to deliver, in spite of the unorthodox architecture of the understanding.

This solution made this understanding even more original, since the traditional practice is to sign one formal agreement and to include members of each party in government. The agreements establish a set of issues, policies and objectives that the government led by the PS committed itself to each party, without implying their direct participation in the government. Politically, the basis of the agreements consisted of ending austerity policies, implementing a program of economic growth, and reversing the more damaging effects of austerity on salaries and pensions.

[22] The full quote from António Costa reads as follows: 'we reject the concept of "arch of governance" as delimiting which parties represented in the Assembly of the Republic have access and have the legitimacy to share government responsibilities. In democracy, who decides, who represents the people is the people and no one can replace the people to exclude part of their representatives from their full responsibilities'. It can be checked here: https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/politica/antonio-costa-recusa-conceito-de-arco-da-governacao_a786263 (last accessed: 24/12/2022).

[23] Technically, there were two signed agreements between the PS and the Communists, because the latter run to elections in coalition with the Ecological Party "Os Verdes" (PEV), forming the Democratic and Unitary Coalition (CDU). Thus, there was one signed agreement between the PS and the PCP and another between the PS and PEV. In essence, the agreement was similar.

Thus, the agreements do not establish a coalition government, but a PS government with parliamentary support from PCP and BE. There is a political solution to support a PS program to end austerity, which functions as minimum conditions for parliamentary support to the government. This is important, since while establishing a confluence of the lefts in several key issues; it allowed political divergence between them in other issues – such as the depth of the European integration. This led to a dynamic socio-political equilibrium that allowed to each part to be invested in the political solution, without having to compromise themselves to an all-encapsulating government program, running the risk of losing their political identity and their popular and institutional basis of support. This solution, on one hand, reinforces the centrality of the role of PS in governance; and, on the other hand, shows that the main goal for both the BE and the PCP was to keep the right-wing coalition and their policies of austerity away from government.

This solution was initially greeted with hostility abroad – with European institutions irked at the role that left-wing Eurosceptic parties might play in government – and scepticism at home where awareness of the long history of antagonism between the three parties did not appear to bode well for political stability. Yet, not only did the "contraption" dispel such fears by providing for a stable government for the past three years, as it actually achieved a series of relevant results.

The national minimum salary was progressively increased, reaching €600 euros in January of 2019. The lowest base salary in the public sector increased from the minimum salary to €635. The value and criteria for access to Social Insertion Income and to supplemental income for the elderly were restored. Moreover, the salaries that had been cut were returned to their previous levels. Difficulties remained in education, mainly in adult education and school equipment and construction projects; and in health care, where privatization continues to expand in the face of delays in treatment and in public health services.

Levels of confidence in the economy turned around and became positive. The GDP reversed its trend and has continued to rise on average 1.4% between 2015 and 2017. The State deficit dropped by historic levels in consecutive years (2% in 2016 and 3% in 2017). The external debt dropped from 128.8% of GDP in 2015 to 125.7% in 2017. The unemployment rate dropped to 9% in 2017 and below 7% in 2018. And the risk of poverty, which continues to be one of the highest in Europe, resumed its downward trajectory, settling on 18.5% in 2016. The financial situation is still critical but quickly improving, and all international institutions, especially in Europe, are looking with curiosity to what has happened in Portugal ever since the country abandoned austerity as the only solution to overcome the crisis. The curiosity does not only have to do with the mix between economic and financial policies and the development of the social functions of the State. It also has to do with the way a socialist party has attained great popularity and political success, when throughout the rest of Europe, its counterparts are in a state of decline. The success appears due to the reinforcement of a social orientation and the enhancement the State's role, as opposed to holding to the centre and allying with the interests of capital, which were nonetheless not attacked.

6.11. Conclusions

The principles underlying the Revolution of 1974 are often summarized in Portuguese public discourse as "the three D's": decolonization (and the end of the colonial war); democracy; and development (social and economic). After a brief period of confrontation between two models, one with a Soviet orientation and the other oriented toward Europe, the latter model won out through the will of the voters, and although the parties that defended Soviet-oriented, Maoist, or Trotskyist models remained within the democratic system, they were placed outside the so-called "arch of governance". In this way, the following decades served to consolidate representative democratic government, and to ensure the means of securing the country's social and economic development. The expansion of the welfare state, the basis of which had been launched during the revolutionary period and in the years immediately following, was a key part of this project.

In this way, a model of welfare capitalism developed in Portugal, approximating the continental model (Esping-Andersen, 1990), similar to the other countries of Southern Europe, although with some distinct features. These included the State's delegation of expanded social services and management of family support structures to third sector organizations and the widespread participation of women in the labour market – with women playing a key role in both the economy and family life, by taking on the dual roles of ensuring higher family incomes and providing a minimum level of care for the rest of the household. Emigration and war were responsible for the large proportion of women in the workforce under the dictatorship, but this pattern has persisted and remains a clear specificity of Portugal in the context of Southern and Continental Europe.

The historical periods of greatest dynamism in the developmental process of the welfare state – in terms of spending, of the functions carried out, and even of State intervention in the economy – were simultaneously periods of great economic growth, modernization of the economy, and economic and social convergence with the rest of Europe. Such was the case between 1986 and 1993, with high growth rates, investment in infrastructure, and expansion of social policies, of education, and of healthcare, the contours of which had been designed in the earlier period before integration into the EEC.

Another such period took place between 1995 and 2001, with growth a bit more moderated but still above the European median, and a strong investment in education, in the sustainability of the pension system, in policies to fight poverty and unemployment, and with Portugal attaining a high point in terms of employment. This pattern held once again between 2005 and 2008, when growth returned, in compliance with the stringent rules imposed by participation in the single currency. Simultaneously, there was new investment in education, in anti-poverty measures, in science, and in technological modernization.

These periods alternated with others in which, in the international contexts of crisis (as those of 1983, of 1993, and of 2002/03), negative or very anaemic economic growth, elevated unemployment, and increased inequality occurred. The trend in responding to those events morphed into systematic attempts to cut social spending, initial efforts to increase privatization of social security, a reduction in measures to combat poverty, and the entry of the private sector into health care.

Whether by raising families' contributions, by turning to public-private partnerships for the building and renovation of facilities, or, principally, by successive efforts to reverse labour laws, with the aim of reinforcing even more the growing deregulation of the market, the precarity of labour relations, and the maintenance of low wages, these measures fed an economic model based on salary cost containment in unproductive, labour-intensive industries.

Overall, the process was thus one of economic modernization and convergence of Portugal's main indicators with the average of the EU, of expansion and diversification of the functions of the welfare state in spite of precarious labour relations and the privatization of public enterprises. This process continued until interrupted by the politics of austerity, from 2010 and with particular intensity from 2011. In fact, between 2011 and 2015, cuts occurred in all social policies, along with the degradation not only of living conditions for both middle and working classes, including the categories most vulnerable to poverty, but also of the economy and public finances.

Popular discontent with the persistent social and economic crisis led to the emergence of two political phenomena: the electoral defeat of rightist parties that governed in the era of the Troika, and the creation of an unprecedented alliance between the PS and the parties on its left. This political context allowed the formation of a government with a program based on the restoration of rights, reversal of measures against salaries, pensions, and fighting poverty, and the stimulation of economic growth, maintaining at the same time the commitments related to the debt and to fulfilling the criteria to maintain the euro. In summary, the new government aimed to restore the welfare state and welfare capitalism, which had come under serious threat.

The greater visibility of this option is particularly pertinent, in light of the failed experience of other countries socialist and social-democratic parties in Europe, incapable to win over voters with credible policies different from the centre-right and right, policies that were not the only alternatives and not even the most effective. Once more, the restoration of the welfare state is revealing itself the best-suited one, whether from the point of view of social policies, or of economic growth, or of the reduction of poverty and unemployment, or of the equilibrium of the financial sector, public finances, and the external debt. In essence, social and economic policies contrary to the conventional neoliberal wisdom encountered success while austerity roundly failed.

CHAPTER 7

Fighting poverty in times of crisis in Europe: Is resilience a hidden resource for social policy?

7.1. Introduction

During the subprime and debt crises, resilience became part of European political discourse on solutions to the global recession. National and international organizations began to include objectives explicitly related to this agenda in their mission statements, framing the development of resilience as a priority to enhance societies' ability to respond to crisis (European Commission, 2013). Following this trend, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has caused the re-emergence of resilience in the EU's policy responses (Baggio, Brown and Hellebrandt, 2015).

Academic interest in the topic has also grown, particularly in the social sciences (Xu & Marinova, 2013), shaped in part by EU research funding priorities. This article arises from one such project, RESCuE. It consisted of a European cross-national qualitative study on the scope and consequences of household resilience to socio-economic hardship, conducted between 2014 and 2017 (Promberger, 2017).

The research project conducted narrative interviews with participants from households in nine European area and neighbour countries. For this article, we revisited three 'emblematic cases' from the study, using QSA to develop a comprehensive understanding of participants' lived experiences, aiming to capture the scope and multidimensionality of household resilience processes. We selected cases from three participant countries with different welfare regimes – Portugal, Ireland and Poland – to assess how diverse social models influenced the development and success of resilience.

The analysis shows that socioeconomic practices of resilience have, at best, marginal effects on households' ability to address crises, regardless of the national setting. The potential for resilience is constrained by limited social investment that shapes ways of life characterized by the commodification of all households' accessible resources. In these contexts, resilience processes entail worrisome social costs, leading to greater inter-generational risks and more pessimistic orientations towards the future.

In addition, policy emphasis on resilience has contributed towards legitimizing the further liberalization of social policies in Europe (Busch et al., 2013). In face of a widespread recession and worsening living conditions, resilience-based approaches served as a political 'remedy' to reconcile the need for a social response and, at the same time, support the continued retraction of the welfare state. Our analysis suggests that ongoing resilience-oriented policy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic will exact negative social costs unless it is decoupled from liberalization and welfare state retrenchment.

The next section reviews the rise of resilience approaches to socioeconomic crises, how they shaped social intervention to poverty, and their main criticisms. Section three presents the methodological approach and the criteria for the selection of the emblematic cases. Section four develops a comprehensive and comparative understanding of resilience practices and their consequences, drawing on secondary analysis of the household interviews, setting up a reflection on the results and social consequences of resilience. Finally, we discuss why resilience remained so attractive to the European social agenda and has become even more influential in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

7.2. Literature review

When applied to social phenomena, resilience has predominantly been interpreted as the ability of individuals or groups to respond both positively and constructively to hardship (Batty & Cole, 2010), using self-generated means (Promberger et al., 2019). Under the mantra of agency, resilience approaches intentionally distance themselves from traditional sociological research on poverty, which is criticized for being based on a "deficit model" (Canvin et al., 2009).

The focus on structural factors and cycles of disadvantage within deficit- based approaches is argued to reinforce low expectations and social stigma in relation to the poorest population. In contrast, approaches to resilience rooted in the psychological tradition focus on the capacity of individuals to take advantage of existing opportunities and to develop successful responses to situations of hardship. Thus, crises are opportunities for the manifestation and development of resilience through a process of "cognitive transformation" (Tebes et al., 2004).

Influenced primarily by psychological understandings of individual action, this understanding of resilience seems to claim that no matter how bad the situation, there are always a few who will manage to "overcome the odds" and come out on top (Davidson, 2009). Resilience is rooted in the power of "ordinary magic" (Masten, 2001), deriving from everyday acts anchored in the innate resources of the subjects, their families, and their communities.

The description of resilience at the individual level has therefore moved from a fixed and persistent attribute that protects individuals against adversity, to a competence of subjects to change and adapt to adverse contexts, which presupposes the potential for resilience to be developed by policies or interventions. Thus, the emphasis of resilience-based policies is developing people's ability to improve their chances of success, and not so much to address the factors of poverty and hardship at a structural or systemic level. Within contexts of crisis and change, this implies that resources to mitigate adversity should be allocated to developing response skills, rather than taking preventive action on factors giving rise to risk and social vulnerability.

This perspective has significant implications for the conceptualization of people's adaptive responses to socioeconomic crises, and for their operationalization in social intervention. Resilience-based approaches aim to develop skills in vulnerable people through salutogenic methods – e.g., practices of restoring self-esteem, developing networks of sociability, and encouraging community belonging – where the focus is not on the problem but on the subject. Thus, the emphasis of policy is developing individuals' ability to improve their chances of success (Seccombe, 2002), and not on addressing factors of poverty and hardship at a structural or systemic level.

It is unquestionably useful to empower people in vulnerable situations, but these resilience-based approaches also raise criticisms, stemming mostly from questions about the transferability of theoretical models from psychology to social phenomena. Focusing on psychological dimensions of vulnerability has two analytical implications. First, there is the controversial assumption that the success or failure of subjects' actions is a function of character. The burden of responsibility for poverty is placed on individuals themselves, understating the significance of social structures and dynamics that promote inequality (Dagdeviren, Donoghue & Meier, 2017), while also removing from the analysis issues such as objective living conditions and socioeconomic policies (Hickman, 2018). The second analytical implication is that results are evaluated only in terms of increasing levels of self-esteem and "personal development", while ignoring or devaluing the social costs of resilient practices and their impacts in the medium/long term (Harrison, 2013).

These perspectives, while attempting to combat the stigmas associated with poverty, tend to reinforce class prejudices (Wódz, Gnieciak & Łęcki, 2020). The behavioural recipes for developing resilient lifestyles are guided by a certain normativism and ethnocentrism (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017). The focus on individual initiative ends up disguising a prejudicial representation of the poor as incompetent individuals who need to adopt behaviours that will bring them closer to those of "successful" individuals, taking for granted the potential for replication of these practices in different social contexts.

Developing a critical sociological analysis of resilience processes requires an understanding of power relations, institutional frameworks, and distribution of wealth and resources, in dialogue with individual agency. Social structures must not be treated as analytical constants transcending social agency, interpreted as something external and independent of the dynamics of individual and collective actors.

Individuals are not just resilient within continuously changing social contexts that determine opportunities and obstacles; their actions influence those structural processes in turn. Social actors not only influence structural processes by their choices and practices within the parameters for action, but in their agency, they shape the same social parameters, influencing the framework of opportunities and the allocation of resources (Dagdeviren et al., 2020).

Following a concept-building approach (Bhatta, 2018; Domingues, 1996), our research aims to elaborate resilience as a dynamic process inextricably linked with people's lived experiences: to identify the singular and comprehensive experiences of specific families; to understand how resilience is shaped; the scope and multidimensionality of these experiences; their ability to generate resources and opportunities; the processes of transference of risk and the costs to people's well-being; and their consequences for people's ways of life (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017).

It is crucial to consider how structural contexts frame and influence agency, enabling or limiting processes of resilience. Thus, simultaneously, we aim to evaluate the impact of the social environment on adaptive processes (Adger et al., 2008). In the next section, we describe the methodology we adopted to unpack resilience processes through a critical sociological lens.

7.3. Methodology

For this article, we adopted a methodological approach based on qualitative secondary analysis of original interview data collected in three of the RESCuE project participant countries, aiming to develop an enriched understanding through their reuse and re-contextualization (Hughes &

Tarrant, 2019). To situate our analysis, we drew on the national report[24] developed as part of the wider European project to inform our selection of cases, and to place them within a broader substantive and theoretical context.

The research uses 'emblematic cases' strategy to select a household from each of the countries, a sampling strategy in which the cases are chosen because they are perfect examples of a theory or application (Robinson, 2014), building on case study methods that use the individual case as a "key to unlock the social" (Henderson et al., 2012) and to generate or test research hypotheses (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The identification of the cases leaned on two auxiliary tools from RESCuE's Work Package 4: (1) the list of profiles of the households and (2) summary sheets on the topics of employment, assets, and consumption.

RESCuE's investigation was based on interviews with households in nine countries, carried out between October 2014 and June 2015.[25] Two series of in-depth interviews were conducted with 24 households in each country. The sampling strategy included a set of criteria to enhance diversity: house-hold composition, gender, age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic circumstances (Promberger, 2017).

The first series of interviews were biographical, collecting narratives of the participants' lives, the impacts of the 2007/08 crisis, their experience of hardship, and the coping strategies they adopted. The life history technique helped to structure the interviews, providing biographical and historical context to the interviewees' narratives (Gray & Dagg, 2019). The second series of interviews was supported by a selection of photographs. Using the photo elicitation technique, participants were asked to select or take photographs that represented themes in their daily lives, following a script provided by the researchers (Revilla, Martín & de Castro, 2018).

[24] For this exercise, we considered the Reports on Socio-Economic Practices of Resilience (RESCuE's Work Package 4) for Portugal, Ireland and Poland. The Portuguese National Report can be accessed at: https://repositorio.iscte-iul.pt/handle/10071/12311; the Irish National Report can be accessed at: https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/7431/; at the moment, the Polish National Report is not available for general consultation.

[25] Each author of the present article was involved with the primary collection of data in their respective country.

It was important that the selected cases were both illustrative of representative experiences of household resilience and that they shared some key-characteristics, allowing us to establish connections across contexts and themes (Tarrant & Hughes, 2019), and to isolate the effects of the socio-political context. The contextual linkages relate to the geographical context, the composition of the household and the socio-economic context, while the thematic linkages refer to their trajectories of poverty and the experience of a recent shock/crisis in their life.

We adopted the strategy of situating the narrative interviews within the analytical framework of practices of socioeconomic resilience, developed by Dagdeviren & Donoghue (2015). Socioeconomic resilience is defined as practices that make use of and aim to increase and/or protect the resources accessible to households. Resources can be internal (e.g., property, savings, skills) or external (e.g., income from work, social transfers, family networks, credit, "open access" resources), being mobilized through two types of strategies: (1) practices aimed at creating sources of income and/or protecting or stabilizing existing ones, which are broken down into: paid work, social transfers, migration, sale of goods/property, or reintegration into the education/training system; (2) practices aimed at managing existing resources and/or reducing the cost of living, which are broken down into: reduction in consumption, own production, family networks, community networks, or postponement of payments.

The interview analysis below will address these dimensions of resilience practices, to elaborate this analytical framework in terms of the singular lived experiences of resilience by each household. The analytical framework is a cross-national extrapolation from country level analyses of a multitude of socioeconomic strategies adopted by participants to cope with crises, aiming to encapsulate the diversity of types of practices and the socioeconomic goals they wish to achieve. It does not express the comprehensive experiences of families, nor does it consider the dynamic relationship between these practices. However, it does provide an analytical tool to categorize practices, which is a useful conceptual starting point for our analysis.

To analyse the lived experiences of households and the impact of the social environment on adaptation to crises, it is crucial to consider how structural contexts frame agency, enabling or limiting processes of resilience. Thus, heterogeneity across national contexts was a priority in sampling cases for qualitative secondary analysis. Accordingly, we selected countries with different welfare state models, since these are an expression of their political and institutional structures. Different welfare state models establish the role of the State, of the market and of the third sector, the ideological orientation of social policies, and the available resources and mechanisms of (re)distribution.

7.4. Households' resilience in the face of hardship

As we can observe in Table 7.1,[26] the households are composed of adult couples with dependents. The ages are similar, as are the educational levels; all live in an urban territory and own their home. The characteristics of the employment situation and the welfare benefits are different in some respects, but all face situations of unemployment. The selected cases are of low income and share long trajectories of poverty.

Table 7.1: Household characterization

Country	Ireland	Poland	Portugal
Interviewee	Jack (husband) and Melissa (wife)	Hanna (wife)	Claudia (wife)
Household composition (plus age)	Wife, husband (late 30s / early 40s); 4 children (pre-teen to mid-teens)	Wife (early 30s); husband (early 50s); daughter (under 6 years), mother-in-law (mid-70s)	Wife, husband (late 30s); 3 children (teenagers, one under 6)
Education	Wife: primary education; husband: secondary education	Wife: secondary education; husband: secondary education	Wife: secondary education; attending higher education; husband: secondary education
Labour status	Wife: not in labour force, former healthcare assistant; husband: full-time worker / supermarket chain worker	Wife: not in labour force, former paramedic; husband: full-time worker / stonemason; graveyard caregiver	Wife: not in labour force, former cook; Husband: unemployed; former clerk; both daughters work part-time: pedicure & manicure (informal); clothing shop assistant (fixed-term contract)
Welfare Support	Children's allowance	Mother-in-law: care allowance, retirement pension, coal allowance.	Unemployment benefit; wife: education scholarship (wife); family allowance; social insertion income

[26] The names are fictional. They are used only for the purpose of identifying the interviewees. Each interview can be identified in the RESCuE reports and databases through a country specific code. The Irish case is coded iNt.hu.007, the Polish case is coded PL/u/06, and the Portuguese case is coded cL/L/r1.

To understand the thematic linkages between the cases it is necessary to understand how these families were affected by the crisis. The 2007/08 crisis was a turning point in their lives and, in some cases, their social trajectories. They all suffered a shock, which affected drastically their life conditions and prompted an increasing requirement for resilience. In this context, the crisis was experienced as a dynamic interaction between the impacts of austerity in the period that followed it (2010–2015) and internal crises within each household, manifesting in the form of unemployment, illness or disability, increased debt, and other difficulties.

Jack and Melissa (Ireland) were already at-risk before the crisis. Jack had been moving between a series of jobs, but in recent years he has gained stable employment working for a supermarket chain. Melissa was unemployed, having worked as a health care assistant before marrying Jack. They had four children with health problems, including a range of medical conditions, and speech and language problems. Despite these difficulties, they managed to keep their lives in order and had prospects for the future. However, the shock of the 2007/08 crisis brought a rise in taxes and property debts, dangerously increasing their social vulnerability.

Claudia (Portugal) was still young, when she went to live with a man, with whom she had two daughters. She was a victim of domestic violence for years, ending up leaving the house with the children to live with her mother. She rebuilt her life and married António, with whom she had a son. They both worked; Claudia enrolled in higher education and her daughters attended high school. The outlook was positive but she suffered an accident at work in 2013. The employer did not accept contractual responsibility, leaving her unable to work and accruing medical and legal costs. Concurrently, António was dismissed from the insurance company where he worked for 13 years, by extinction of the labour position,[27] which was allowed by the labour changes resulting from the intervention of the Troika.[28]

[27] Dismissal due to the extinction of the labour position consists of the termination of the employment contract promoted by the employer on grounds of market, structural or technological reasons, as legislated in the revision of the Labour Code in 2009 (Labour Code – Law nº 7/2009, February 12).

[28] In 2011, the Portuguese government signed a MoU with the IMF, the ECB and the EC. The Troika provided financial support to respond to the debt crisis, while the Portuguese government committed itself to comply with a series of political measures.

The Polish case stands out for its long and multi-problematic experience of hardship. Hanna married Marek in 2010 and shortly afterwards their daughter was born, Marek was flagged by police for domestic violence, while Hanna was being monitored by social child protection services. Since 2014, Hanna's mother-in-law lived with them; she suffered from Parkinson's disease. The apartment was inherited from Hanna's grandfather, but in late 2014 they discovered that he had immense debts related to payment on the house. This debt, on top of previous debts, put the family in an unsustainable financial situation, having to respond to a bailiff who controlled their spending.

7.4.1. Practices aimed at the creation and/or protection of income

Traditional institutions (the labour market and the State) represented the largest source of income for the families we examined in detail. Employment was vital in each household economy, even though experiences of non- participation in the labour force occurred across all three cases. Higher levels of unemployment prompted changes in labour law and/or employment policy, which resulted in worsening working conditions and in lower wages (Clauwaert & Schömann, 2012; Hermann, 2014). Furthermore, limited access to support services has forced families to assume almost full responsibility for their well-being, which in turn constrained their participation in the labour market.

The Irish case is paradigmatic. Melissa had not been in the labour force for almost all her adult life. At the time of interview, she was not employed in order to take care of the four children, but even before getting married she had to quit her job as a health assistant to care for her sick parents. Jack had a stable job and opportunities to increase his earnings, but paradoxically the high cost of their children's medical needs discouraged taking advantage of those opportunities.

> I'm 15 years now in <Supermarket Chain>. I'm there now for life, I think, as I have the family and commitments now. (…) I haven't gone any further because if I go further then, as I say, all the kids medicals will, we will end up having to pay more if I go further into the job, if I'm at it, if I could earn a lot more but then I'll be losing a lot more if I do go further. Two of them have medical conditions that without the medical card I wouldn't be able to balance it.
>
> Jack

In the Portuguese case, both adults were out of work. Claudia was physically limited in her ability to work and had her benefits suspended because of a legal dispute with her former employer. António had been doing internships as part of an active job search, which points to the increased significance of activation measures (Calado, Capucha & Estêvão, 2019; Pedroso 2014), but without success in securing a permanent job. Their teenage daughters were the only household members employed: the youngest worked part-time as a shop assistant, and the oldest worked as a beautician, on an informal basis.

> I had to scrape by the way I could. My husband took several courses – car repairing and other things. He never found anything related to the courses. (…) My daughter began working. My other daughter is looking for a job. In the meantime, she does fingernails. She says to me "I always take €5 for buying the materials". The other €10 she – the poor thing! – often gives me so that I can buy bread or milk.
> Claudia

Hanna's household was the only one where a member had multiple jobs, albeit on an occasional basis. Hanna had almost always been out of work. The care needs of her mother-in-law and her daughter greatly limited her availability for work, so she sought caregiver jobs informally, that occupied only a few hours a day. Marek was a service provider at a stonemason's shop, and he also worked informally on graves maintenance services, with Hanna's help. These employment patterns illustrate the trend in Poland towards lack of job security and an increasing role of the 'grey market' (Duszczyk, 2014).

> We sometimes carry out comprehensive work on graves. It would be hard without such additional work. There are few orders in winter, but now everything is going on. It would be hard without it. It's good that my husband can do it, although I help him too, e.g. I clean letters. (…) It is about 500–600 zlotys and it goes to the bailiff and we would always buy something to Julka.
> Hanna

Across all three households, social transfers were significant in guaranteeing family subsistence, despite the increased restrictions on access and reduced amounts imposed by austerity policies (Hermann, 2014). The different welfare state models created different levels

of coverage, but across all three cases, families mobilized social benefits to meet basic and urgent needs in the context of reduced levels of social investment.

In Portugal, after António's unemployment allowance period ended, the household benefited from the Social Insertion Income[29] and the family allowance. The range of benefits drawn reveals the diversity of existing supports, but also that they are insufficient to replace the loss of income from paid work.

> I receive the [social insertion] income before the house is paid, thanks to God. That money is there. I pay €200 and get €300 and little from the minimum income: it remains a hundred and a few. I have multi-risk insurance and life insurance, which is another €30. In the end, it adds up about €230. I still can pay for electricity, gas and water for what I have left. Normally, light and gas are €80 or €85, plus €20 for water.
> Claudia

In the Polish case, access to social transfers was via Hanna's mother-in-law. She received a retirement pension, care allowance for her health condition, and a coal benefit for heating. Her integration into the household thus constituted a form of collectivization of the family's social risk: she had a home to live in and received care, and her social transfers were the most stable source of income for the household. This also reveals high levels of vulnerability resulting from increasing labour market precarity, low levels of employment and limited social support for caring.

> Well, but now we are saved by the fact that my mother-in-law on the last day of the month gets the pension: 1,600 zlotys, and 800 zlotys for coal. She gets it [coal allowance] twice a year.
> Hanna

In the Irish case the income support available to the family was limited to children's allowance, which was cut as other taxes and charges increased (Callan et al., 2014; Hardiman et al., 2017). Social transfers were mobilized to cover immediate expenses, since Jack's salary was not enough to satisfy this household's consumption needs.

[29] Social benefit designed to protect people in extreme poverty, to assure that everyone can meet the basic needs.

> All I have coming in is children's allowance, and that's gone because when that comes in on the 5th of every month, the car loan goes out of that which is €240, and the house insurance goes out, which is another €60. Then you have your life insurance, so you are left with about … last month we were left with €27 in it, before I could take it out, so I don't have anything.
> Melissa

The Polish case was the only one where the sale of goods was mentioned as a way to increase income. Hanna pawned assets with a high symbolic or utilitarian value (laptop, work tool, wedding rings) to face urgent needs. Out of necessity, she had been buying back some of those assets, generating a vicious circle. These practices show a process of transferring risk between immediate and future needs and the emotional costs of these processes, in addition to highlighting the lack of alternatives.

> It was hard because he didn't have a job, I had to pawn some things, among others, wedding rings. (…) I pawned my husband's angle grinder, but I'll have to pawn it back.
> Hanna

The analysis of the cases regarding paid work and welfare benefits shows that the influence of the economic and political environment was experienced mostly through restrictions on households' economic strategies, regardless of the national context. The structural trends followed similar paths of reduction in social investment, lack of access to proper employment, reduction in wages, and lack of adjustment of social measures to the specific needs in each country.

7.4.2. Practices aimed at reducing the cost of living

Even in the context of retrenchment, the welfare state remained highly relevant to withstanding the effects of the crisis. Public services had a dual role in communicating cases of risk and/or social emergency to relevant service providers and in responding to the needs of families. Noteworthy are health centres, hospitals, social security, and schools. The Portuguese and Irish cases illustrate the importance of public services, since both families were completely

dependent on public health services. In the Irish case, however, access to these services was conditional on social vulnerability. For Jack and Melissa to afford health care, they had to earn below a certain income limit, which constrained Jack's professional activity and was an important factor in Melissa's unemployment.

> Since then, I haven't been able to work but I'd love to be able to work, to have my own money, my own independence but I can't because I was caught in a trap. If I go out to work, the money that's coming in at the moment it's not enough, we are just struggling by on what's there but if I go out to work, I lose my medical card for the kids. With the conditions the kids have, I just can't afford that. There is a lot of medical issues that their bill would exceed over about €8,000 a month if I was to do that.
> Melissa

For Claudia, access to affordable health public services was essential to face continuous medical needs arising from the work accident. They were not covered by private health insurance, relying on the public system. She was operated on twice and was being followed up in three clinical specialties. In addition, the family doctor provided important emotional support.

> My doctor knows everything. He accompanies my problem and is a very human person. Gives me advice. Tells me "you have to be calmer" (…) My family doctor ends up being my psychologist, psychiatrist, and listener. Sometimes I tell him things that I avoid talking to my husband to not make him worse than he already is.
> Claudia

The institutional network played a complementary role, where a local charity organization provided direct support, through the transfer of goods and services.

> I was receiving through <Local Charity Organization> (…) They gave me instant cereal, biscuits and milk, and food for the rest of the family: olive oil, dry pasta, canned sausages, rice, tuna. Sometimes, they would send yogurts for my son. They gave according to what they got. I used to go there once a month and they would give me a decent amount. Sometimes they gave us frozen food. Of course, this was a great help!
> Claudia

In Poland, welfare services are more prominent at a public municipal level. They provide multidimensional support, both in the form of social services and material support, such as clothing donations. Through these services, Hanna had access to psychological therapy when she suffered a severe depression.

> I have a psychologist from <Municipal Centre> because we have such problems, because my husband has a blue card [for domestic violence].
> Hanna

In the Irish case, the community network provided opportunities for social participation. Jack engaged on a voluntary basis, together with his children, in a local children's organization. This allowed them to leave the house, to develop leisure activities, to be involved with other children, and to strengthen the relations between their children and the community.

> I'm involved with the kids now outside of work, as well. We are all doing the <children's organization> in town. I volunteered for that and they have a great time having me around but, as I say, I sort of don't do it as a Daddy role and they know that they don't call me Daddy in it. It allows them a little freedom and they know I'm around as well.
> Jack

The intrafamily redistribution network also played a decisive role in resilience processes, mainly in the form of money transfers, the (re)distribution of goods and through the assumption of certain family roles. This type of aid took place mainly through intergenerational family relationships and was strongly implicated in increasing the vulnerability and social risk for the family group, since the redistributive family effort affects elder members' well-being and/or ability to respond to future challenges.

In both Portugal and Poland, countries that historically rely on this kind of support to compensate for low incomes and/or welfare support (Saraceno & Keck, 2010), the evidence points to a growing dependency on familialism amongst those adversely affected by the crisis. In the present study, this feature was manifested through the direct integration of a family member in the household (Poland) or through the assumption of financial or care giving roles (Poland and Portugal). Claudia's in-laws paid for the kindergarten, and they brought a package of food on their monthly visits, that they purchased or grew in their vegetable garden. In turn, Claudia's mother paid for the internet account and provided aid for grocery shopping. Consequently, the household's consumption patterns were highly dependent on the aid they received from their parents.

> I have to manage things in order to get the promotions, have money by the end of the month and have food at home. Next week my mother-in-law will come and bring anything that will help. Last week it was my mom who bought me the meat.
> Claudia

In Poland, the mother-in-law's social transfers were used to ensure a series of payments, namely the household debts, monthly bills, and the daughter's nursery. The mother-in-law had also sold farmland to cover debt on the apartment and had taken out bank loans. The collectivization of risk served to address successive present crises, but it compromised the futures of all members of the household.

> When my mother-in-law's payday comes, I am left with no more than 100 zlotys. I was so good, and I lent my neighbour Internet through the wall. Okay, she paid for TV, but then they turned off her light, I lent her that light, but you know what, when the first instalment came to me, it turned out that it was as much as 570 zlotys, and the following fees are 60 zlotys per month. You have to pay it because your contract will end. My mother-in-law paid for it, she took a loan, consolidated all her debs and got 1,200 zlotys.
> Hanna

In the Irish case, intergenerational support was less intense and more intermittent, congruent with the trend towards de-familiarization and reliance on market solutions typical of Liberal welfare models (Saraceno & Keck, 2010). Nevertheless, other research has demonstrated the importance of intergenerational exchanges in keeping families 'afloat' during the crisis (Conlon

et al., 2014). In Jack and Melissa's case only one parent is alive, Jack's mother. She provided aid in situations of emergency since her few savings did not allow for more.

> My mum, yeah, if we need a little help but, as I say, she can't give so much as well because my stepdad is retired now, so he is only on a pension now and she never worked so she has only got life savings, as I say, but they do help out with little bits and pieces that we need.
> Jack

All three households resorted to similar consumption practices, making use of all the accessible ways to manage scarce resources. To do so, they took advantage of discount packages or promotions, used second-hand product stores, prioritize essential goods, and carefully managed any goods consumed or purchased.

> Well, when I go to <Supermarket>, I go to the reduced section and buy all the cheap food because I can't, I don't do a big weekly shop because I can't afford it. I work on a day-to-day basis. I can't. I used to be able to go in and do a big trolley shop, but I can't anymore.
> Melissa

> I go to <Supermarket1> on Sunday and I have a 10% discount, and that makes it cheaper. It is cheaper to go to <Supermarket1> than to go to <Supermarket2>. I don't go every week, I go more or less every other week, depending on what we spend.
> Claudia

> When my husband gets week's wages, I can buy meat for 100 zlotys – I buy meat at <Supermarket> because meat is cheap there: it costs 4 zlotys [per kilogram], it's enough for three weeks.
> Hanna

These practices were not innovations brought on by the crisis; on the contrary, they were the result of prolonged trajectories of hardship. Inventiveness in resource management was an absolute necessity that converted to a drastic reduction of consumption, with two types of consequences. First, because these practices of consumption management included essential goods, they resulted in material deprivation; second, they tended to aggravate gender

inequalities, as it was women who simultaneously bore the emotional stress of managing the household and the main burden of the costs.

> There were days I wouldn't eat at all. There were days there, there was one week I didn't eat for four days. I gave it to the kids instead, and I gave it to him because he is at work and the kids need it for school. I didn't eat, and I just told the kids I wasn't hungry, but I was, but I just gave it to them instead. I would rather give to them, they need it for school, and he works, I do without it. I'm used to that.
> Melissa

> Yes, he prescribed an antidepressant. I don't take it always, I only take it when I feel that I'm really falling, because I don't even have money for the medicines. I had to give up of my medicines to put food on the table. I must make choices every month. Either I buy my medicine, or I put food on the table for me and my children.
> Claudia

> Sometimes, I deny myself a cutlet, because I don't have money, and with the debts we have … And no job. For example, I make a pork cutlet, but I have only three of them: my husband works, Julka and my mother-in-law also must eat pork cutlets. I can eat only potatoes. I must get used to it.
> Hanna

7.5. Resilience as a way of life

In-depth comparative analysis of the three cases revealed resilience to be a constant process of negotiation between adaptation to reduce social vulnerability and the search for greater well-being. When we look at resilience from the perspective of its effects and consequences, we unravel complex interconnected processes of transferring costs and risks within family roles and along generational lines, in the temporal sphere (short term vs. medium/long term) and in the type of action (reactive vs. strategic).

Resilience processes are framed, essentially, by political responses that withdrew or failed to increase resources and investment during a global crisis (Busch et al., 2013). The paradox of resilience is that practices oriented towards increasing income are the least available to families and, at the same time, the most important for future well-being. On the other hand, practices aimed at reducing living costs are multiple and diverse, but their success is offset by the costs of deprivation. The implication is that resilience practices are unavoidable but that they consist mainly of strategies for managing needs and aspirations to adapt to poverty (Dryland, Carroll & Gallegos, 2021; Sen, 1999).

Our analysis of these processes leads us to question the degree of choice that individuals have in determining how they adapt and cope with hardship. The household narratives suggest that resilience processes are shaped within a narrow set of options and have a totalizing character. Families do not favour or choose certain strategies according to their strengths; instead, they develop practices across most dimensions of resilience, which thereby overwhelm almost every aspect of their lives. This course of action leads to the exhaustion of alternatives and forecloses the possibility of correcting paths or responding to new shocks, placing families in a vicious circle in which they jump from crisis to crisis (Hickman, 2018). Simultaneously, the policy focus on resilience promotes the idea that social justice is characterized and obtained through individual participation and self-responsibility (Grove, 2013).

The analysis also reveals similarities in resilience practices and outcomes across all three cases. It is difficult to find unique or differentiated family strategies, even though the cases were inserted in different socio-economic and political contexts and within different welfare regimes. Different social environments do not seem to produce different opportunities for resilience amongst those experiencing hardship. Similarly, the absence of household engagement with public and community services signalled no instance of active citizenship or personal development. Instead, the constraints resulting from the austerity policies implemented in the three countries were the most visible effects of institutional arrangements and policy initiatives (Pochet & Degryse, 2012), reflected in the retrenchment of State intervention and in the increasing role of familialism.

This undifferentiation of resilience practices occurs not only across territories, but also diachronically. The intensification of these practices is closely associated with the urgency of meeting immediate household needs. The uniformity and continuity of resilience suggests that it is not pre-eminently a process of creative problem-solving in the face of crises, but rather a reactive process reflecting ‘ways of life’ within a framework of economic pressure and resource retraction (Okech et al., 2012).

The success of resilience is not related to the degree of agency exercised within each family, but is aligned with the resources that they can mobilize (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017). It follows that the households that own or have access to more and better resources before the shock are those that have the best conditions to face it. Thus, the evidence seems to confirm that to be effective, resilience processes need resources and financial security for families, supported by a present and active welfare state (Dagdeviren et al., 2020; Donoghue & Edmiston, 2020).

The most striking finding relates to the social costs associated with resilience practices and how families transfer risk to manage hardship. Resilience is realized in the relationship between the degree of vulnerability, immediate needs, and social risk. Social vulnerability has increased in all three cases, manifested in reduced physical and mental health, in the absence of prospects for the future, and in the way that social risk spreads intergenerationally. This suggests that the development of resilience in processes of adaptation to crisis is not effective for the reduction of risk and social vulnerability.

Resilience processes seem to be disconnected with the promotion of well-being in the lived experiences of the families in our study, consisting predominantly in practices of survival or subsistence, without showing the capacity to reverse the dynamics of poverty reproduction. It is not appropriate to classify resilience practices as irrelevant, as they help families to avoid succumbing completely to their circumstances, but their potential impact is clearly residual.

Rather than producing extraordinary results through ordinary practices, these strategies function mostly as a mask that conceals the experiences of hardship of its protagonists, hiding its social costs and social risks. The disconnection of resilience processes from well-being tends to obscure the difficult decisions and high costs associated with coping with crises, not being able to fully understand the profound implications of resilience experiences.

While households turn to resilience strategies to cope and adapt to socio-economic crises, of the outcomes with respect to quality of experienced lives are clearly insufficient. Processes of resilience consist mostly of a combination of strategies for the management of privation and transfer of risk to the future, gambling that this will be enough until environmental conditions improve, providing households with resources to improve their well-being without paying the costs of increased vulnerability (Coulthard, 2012).

7.6. Discussion: The appeal of resilience and its implications in social policy

Despite reservations about resilience, political actors and institutions have not resisted its appeal in the context of ongoing global crises. During the period leading up to the financial crisis, discourse on the responsibility of the State and society with respect to solidarity was replaced by a rhetoric of individual accountability and non-dependence on the welfare state (Meyen & Schier, 2019), following a neoliberal trend that was gaining ground on European policy (Grahl, 2009). Subsequently, resilience emerged in EU's social agenda proposed as a bridging concept between social research and the political responses to fight poverty following shocks and crises (Baggio, Brown & Hellebrandt, 2015). The EC stressed the need for "empowering individuals and building more resilient societal structures able to adapt successfully over time" (European Commission, 2017: 22), arguing that a "stronger focus on employment and social performance is particularly important to increase resilience and deepen the Economic and Monetary Union" (European Union, 2017: 8).

Given the growing weight of evidence against the "resilience discourse", which is supported by our findings, why does it remain so attractive to European political actors?

We argue that resilience-based approaches persist precisely because they have a strong compatibility with the neoliberal agenda, accentuating the role of individual agency, personal development, and adaptability to crises (Harrison, 2013), while diverting focus from structural considerations, establishing distance from the factors that contributed to triggering the crisis (Joseph, 2019).

Firstly, they feed the idea that resilience is a kind of "hidden resource" that individuals and households can trigger in situations of crisis, which can be exploited by public policies (Promberger et al., 2019), particularly through activation measures, which represents an inexpensive alternative compared to the intervention of the welfare state.

Secondly, they suggest that social risks, stemming from contexts of uncertainty and unpredictability, can be effectively addressed mainly at the individual and family level (Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2016). This presupposes that individuals and households are equipped with resources and the ability to decide which adaptive strategies are most suitable for them. Moreover, it downplays the idea of risk socialization, which is at the heart of the welfare state.

Thirdly, resilience-based approaches suggest that it is an attribute distributed unevenly among human populations. Failure can easily be justified by someone's lack of resilience, concealing the absence or malfunction of policies. Fourth, an emphasis on resilience establishes activation and risk taking as a civic duty (Meyen & Schier, 2019), since passive behaviour is characterized as avoidance of self-responsibility and a lack of empowerment that inevitably leads to failure.

Thus, resilience is highly compatible with the "new culture of risk", which promotes greater reliance on self-protection and self-help capacity to respond to disruption (Joseph, 2019). This perspective proposes that, in situations of crisis, individuals must use their reflexivity to assess their vulnerabilities to risk and use this as a motivation to act and be prepared, while the State acts as a facilitator at a distance.

The role of the State is limited in terms of changing the macro-structural conditions, instead focusing on the development of human capacity. Social policy aims to mobilize active citizens, by developing tools and skills for individuals to be able to cope with the instability of the socio-economic environmental, and to take advantage of the opportunities created by the crisis. Resilience presents itself as an alternative political response that provides the illusion of solving problems, while legitimizing and reinforcing the "liberalization of the welfare regime" (Donoghue & Edmiston, 2020).

The risks of the EU's emphasis on increasing and reinforcing resilience as a mechanism to protect against large scale shocks became increasingly salient in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable segments of the population, such as lower income groups and minorities, in terms of their exposure to both health and socioeconomic risk (Burström & Tao, 2020; Buheji et al., 2020), while European welfare states show limited ability to buffer the financial and social impacts of the crisis (Sánchez et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, and similarly to what happened following the debt crisis, the "resilience discourse" leads European post-pandemic social policy and seems to have an even more prominent role. The ESIR Policy Brief for the EC states that European policies "should thus be designed to enhance the lives and livelihoods of people and enable resilience across European and global communities" (European Commission 2020a: 1), placing resilience at the core of the recovery effort. This approach is followed in the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the EU's main instrument for the post-pandemic effort, that specifically relates the mitigation of the economic and social impacts of the pandemic with making European societies more resilient.

This discourse raises questions regarding the lessons learned from the experience of the financial crisis is terms of the effectiveness of resilience-based approaches in reducing social vulnerability and improving social responses to shocks and crisis. The endorsement of a social agenda to reinforce resilience in European societies needs to balance the reduction of vulnerability and adaptation with the promotion of well-being and quality of life (Coulthard, 2012). Since the ability of resilience to be effective relates to the resources accessible to individuals and households, this effort must be supported through public social investment and an active role of the State (Dagdeviren et al., 2020; Perrons, 2012).

Social research is particularly invaluable to better understand resilience processes and how they can be supported by social and economic policy, providing an important contribution to anticipate the effects and critically evaluate the post-pandemic recovery policies. The articulation of the analysis of resilience with the analysis of well-being allows to capture, on the one hand, the consequences and the costs of adaptation strategies, and, on the other hand, the space for the agency of individuals, therefore, their ability to determine their resilience strategy. It also has the potential to inform public policies in terms of the resources and goods needed to be made available, as well as the regulatory frameworks and values imposed on them.

CHAPTER 8

Labour relations under duress in Europe: Contributions for social resilience theory

8.1. Introduction

The advent of the financial crisis prompted the popularity of resilience across areas such as media discourse, political rhetoric and business communication (Meyen & Schier, 2019). This phenomenon was bolstered by the "social turn" within academic research on resilience (Brown, 2014), in which the notion grew as a boundary concept, expanding across several disciplinary areas, and ultimately consolidating as an emergent field of study (Baggio, Brown & Hellebrandt, 2015). Given the socio-political context, approaches inspired by or developed in the field of psychology promoting a "heroic" notion of resilience became the dominant interpretation in public discourse (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017). Resilience was characterized as an attribute that empowers individuals to deal with crisis as opportunities to succeed using only their own strengths.

Simultaneously, a structural approach to resilience studies grew and gained influence in academic and political fields. Inspired by human ecology and human geography, it follows the principles of ecological systems' adaptation processes to external shocks and seeks to apply them to social systems. It was quickly adopted to understand how societies respond to crises and the ensuing processes of systemic change. In the aftermath of the crisis, resilience became a "key concept" in the narrative of EU agenda (European Commission, 2018), which prioritized the development of "resilient societal structures" (European Commission, 2017: 22). Thus, the financial crisis constitutes a unique opportunity to evaluate the scientific usefulness of these approaches from a sociological perspective.

Given the systemic nature of the crisis, we focused the empirical analysis on labour issues. We present a comparative analysis of Portugal, Ireland and Poland, on the impacts of the financial crisis and the effects of measures of adjustment on labour law, industrial relations and employment policies. This option is justified by the centrality of labour issues in austerity and associated structural reforms, following the strategy of internal devaluation of labour costs (Busch et al., 2013).

The analysis shows that resilience-based approaches are useful to understand institutional change, but the scope of the concept has been limited by certain assumptions. From a critical perspective, we propose a more dynamic definition of resilience as processes of recomposition of social systems facing systemic crises, stressing the dialectical power relations between social agents affecting the norms, the institutional arrangements, and the distribution of resources, which subsequently constitute the structural foundations for social action in the post-crisis environment.

Applying this theoretical framework to the empirical data we show that the crisis triggered processes of change in each country towards the further liberalization of labour law, the decentralization of collective bargaining and the activation of employment policies. The dynamic of adjustment did not fit country specific systemic vulnerabilities; rather they followed a common strategy of internal devaluation of labour costs. The crisis was used as an opportunity for EU institutions and international organizations, in articulation with national governments, to prompt a convergence process to institutionalize neoliberalism in European regulations and institutional arrangements.

The first section reviews the literature on the contributions of resilience theories to understanding recovery processes from socio-ecological systems crises. This is followed by a description of the methodology. The next section describes and analyses measures of adjustment to the financial crisis directed at labour relations and employment policies in the case-study countries. The conclusion reflects on the outcomes of resilience processes on labour structures and the implications for social resilience theory, which in turn guides our discussion of EU responses to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

8.2. Literature review

The study of resilience of social systems was mostly inspired and/or developed by human ecology and human geography. This approach was already popular for studying the effects of climate change and environmental disaster in ecological systems and communities, but the advent of the financial crisis prompted its extension to economic crisis and social systems (Xu & Marinova, 2013).

The theoretical foundations of resilience can be traced to Holling (1973), who defined it as the ability of ecological systems, in the face of an external shock or disturbance, to maintain the functionality of their constituent elements, rather than succumbing and extinguishing themselves. If initially the emphasis was on the persistence of relationships within systems, later it shifted to the amount of stress that systems can withstand before starting a process of reorganization, to adapt to new environmental conditions (Holling et al., 1995).

These perspectives continued evolving to include studies of the hierarchical relations of dependency within and between ecological and social systems. Analysis of relationships in systems' social infrastructure placed the emphasis on their adaptability (Longstaff, 2005) and on the role of institutions (Adger, 2000). Resilience processes are conceptualized as opportunities for the continuous development of systems (Folke, 2006), while resilience outcomes are a function of systems' reflexibility, that is, their ability to learn from shocks, to interpret the meaning of change, and to generate and/or manage resources (Garmestani & Benson, 2013).

Most models of socio-ecological resilience associate these processes with defined outcomes. Systems are labelled resilient by their ability to respond positively to crises (Waller, 2001), either by recovering and returning to their original or previous state (Klein, Nicholls & Thomalla, 2003), or by reaching a new state of equilibrium (Anderies, Janssen & Ostrom, 2004). The stability of structures constitutes the measure for evaluating systems' performance, either in the reduction of conflict (Allenby & Fink, 2005), the efficient allocation of resources (Perrings, 2006), or the productive capacity of the economy (Rose, 2007).

The distinctive characteristic of resilience processes stem from the systemic nature of the shocks. Socio-ecological systems are constantly evolving, through incremental change, but sudden large-scale shocks can generate such an impact that existing institutional responses are unable to absorb them, forcing those systems towards structural processes of adaptation to the new conditions (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017). In face of the unpredictable nature of the shocks (Carpenter & Gunderson, 2001), some approaches focus on the importance of the development of resilience in social-ecological systems, arguing that it constitutes the main preventive modality to protect and respond to future crises (Berkes, Colding & Folke, 2003).

Resilience approaches have been the subject of several criticisms, essentially attributable to the transfer of models from ecological processes to sociological processes, without considering their distinctive characteristics. The first criticism points to the analytical circularity in the analysis of resilience phenomena (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017). Even though it is defined as a process of adaptation, its positive outcomes are what distinguish them as resilient, which in turn are the result of systems having the attribute of resilience.

Furthermore, anchoring resilience to a positive outcome marginalizes systems that are not able to overcome crises, justifying their failure as lack of resilience (Donoghue & Edmiston, 2020). Another criticism stems from the functionalist view that structural equilibrium is the singular goal of resilience processes, devaluing its costs and risks (Harrison, 2013). Finally, these approaches can naturalize socioeconomic crises by characterizing them as external and arbitrary, depoliticizing their causes and distancing from the need to protect against known vulnerabilities and risks (Neocleous, 2013).

Based on these criticisms, we argue that the structural analysis of resilience must integrate how it impacts communities and individuals; and must address the trajectory and consequences of the recomposition of social systems. This is necessary to understand not only the organization that emerges after the crisis, but also how it affects and frames the objective conditions of life and system of opportunities, by analysing outcomes with respect to rules systems, the distribution of power, and the mechanisms of redistribution (Dagdeviren et al., 2020).

8.3. Methodology

We analyse the impacts of the financial crisis on labour structures in Poland, Portugal and Ireland, from 2008 to 2015. Labour structures are defined as the relationship between three pillars: labour law, which sets the terms of contractual and working conditions; industrial relations, which is the basis of collective bargaining; and employment policy, which influences the demand and supply of labour. The objectives of the analysis are: (i) to assess the potential of resilience-based models to explain processes of institutional reconfiguration in societies facing systemic crisis, and (ii) to understand how the financial crisis and ensuing political responses shaped labour market relations in different European contexts.

The criteria for selection of the case studies included their heterogeneity and representation of EU trends. The countries selected are from different regions in Europe (Southern Europe, North-West Europe and Central Europe) and have dissimilar experiences of the crisis, in terms of its initial shocks and the extent of its impact. They are also emblematic cases of varieties of capitalism (Bohle, 2018; Hall & Soskice, 2001) in the EU: the Anglo-Saxon or Liberal model (Ireland), the Southern European model (Portugal), and the Post-communist model, specifically the Visegrad model (Poland).

The empirical analysis consisted primarily of a comparative review of scientific and technical literature on the experiences of the financial crisis, how it affected labour structures and the consequences of adjustment measures on labour and employment, at both national and European levels. The national literature provided information on the impacts of the crisis, the response strategy and the consequences of its implementation. It also allowed us to contextualize that information according to the socio-political context in which it occurred and the debates it generated. The European literature provided context to national strategies, information on the EU's strategy to mitigate the crisis, and on the general trends and exceptions. This was complemented by an analysis of policy documents on the measures of adjustment to the crisis centred on labour and employment issues, identified from the literature review, which were used both to test the author's thesis and to provide detail to the analysis.

8.4. Labour structures adjustment measures during the financial crisis in Poland, Portugal, and Ireland

The subprime crisis led to an economic recession in Europe. The EU responded in concert, pursuing a policy to support economic activity and employment, aiming to back the financial sector and to prevent massive fall in demand. It consisted of three types of measures: (i) public investment to maintain demand, mostly through employment, infrastructure, and tax relief measures; (ii) rescue and recovery of the banking sector, with the nationalization of banks, the creation of liquidity funds or the imposition of guarantees on savings; (iii) business support measures, through the creation of financial support programmes. These measures encouraged each country to enhance its competitive advantages, strengthening its institutional differences (Hermann, 2014).

However, the massive public investment to rescue the financial sector turned what was mostly private debt into public debt, making national debts unsustainable (Andersen, 2012). In 2010, the subprime crisis turned into sovereign debt crises, marking a change of political direction in the EU, which started the austerity period. Austerity measures consisted of structural reforms, focused primarily on cuts in public spending and redefining the role of the State towards the market (Pochet & Degryse, 2012). From 2015, austerity directives started to be moderated and governments gained more latitude to increase public investment, yet strict policies were enforced on national public finances and fiscal policies through the Stability and Growth Pact.

8.4.1. Poland

Poland is a peculiar case in the European context. In 2008, the Polish economy not only absorbed the financial shock but experienced GDP growth, which motivated Prime Minister Donald Tusk to dub Poland Europe's "green island". Poland's resistance to the crisis is explained by an interplay of factors including: (i) an economy not fully integrated into the EU; (ii) the commercial relationship with the USA and Germany; (iii) tight regulation of the banking sector regarding the concentration of foreign capital; (iv) limits on the levels of public debt contracted (Duszczyk, 2014).

Nevertheless, the Tusk government prioritized policy measures to prepare the economy for the effects of the crisis. In the first phase, it resisted implementing either a stimulus package or reducing spending levels, following a strategy based on three factors: (i) the stimulus package applied in Germany, which generated an increase in orders that contained unemployment; (ii) the devaluation of the zloty between 2008 and 2009, which immediately led to an increase in exports; (iii) anticipation of EU human capital and infrastructure funds for the period 2009-2012, to sustain public investment levels (Siemieńska & Domaradzka, 2016).

Additionally, the government started to negotiate a set of measures aimed at the labour market. The Anti-Crisis Act was supported by social dialogue, under the Tripartite Commission for Social and Economic Affairs. Initially, it was seen as a sign of improved articulation between the government and the social partners. However, several criticisms from the unions started to arise during the approval process for this package, namely that social measures were being ignored, the flexibility of working hours was not limited to companies in economic difficulties, and wages were being subsidized by the State (Bernaciak, 2013).

The final version (Journals of Laws of 2009, No. 125, item 1035), approved on July 2009, included: (i) extension to a maximum of 12 months to set the working time of the employee; (ii) possibility of suspending the passage of fixed-term contracts after two renewals, for a maximum period of 24 months; (iii) flexibilization of the start and end time of daily working hours; (iv) employers with financial difficulties could reduce working time by up to 50% for a maximum period of six months (Boulhol, 2014). These measures were temporary and had low rates of application; however, they laid the foundation for a broader intervention in labour law.

From 2010, a "silent crisis" started to grow, which led to implementation of austerity measures to control the growth of debt deficit (Maciejewska, Mrozowicki & Piasna, 2016). As of 2012, Poland entered a second phase of adjustment measures, with four priorities: (i) launching the European 2014-2020 structural funds for human capital, accessibility and digital technologies; (ii) increasing public spending on development, pursuing competitiveness; (iii) stabilizing public finances, mainly by changing the pension plan; (iv) labour measures, aimed at the flexibilization of employment (Duszczyk, 2014). There were also efforts to emphasize the role of activation in employment and inclusion policies; however, these initiatives had little expression due to budgetary constraints.

Labour measures included in the Anti-Crisis Act II (Journal of Laws of 2013 item 1291), October 2013, focused on two areas: (i) working time, with changes in the calculation method, short-term work schemes, reduction of working hours, and leave of absence; and (ii) fixed-term contracts, which became subject to indefinite renewals, even if limited to 18 months for the same employer.

Unlike the previous package, these measures were not supported by social dialogue. After almost a year without meetings of the Tripartite Commission, (between July 2011 and March 2012), the unions abandoned negotiations, criticizing the further flexibilization of the labour market and the absence of employment protection measures (Bernaciak, 2018). In the end, the commission came to be perceived as a facade of corporatism to convince public opinion of a broader social commitment (Meardi, 2014).

These measures, in combination with the worsening economic situation, had a double effect on the labour market: growth of the grey market and an increase in the precariousness of workers. To escape the costs of social contributions, companies fostered working arrangements based on self-employment, service contracts and informal employment. On the workers' side, in addition to loss of job security, there was a loss of labour rights, with the proliferation of civil contracts and informal ties. Labour market segmentation, associated with high levels of structural unemployment, contributed to limiting the bargaining capacity of workers, maintaining precarious work levels (Siemieńska & Domaradzka, 2016; Strzelecki & Wyszynski, 2016).

This situation represented a turning point in the unions' strategy, with an exponential increase in loud protests and strikes between 2010 and 2015. The most emblematic moment of this strategy was the "Days of Protest" in Warsaw, in September 2013, which brought together more than 100,000 people to protest the changes to the labour code. Under a rhetoric focused on employment protection and the denunciation of "junk contracts", the unions rediscovered their ability to mobilize (Bernaciak, 2018).

The rise to power of the nationalist and conservative Law & Justice party in 2015, was partly based on supporting unions' demands, denouncing the fact that labour rights and wages did not reflect economic growth. The shift in paradigm led to the introduction of labour protection measures, incentives for companies to award long-term contracts, and increases in wages. However, these reforms did not address systemic labour issues; instead, they were designed to legitimize the new government (Grzebyk, 2021). The unions initially followed a strategy of alignment with the party's policies, but by 2016, they found themselves disarmed and without capacity for mobilization, after the government unilaterally restricted collective bargaining agreements to the company level (Bernaciak, 2018).

Despite the distinctive impact of the crisis on the Polish economy, political responses followed the same general austerity recipe. The crisis was an opportunity to implement a set of reforms reinforcing and stabilizing the "embedded neoliberalism" model (Meardi, 2014). Structural reforms prioritized labour legislation, particularly the expansion of fixed-term contracts and the flexibilization of working hours, and the eventual decentralization of collective bargaining. The labour framework has seen little change since the crisis, not deviating from its liberal principles, based on a flexible labour market with low regulation oriented towards attracting FDI.

8.4.2. Portugal

In Portugal, the internal devaluation of labour costs was a priority during the financial crisis, with structural reforms in labour legislation, collective bargaining mechanisms and unemployment protection. However, the measures implemented in this period essentially follow a line of continuity with the legislative changes of the beginning of the decade, namely the revision of the Labour Code of 2003, which introduced elements of flexibility and individualization to labour relations, and an emphasis on active employment measures at the turn of the century, following the EES.

The political orientation from 2008 to 2010 was in line with previous labour reforms, mixing liberalization and recalibration measures, in a process of incremental change (Cardoso & Branco, 2018). In general, the reaction to the subprime crisis followed European guidelines, by expanding social protection benefits, stimulating the economy through public investment, and rescuing the financial sector. In 2009, a revision of the Labour Code was signed, which had been under preparation since 2006. Under the premise of "protected mobility", this introduced changes in the adaptability of occupational functions and in the setting and concentration of working hours. The creation of work time banks was made possible, but only through a collective agreement, and procedures for individual and collective dismissals were simplified. Additionally, the continuity of collective agreements was safeguarded and the conditions of precedence of these agreements over general law were extended (Pedroso, 2014).

The transition to the debt crisis, under extreme external pressure from rating agencies, negative developments in bond markets and rising political instability, led to the reorientation of adjustment measures towards austerity and the acceleration of labour market reforms program. After the introduction of several extraordinary measures, the PS government formally requested a bailout, followed by the dissolution of Parliament. The MoU was signed between the Portuguese government and a troika formed by the IMF, the EC and the ECB, on 17 May 2011. The negotiations included opposition parties and social partners, except from the left parties.

The elected PSD-PP government fully adopted the Troika's political agenda. The crisis was explained by internal factors, accusing the previous government of fiscal irresponsibility. Lack of economic competitiveness was presented as a function of the rigidity of labour legislation, the centralized system of collective bargaining and excessive social benefits. This diagnosis legitimized a package of austerity measures and outlined a plan of structural reforms that prioritized the internal devaluation of labour.

To implement these measures, the government sought support from the social partners through tripartite agreements to revise the Labour Code, namely the Agreement on Competitiveness and Employment, from March 2011, anticipating the proposals that were included in the MoU, and the Commitment to Growth, Competitiveness and Employment, from January 2012, following a new set of Troika demands. The tripartite agreements only had the signature of one of the confederations of unions, the UGT, of socialist orientation. The communist-oriented CGTP, which has a greater representativity of workers, did not sign these agreements and reacted to both by calling for a general strike. A third tripartite agreement was attempted in August 2013, but it was not supported by the unions (Pedroso, 2014).

Deregulation of labour protection and flexibilization of working time arrangements were key aspects in both labour code revisions. Changes to labour protection included: (i) substantial cuts in severance payments (from 30 to 12 days per year of work); (ii) limitation of the maximum (12 months) and minimum (3 months) amount of compensation, and (iii) more ambiguous definitions to validate the dismissal of workers. Changes to working time arrangements included: (i) cuts in extra overtime pay (by 50%) and elimination of time compensation for overtime work; (ii) regulation of work time banks negotiated directly between companies and individual or collectives of workers (up to 150 hours); (iii) increase of 7 working days per year, through the elimination of 3 vacation days and 4 holidays (Santos & Fernandes, 2016).

In collective bargaining, measures focused on issues of union representation and decentralization. Thus, by a unilateral decision, the government suspended the administrative extensions to sectoral collective agreements that guaranteed their application to non-signatory companies, implying the redundancy of union representation. Provisions were also created for groups of workers to sign company-level agreements, albeit under the delegation of unions, promoting the decentralization of collective agreements (Ramalho, 2014).

Employment policies focused on activating the unemployed, mainly through enhancing conditionality in social benefits. In 2010, the exceptional unemployment benefit schemes from the first phase were suspended and restrictive rules were introduced, namely: (i) new thresholds for benefits; (ii) limitations in rejecting job offers; and (iii) the possibility of partial accumulation of subsidy alongside part-time work. In 2012, more rules were introduced, such as: (i) reduction of the qualifying period for eligibility of the subsidy; (ii) cuts in benefits after 6 months of payment; (iii) cuts in the duration of the benefit; and (iv) reduction of the maximum amount paid (Pereirinha & Murteira, 2016).

These measures were complemented by the creation of programs to support job creation, such as the *Estímulo Emprego*, the *Vida Ativa* and *Impulso Jovem*, which provided wage allowances for new hires, training programs and professional internships for young people. However, these measures were underfunded, and did not generate a substantial impact (Cardoso & Branco, 2018).

The government also adopted measures aimed at the immediate reduction of labour costs, from amongst which we highlight two areas. First, the minimum wage was frozen between 2011 and 2013. Second, the public sector was affected by several measures of direct and indirect wage reduction. Salaries were reduced by 5% in 2011 and frozen in nominal terms between 2012 and 2014. Promotions were restricted and working hours were increased from 35 to 40 hours, in line with the private sector (Santos & Fernandes, 2016).

The effects of the structural reforms were disappointing. Unemployment and long-term unemployment rates increased, as did the number of available inactive people and emigration, particularly in the highly educated segment. The number of employees decreased in all forms of work (self-employed and employee) and by type of contract (full-time and part-time). In collective bargaining, the number of administrative extension ordinances decreased, increasing the number of workers not covered by collective agreements (Pereirinha & Murteira, 2016; Ramalho, 2014; Santos & Fernandes, 2016).

Regarding the impacts on the institutional framework and arrangements, the measures of the first phase of the crisis in labour legislation followed a path of incremental change. The second phase of the crisis was characterized by "liberal dualization", which affected people in employment through deregulation and flexibility of contracts and individualization of labour negotiation, and unemployed people with transition to workfare in active employment measures (Cardoso & Branco, 2018). The influence of the Troika was instrumental in allowing the implementation of reforms that the unions previously considered unacceptable and that the parties avoided due to their unpopularity (Távora & González, 2016).

The election of the left-wing coalition government in 2015 (Calado, Capucha & Estêvão, 2019) did not substantially change the framework of labour structures. The main mechanisms of devaluation of labour costs remain in force, and there are no changes to the Labour Code in terms of protection against dismissal and working time arrangements. In industrial relations, there were positive advances with the reintroduction of administrative extensions of collective agreements and the temporary introduction of a measure to prevent the expiry of sectoral agreements. However, the vigour of the negotiation was not recovered and the balance of power between the partners changed drastically in favour of employers (Lima et al., 2021).

8.4.3. Ireland

Ireland is seen has an exemplary case of the successful practice of austerity during the financial crisis, supported by the government's consistent policy and the absence of major protests. However, this story of recovery is "more complex and problematic" than its advertisement (Hardiman et al., 2017).

The impact of the crisis was profound, because of the exposure created by a bubble economy built on over-investment, easy access to credit and excessive dependence on property assets (Fraser, Murphy & Kelly, 2013). The Fianna Fail-Green Party government responded by pursuing a deflationary strategy, with a very limited role for labour demand measures, eventually declaring a bailout for banks, in September 2008 (McCashin, 2016). The immediate consequences were a credit freeze, the collapse of house prices, decline in private investment and personal consumption, and rising unemployment (McDonnell & O'Farrell, 2016).

By 2010 the crisis became understood as fiscal irresponsibility on the part of national governments, which led to strict enforcement of fiscal rules and timetables for deficit reduction, set by the EU. Facing economic recession combined with inability to meet these demands, the government requested financial support and signed an MoU with the Troika composed of the EU, the IMF and the ECB, in December 2010. External pressures were met positively by the political elite. The crisis was seen as an opportunity to unlock institutional resistance to State reforms (Dukelow & Heins, 2017) and to implement a wide-ranging program of rapid modernization (McGann, Murphy & Whelan, 2020).

The crisis was explained by the loss of economic competitiveness, due to increasing wages and high levels of social spending (McDonnell & O'Farrell, 2016). To legitimize this stance, the government invoked critiques of social programs to justify cuts in spending (McCashin, 2016) and accused public sector unions of holding the government to ransom, with accusations of exorbitant wages, corruption, diverted funds, internal conflicts, leading the media to dub unions "public sector cartels" (Culpepper & Regan, 2014). The strategy to address the crisis was one of internal devaluation, which led the government to commit to labour market reform and activation measures (Murphy, 2016).

Labour market reform was attained primarily through the transformation of collective bargaining. Before the crisis, Ireland had a tripartite model of social dialogue, which articulated salary negotiation and public policy agreements, combining wage moderation, social spending containment, low business taxes, income tax benefits, and job creation measures. After the onset of the crisis there were attempts to find a tripartite solution, but at the end of 2009, the employers' representatives withdrew from the wage centralization agreement, which formally killed the social partnership (Tassinari & Donaghey, 2020).

However, bipartite agreements between the government and the unions continued to be reached for the public sector. After the minimum wage freeze in 2009 and two unilateral pay cuts for public servants by 2010, the unions responded with a threat of a general strike. The prospect of social unrest damaging the international perception of the economy among foreign investors and creditors, led to social dialogue. In May 2010, the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 was signed, establishing fiscal consolidation measures without forcing redundancies.

The MoU did not alter the bipartite social partnership, since the Troika valued a wage setting regime conducive to internal devaluation and the cooperation of the unions advantageous for implementing measures to increase labour market flexibility (McDonnell & O'Farrell, 2016). By 2012, more cuts to the public sector were required. The Fine Gael-Labour government pursued a new social partnership agreement, which was initially rejected. Under the threat of a second bailout, an agreement for the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2016 was reached in July 2013, establishing: (i) wage cuts; (ii) work flexibility measures, namely the possibility of relocating workers in different sectors and geographical areas; (iii) the introduction of performance verification mechanisms and individual action plans to improve performance (Fraser, Murphy & Kelly, 2013).

The prioritization of activation in employment measures was clearly influenced by international institutions, such as the Troika and the OECD (Murphy, 2016). Following the signing of the MoU, the government introduced Pathways to Work, which shifted the activation approach further towards ‘work-first’. It focused on five issues: (i) more regular and continuous engagement with job seekers; (ii) greater targeting of activation; (iii) creation of incentives for the "take-up" of opportunities; (iv) creation of incentives for companies to hire the unemployed; (v) reform of the job search service.

The institutional reform plan was set in motion with the creation of *Intreo*, which linked employment and social protection services. Several changes were made to social benefits: (i) age-based cuts in transfers; (ii) doubling the requirements for qualifying for benefits based on social contributions; (iii) decreasing the duration of benefits; (iv) introduction of penalties for non-compliant beneficiaries (McGann, Murphy & Whelan, 2020). Regarding public employment measures, the *JobBridge* program was created. It consisted of State funding for professional internships (6-9 months), under which beneficiaries received the unemployment benefit and a €50 bonus (Boland & Griffin, 2015). In 2015, following social protests, the government reduced the incidence of the internship program and created the *JobPath* program. Its most visible action was to hire two private sector companies to provide reinsertion services, through a payment-by-result method, which introduced few changes in practices and led to rather poor results (McCashin, 2019).

The effects of austerity measures quickly became visible. If the unemployment rate had a steep decrease since 2012, the quality of employment paints a different picture. Labour precarity became a prominent feature. False self-employment grew, particularly in the construction sector, as reduced or non-standardised hours become more common, especially in the retail, hospitality, health and social work sectors. Temporary and informal contracts also grew, affecting mostly young workers in service or production jobs. There were also increases in emigration and long-term unemployment (Fraser, Murphy & Kelly, 2013; Murphy, 2016; Murphy, 2017; Ó Riain & Healy, 2018).

The Budget of 2015 was a turning point, representing the end of an era of austerity measures (McCashin, 2016). If the softer approach to austerity generated a positive trend of socioeconomic recovery, in terms of the labour market structure and employment policies there has been little change. Labour market measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic suggested the continuation of an activation approach based on workfare policies to reduce the number of subjects receiving social benefits, as evidenced by the cuts and tightening of eligibility conditions for the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (McGann, Murphy & Whelan, 2020).

In sum, the advent of the crisis initiated a process of labour market reform to reinforce the trend of labour market liberalization in collective bargaining and in employment policies, implementing a package of measures clearly influenced and supported by international institutions.

The social partnership model was dissolved and unions' ability to affect public policy was delegitimized, even if they retained institutional power in the public sector (Culpepper & Regan, 2014). Employment policies shifted from a supportive and enabling discourse to a more overt work-first discourse (Murphy & Dukelow, 2016). Its main effects were the loss of ability of the unemployed to negotiate the terms of their re-entry into the labour market putting downward pressure on wages and deregulating contracts (Boland & Griffin, 2015).

8.5. Discussion: Understanding social resilience from labour market reform in Europe

In this section, we assess the potential of structural resilience analysis from the empirical findings, by discussing three key assumptions that are limiting its ability to capture the dynamic and multidimensional nature of social phenomena. From this analysis, we propose a critical and comprehensive concept of social resilience.

The first assumption relates to the nature of resilience phenomena. To analyse the resilience of social systems in terms of the shock that is at its origin overestimates its impacts (Neocleous, 2013). Resilience processes are triggered by the shock, but they are not linearly determined by its effects. Shocks become systemic crisis only if the power structures determine that the social system's defence mechanisms are not sufficient to absorb it. Therefore, to understand the triggers of resilience processes it is necessary to consider the prevailing interpretations and representations of the shock, of its perceived causes, costs, consequences, and future impacts.

The transition from the subprime crisis to the debt crisis was not just a consequence of the worsening of the national debts in some countries, but mostly the result of 'loss of confidence' by the markets and the reorientation of EU political approach to the crisis (Pochet & Degryse, 2012). The representation of the crisis became a narrative of guilt, directing its causes to the most affected countries, thus legitimizing the implementation of austerity and structural reforms (Capucha et al., 2014).

The second assumption relates to a common interpretation of resilience as processes of change. The logic is that changes in environmental circumstances and accessible resources incentivize the emergence of new institutional and governance models. A systemic crisis can challenge the organizing principles of the system and its institutions. However, these processes might result in dynamics of transformation or in the reinforcement of previous conditions or trends. It is more accurate to describe structural resilience as processes of recomposition, without assuming changes in power relations or settings.

Accordingly, austerity measures suggest the deepening of neoliberal trends that were already prominent (Grahl, 2009), by accelerating the convergence of labour market models across the EU. Notwithstanding the heterogeneity of experiences of the crisis, adjustment measures followed a single recipe of devaluation of labour costs, liberalization of labour law and decentralization of collective bargaining. Reforms did not aim to resolve the system's imbalances, but rather to overcome the obstacles for institutionalization of the neoliberal model.

Ireland was already characterized by a mostly liberal labour market, but unemployment measures were reoriented to a work-first strategy. In Portugal and Poland there was a general liberalization of labour law, surpassing the traditional dualization that characterized both cases, also affecting the protected segments of the labour market, even if at a lesser scale (Prosser, 2016). Industrial relations followed a general trend of convergence towards the "East-European" model, based on decentralization of collective bargaining, shrinking of bargaining coverage, and decline of union densities (Welz & Broughton, 2014).

The third assumption relates to the idea that resilience leads necessarily to positive outcomes. However, these processes are inherently open-ended and complex. The implication is that resilience does not necessarily lead to a decrease in vulnerability or risk, nor does it always improve the living conditions of individuals and communities. Resilience processes do not necessarily lead to changes under the new environmental conditions nor to reductions in the perceived vulnerabilities and risk-factors of the system, rather they establish and institutionalize a new systemic balance, that incorporates both opportunities and costs.

This is evident in the poor results of austerity measures. Similar trends emerged in the three countries, such as: the reduction of wages, the growth of youth unemployment, the increase of population working part-time on an involuntary basis, the growth of informal work, atypical employment and self-employment, among others. The effects of adjustment measures on reducing the vulnerability of labour structures were secondary in practice. The priority of structural reforms was the institutionalization of a neoliberal framework in labour relations in the EU.

In the first phase of the crisis the emphasis was on the distribution of resources, though public investment to offset the immediate impacts of the crisis. Transitioning to the debt crisis, the emphasis suddenly became the system of norms and institutional arrangements, through structural reforms to the labour market, and the distribution of resources, through austerity.

The desired outcome of the recomposition processes of labour structures was the competitive devaluation of wages, the deinstitutionalization of labour relations and the introduction of a market logic to employment policies (Clauwaert & Schömann, 2012; Wickham & Bobek, 2016).

In sum, a comprehensive and dynamic understanding of resilience structural processes must consider these three ideas. First, it needs to address the social construction of the systemic crisis. Second, it must analyse the dynamics of adjustment as power struggles within the system to influence the setting of the social structures. Third, it must recognize that the outcomes of resilience processes are complex, and its analysis must integrate its impacts in individuals' objective life conditions and social agency. The analysis should therefore not only consider its benefits and opportunities, but also its costs, risk-factors and potential threats, and the forms of social injustice inherent to the structural framework.

Accordingly, we understand social resilience as the process through which social systems, facing a systemic shock, initiate an internal reorganization of its components in search of a new order, or state-of-balance. This transition process is determined by the dialectical power relations between social agents and institutions to affect the system's structural foundations (Dagdeviren et al., 2020), specifically (i) the system of norms and institutional arrangements (laws), (ii) power relations (politics) and (iii) resource distribution (economy). The outcomes of these processes will define the direction and intensity of change, framing the conditions and opportunities for agency in the new social context.

8.6. Conclusion: The implicit ideology of resilience in post-crisis European policy

Despite all the investment by in developing resilience (European Commission, 2018), the shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was not absorbed by European societies without massive costs, nor did these societies prove resilient enough to mitigate its social and economic impacts. Nevertheless, resilience gained an even more prominent role on the European post-crisis agenda, being at the core of the coordinated EU recovery response to the COVID-19 outbreak (European Commission, 2020b). The post-crisis agenda frames the recovery plans within a crisis continuum that threatens human health and wealth, economic prosperity and political stability, aiming at "creating resilience by design and not by disaster" (European Commission, 2020a: 2).

The interpretation and framing of resilience are evocative of socio-ecological perspectives, particularly the idea of resilience as a preventive strategy. In this perspective, resilience gains the quality of an attribute, refocusing crises prevention from mitigating structural risk factors and systems vulnerabilities to increasing the adaptive or transformative mechanisms after the occurrence of systemic shock. The very characterization of the shock – sudden, unpredictable, and external – establishes a distance and inaccessibility from the structural factors, while creating a false sense of security in relation to known vulnerabilities (Neocleous, 2013).

This preventive approach is highly evocative of neoliberal governance models based on adaptability and deregulation, assuming greater flexibility will emphasize change and the adoption of risk. In this perspective resilience becomes an instrument for reinforcing the structural order against the permanent threats of uncertainty and disaster (Joseph, 2016). The principle of systems equilibrium becomes the ultimate objective of politics, prioritizing institutional stability, systemic order, and short-term sustainability over questioning the vulnerability and insecurity in ways that might generate more radical forms of political action and structural change (Grove, 2013). In practice, resilience politics reinforce its ideological principles and systemic stability, sustaining socioeconomic inequalities that are at the core of the system's vulnerabilities and risks-factors.

Part III
CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 9

General discussion of the results

The financial crisis created a socio-political environment that led to the expansion of resilience studies in the social sciences, particularly research on the responses by individuals, groups and communities to the impacts of socioeconomic crises and on processes of institutional change. These approaches were quickly appropriated by the political field, and nowadays are often adopted as reference models for understanding these phenomena and guiding the programmatic agendas of international organizations. However, the popularity of the concept and its widespread use have not been met with a consensus definition of social resilience. Furthermore, its consequences for social policies and the way in which it has been instrumentalized in the European political agenda require a broader discussion.

The works presented in this dissertation make the following original contributions to the literature on social resilience:

Article 1 (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017) presents a specific sociological theoretical framework to the concept of resilience, informed on sociological knowledge. The key findings from this article are:

- Revision of the main theoretical proposals on resilience at that point, framing the dominant individualistic interpretation of the concept as an "heroic" perspective of resilience;
- Proposal of a critical concept of resilience grounded on poverty studies, presenting a definition for resilience, the conditions and characteristics of this social phenomenon;
- Proposal of a model of operationalization based on two major dimensions: mobilization of resources and shifting of risks.

Article 2 (Dagdeviren, Capucha, Calado, Donoghue & Estêvão, 2020) takes an analytical approach to the theoretical development of social resilience, aiming to identify and define the structural parameters that frame and condition social agency. The key findings for this article are:

- A critical analysis of how social resilience is distinct compared to views in the literature on poverty, and whether it contributes significantly to our understanding of this area;

- It suggests a distinct role for social resilience approach to understand the dynamics of hardship in contexts of systemic crises, rather than explain the long-term trajectories of poverty;
- It proposes an operational definition of the structural dynamics that contribute to frame social action in resilience processes, highlighting the social, political, and institutional foundations of social resilience.

Article 4 (Calado, Capucha, Gray & Wódz, 2022) used interview analysis of three emblematic cases to undertake a comparative analysis of the lived experiences of households in situations of hardship, while addressing the influence of socio-political frameworks in social agency. The key findings from this article are:

- The analysis shows that resilience processes had only marginal positive effects, consisting mostly of survival practices to cope with increased levels of poverty and social risk, regardless of national setting;
- It provides an understanding of the connections between the implicit ideology of "heroic" perspectives on resilience and the further neo-liberalization of social policies in Europe, and of its role in legitimizing this agenda;
- It emphasizes the need for the dissociation policies to promote social resilience from trends towards the liberalization of social protection, to avoid the high negative social costs and increased risk associated with these experiences.

Article 5 (Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023) follows a theoretical approach founded on socio-ecological research on resilience, to present a comparative analysis of the reconfiguration of labour structures in Portugal, Poland and Ireland during the financial crisis. The key findings from this article are:

- It provides a critical review of the structuralist perspective of resilience, testing its potential and limitations through the analysis of the adjustment processes and transformation of institutional arrangements in Europe during the financial crisis;
- It proposes a critical understanding of social resilience, as processes of institutional recomposition in the face of systemic crises, that captures both the organization of the system that emerges post-crisis and its underlying dynamic power relations;
- It provides an understanding of the relationship between the political appropriation of this structuralist perspective at the EU level, to legitimize the reinforcement of the

institutionalization of the neoliberal model in European regulations and institutional arrangements.

Article 3 (Calado, Capucha & Estêvão, 2019) plays a complementary role to the social resilience analysis, covering the evolution of Portuguese social model since the Democratic Revolution in 1974 until the break with austerity policies in 2015, carried out by a Leftist government, famously dubbed the "contraption". The key findings from this article are:

- It proposes an analysis of the most distinctive characteristics of the welfare state in Portugal, from its origins to the present day, indicating the main stages of development and transformation;
- It provides a contribution to the understanding of the underpinnings behind the emergence of the innovative Leftist political solution in 2015, namely the history of the Portuguese welfare state and the consensus over the restoration of social rights and living standards

The following general discussion includes a synthesis of these results combined with new contributions, to provide a general overview on the problematics discussed throughout the investigation. It is structured in four parts. We begin by discussing the problems created by adopting the "heroic" perspective of resilience for understanding individuals' responses to hardship. The critique of this interpretation is the starting point for proposing a sociological conceptualization of social resilience. Based on this dynamic critical perspective, we propose a synthetic characterization of the financial crisis effects in Europe, in terms of household responses to the economic recession and institutional changes in the labour market. The combination between resilience and the financial crisis serves as a platform to analyse the implications of the adoption of this perspective in social policy. Finally, we discuss how resilience has progressively been appropriated in policy as a preventive strategy and what this means for understanding the EU's strategic funding programs.

9.1. From "heroic" resilience to a critical perspective

Earlier in this dissertation we identified some of the criticisms that have been levelled at individualist and structuralist interpretations of resilience when applied to social phenomena. Its critical discussion highlighted weaknesses in the theoretical design, but also how these interpretations have shaped the way we understand socioeconomic crises, the agency of individuals and the role of the State and public policies. In this section, we propose to revisit

the key aspects of these criticisms, namely the status of the systemic shock, the focus on social agency and the definition of success in resilience processes, highlighting the problems that a critical perspective on social resilience aims to solve.

The first type of problem is related to the status of 'the shock' in conceptualising resilience. A frequent criticism is that these interpretations tend to avoid the causes that are at the root of the crisis, referring to the relationship between the shock and resilience. Representations of social resilience based on ecological models consider that it only materializes with the occurrence of a shock that is imposed on individuals and systems, so the factors that cause it are outside of its analytical horizon. For this very reason, shocks are not just external to individuals or systems, but mainly to the resilience processes they trigger. Second, they consider that there is a direct and organic linear relationship between the shock and the subsequent processes. This idea stems from the analysis of ecological systems based on natural principles. The analytical focus is thus centred on the effects and impacts generated by the shock.

However, in applying these perspectives to social phenomena, it is important to analytically separate the occurrence of the shock from the crisis caused by it. The interpretations of the causes, the factors that cause it and their foreseeable impacts are fundamental elements for the transition of a shock to a crisis, or in other words, for the political and social construction of the crisis (Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023). In this regard, the literature on human geography and studies of environmental disasters has pointed to the role of institutions and resource redistribution processes in resilience processes (Adger, 2000; Akter & Mallick, 2013). From this perspective, resilience processes are the result of combining the effects and consequences of the shock with the interpretation of its causes and the responses and measures implemented to combat it. Accordingly, resilience is experienced at the agential level as a dynamic interaction between the impacts of the crisis and the internal crises within each individual or household, manifesting in the form of unemployment, illness or disability, increased debt, and other adversities (Calado et al., 2022).

The second type of problem stems from the almost exclusive focus on social agency, giving little or no attention to the role of social structures (Dagdeviren, Donoghue & Promberger, 2016). Strategies and practices to cope with adversity are fundamentally attributed to the initiative and creativity of individuals to change their circumstances. This interpretation tends to place the burden of responsibility for the results of crisis coping strategies on individuals (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017).

However, social agency does not occur in a neutral or equal opportunity framework. The actions of individuals and social relations are framed and influenced by systems of norms, cultural conventions, power structures and institutional arrangements. If it is true that individuals have the autonomy to act and the structures themselves are mutable, social agency is not independent of the effect of the structures and even tends to reproduce them (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, it is essential to recognize the critical role of institutions such as the State or the functioning of the market, to understand the constraints and opportunities that frame social action. In the analysis of resilience processes, it is not enough just to characterize the practices of individuals and assign them a strategic intention, it is also important to assess the degree and quality of the choice they have in defining the way in which they face adversity.

A consequence of the agency focus is the lack of recognition of social inequalities, social injustice, and systemic forms of oppression as intrinsic elements of societies. The recognition of poverty as a condition, and not just as a situation that only depends on the ingenuity of individuals to be overcome, is the recognition of structural and systemic imbalances in societies.

One of the social implications of individuals' adaptation processes to crisis is that opportunities and costs are unequally distributed across society, as a function of power relations that influence resource redistribution processes and social norms (Dagdeviren et al., 2020). Strategies and practices to cope with hardship can entail disproportionately high costs for certain social groups, with low-income families, emigrants, minority groups, among others, being the most vulnerable and most exposed to risk (Dagdeviren, Donoghue & Meier, 2017). Thus, the analysis of resilience needs to be integrated with assessing its consequences for well-being (Coulthard, 2012). Articulating the analysis of resilience with the analysis of well-being allows us to consider the costs and risks of adaptation strategies and the ability of people to determine their agency (Calado et al., 2022).

The third type of problem is related to the definition of success in resilience analysis. Not being interested in solving structural problems, the purpose of resilience is to support practices or strategies that produce positive results (Batty & Cole, 2010). However, from this perspective, success does not necessarily, or even primarily, mean overcoming socio-material insecurity or reversing the path of poverty, but rather exceeding expectations (Davidson, 2009). Defining what expectations are is both an essential condition and a nebulous exercise for assessing resilience results. It is the dominant classes that establish the criteria and the measure of success, insofar as these are the result of power struggles, leaving people in poverty to meet externally established goals.

The determination of citizens' standards of living and rights is replaced by the projection of what should be the response capacity of the various social groups to the crisis, reifying the low expectations and stigmas associated with the most vulnerable groups. In addition, the emphasis on own resources and resourcefulness as key elements in resilience tends to ignore their social costs (Lister, 2004). This has been largely confirmed by empirical evidence, which has pointed to the increasing individualization of risk and socio-material deprivation (Coulthard, 2012). To avoid this problem, resilience practices must be properly contextualized with their results, costs, and existing opportunities, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of those affected (Calado et al., 2022).

An important aspect to note is that these social relations occur in a space of possibilities and opportunities shaped by social structures and the natural environment in times of crises. A distinctive feature of social resilience as an analytical approach is that it is oriented towards the study of transitional dynamics caused by systemic shocks (Calado et al., 2020; Dagdeviren et al., 2020). Sudden large-scale shocks can generate such an impact that existing responses are unable to absorb them fully, forcing processes of change or adaptation to the new conditions at both institutional and individual levels (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017). Therefore, resilience processes are activated not only when individuals or families suffer a shock that alters and restricts their objective conditions of existence, but when this shock also causes the reconfiguration of social structures (Calado, Capucha, Wódz; Dagdeviren et al., 2020).

The analysis of social resilience must, therefore, consider the structural arrangements, that promote path dependency, and the institutional change processes stimulated by the shock (Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023). The dynamic relationships played out at the level of institutions, which permeate and shape social structures, will simultaneously define the direction and intensity of change. These processes are based on three structural foundations: (i) the political structure, which refers to power relations between social groups; (ii) the institutional structure, which refers to rules, social norms and institutional arrangements; and (iii) the economic structure, which refers to the processes of (re)distribution of resources, that can be economic, cultural or social. Thus, we propose that the analysis of these processes must consider the dynamics of change at the level of rules and the distribution of resources, articulating them with an analysis of the power relations that define them and are defined by them (Dagdeviren et al., 2020).

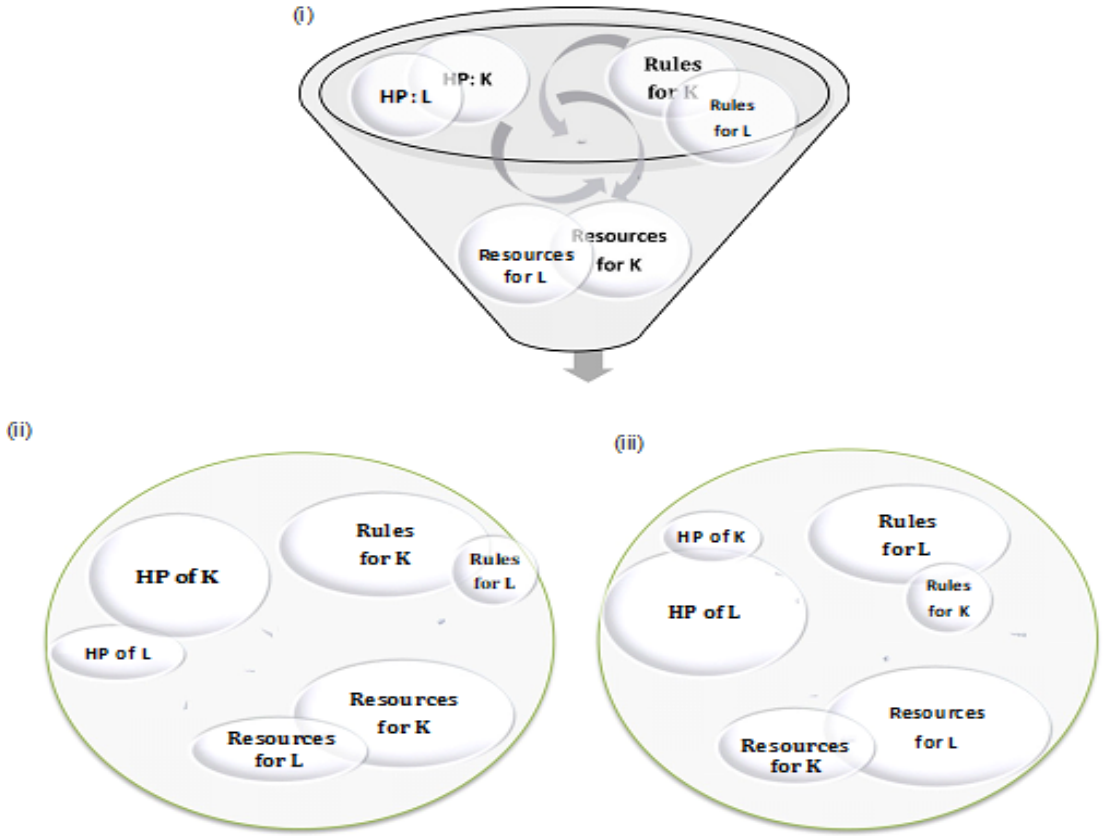

Figure 9.1: (i) Initial conditions, shock, action and struggle (ii) and (iii) Alternative social structures emerging after the shock. Note: HP is an abbreviation for hegemonic power. K and L denote capital and labour, respectively.

Resilience processes at the structural level account for the dialectical relationships between social actors to affect the configuration and orientation of social structures, which frame the conditions and opportunities for social action in the new social environment. The result of these dynamic relationships will impact the various socioeconomic groups in different ways, so the opportunities for resilience must be perceived in relation to the factors and logics that promote social inequalities. In this regard, it is necessary to identify the mechanisms and the forms of social injustice inherent at the systemic level, to assess to what extent and in what way the framework of opportunities potentiates or not the inversion of poverty trajectories (Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023).

For the analysis of social agency in times of crises, we propose a concept of social resilience anchored in sociological knowledge, particularly in studies on poverty (Calado et al., 2020). This perspective proposes an analytical model that incorporates the dynamic and complex interaction between objective factors (e.g. income, material deprivation) and subjective factors (e.g. social representations or attitudes) (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017). This conceptualisation recognizes, on the one hand, that individuals develop an active relationship with their living conditions, and, on the other hand, that resilience processes are an expression of the relationship between material conditions and the capacities that individuals have to manage them.

Theoretically, resilience accounts for the dynamics of "poverty ways of life" (Capucha, 2005), making it possible to capture readjustments in people's lifestyles to adapt their socio-material conditions to contextual constraints. In this sense, resilience processes are open and may result in the transformation or reinforcement of pre-existing ways of life, affecting and having consequences on the various spheres of their lives and on the framework of opportunities (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017; Calado et al., 2022).

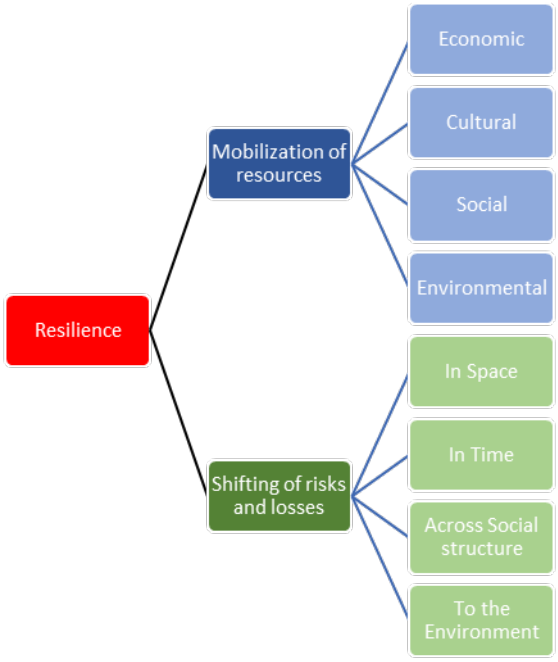

Figure 9.2: Dimensions of resilience.

In order to capture the dynamic and multidimensional nature of resilience, namely the relationship between practices and their results and effects, an analytical model is proposed consisting of two main dimensions: (i) mobilization of resources; and (ii) shifting risks in time, space, across the social structures, and the environment (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017). Resource mobilization refers to the ways in which resources are made available and how they are effectively used. They are grouped into four types: (i) economic, (ii) social, (iii) cultural and (iv) environmental. Risk transfer consists of replacing an immediate social risk (primary risk) with another risk that is distant from the first in time, space or social structure (secondary risk). Risks can also be grouped into four types: (i) socioeconomic (e.g. unemployment, poverty), (ii) physical (e.g. hunger, physical or mental illness), (iii) political (e.g. discrimination) or (iv) environmental (e.g. pollution, degradation of natural resources). These dimensions are often interdependent and bidirectional, and can be reinforced in practice. The joint analysis of these two dimensions and the relationships they establish between themselves allows for a comprehensive assessment of the outcomes and effects of practices for coping with hardship at the agential level.

9.2. Patterns of resilience during the financial crisis

As discussed earlier, the expansion of resilience approaches to socioeconomic phenomena was driven by the need to study the financial crisis and analyse its effects and impacts on the population and institutions and the results of mitigation and recovery policies. In this sense, we briefly revisit the financial crisis from the critical perspective on social resilience, focusing on some key topics addressed in this investigation.

The subprime crisis in 2007 had as an immediate consequence the instauration of an economic recession in Europe, in the context of bankruptcy of the financial system. EU countries sought to mitigate the effects of the crisis in a concerted manner. The strategy followed consisted of activating automatic stabilizers and implementing discretionary measures aimed at stabilizing the financial sector and supporting economic activity and employment. The welfare state responded positively during the subprime crisis, proving to be effective in its ability to protect from shocks and diversify these shocks (Andersen, 2012).

Despite the initial positive signs of the response, the coordinated policy of economic expansion, particularly the financial system bailout, transitioned the crisis into a sovereign debt crisis from 2010 onwards (Busch et al., 2013). This transitional process was not only a consequence of the worsening of public debts countries, but above all resulted from the "loss of confidence" in the markets and the reorientation of the EU's political approach, causing a systemic crisis with profound effects in institutional arrangements and in life conditions.

The structural recomposition processes triggered by the debt crisis opened space for a process of convergence of economic growth models in Europe (Hermann 2014; Johnston & Regan, 2016), which was the result of the confluence of a systemic shock (the debt crisis) and the role of supranational institutions (EC, ECB and IMF), which controlled the policies in response to the crisis. This process aimed at deepening the institutionalization of the neoliberal economic and social agenda (Pochet & Degryse, 2012), reinforcing a trajectory that had been gaining momentum since the beginning of the 21st century (Barnes & Hall, 2013; Grahl, 2009).

Despite the heterogeneity of the impacts of the crisis experienced in each country, the adjustment measures followed a single recipe for austerity and structural reforms of the State (Regan, 2017). Governments and social partners in each country had to choose to be at the service of legitimizing the measures or to be outside the process (Capucha et al., 2014). The main areas of focus of austerity measures were the liberalization of labour markets, the structural restructuring of the State, the promotion of private property and individual accountability, and the reform of labour law and collective bargaining (Busch et al., 2013; Pochet & Degryse, 2012).

In labour market relations there was a transition from a European flexicurity strategy, based on job quality and social cohesion, to a "flexinsecurity strategy" (Murphy, 2017). The results of resilience processes in work structures resulted in the competitive devaluation of wages, the flexibility of employment policy, the deregulation of labour legislation and collective bargaining, and the individualization of risk for workers (Clauwaert & Schömann, 2012). Despite the transversal impact of the labour liberalization process, the most unskilled sectors based on low wages were the most affected. In turn, these groups were the least equipped to face the costs of devaluing contracts and earnings, which further increased labour market segmentation and hampered upward trajectories in the labour market.

The emphasis on conditionality and work-first measures in social policies carried out by the articulation between workfare and welfare, contributed to the establishment of a vicious circle. The precariousness of the labour market led to a proliferation of insecure jobs with low wages, which to the present day continue to discourage people from entering the labour market. As a result, they do not generate tax revenue from their work and contribute to increased social spending, which leads to governments limiting eligibility conditions and cutting social benefits. With these cuts, unemployed workers are pressured to re-enter the labour market on a lower and/or more urgent basis, which generates a greater devaluation of wages and contracts (McGann, Murphy & Whelan, 2020).

In practice, the impact of these measures in reducing the vulnerability of workers in the labour market was secondary, in favour of promoting the institutionalization of a neoliberal framework for labour through the rearrangement of institutional structures and legislation changes (Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023). We can thus conclude that the institutional context during the financial crisis generated a more restricted framework of opportunities, forcing individuals to become more dependent on a devalued and precarious labour market. Thus, the constraints resulting from austerity policies were the most visible effects within the socio-political environment during the financial crises, reflected in the retrenchment of the welfare state and in the growing role of familialism (Calado, Capucha & Estêvão, 2019; Calado et al., 2020).

Social resilience thus emerged in a context of reduced opportunity and invalidation of capabilities. Resilience was experienced as a paradox, in which practices aimed at increasing income were the least accessible to families and, at the same time, the most important. At the opposite extreme, cost-of-living reduction strategies were multiple and diverse but entailed high costs arising from socio-material deprivation. The resilient way of life was thus characterized by the alienation of household's own resources and by its totalizing nature. Families were no longer able to strategically mobilize their relative advantages; instead resilience practices affected and had consequences in almost every sphere of their lives. The intensification of these practices was closely associated with the urgency of meeting immediate needs. This course of action led to the exhaustion of alternatives and severely limited the possibility of correcting trajectories or responding to new shocks. In short, resilience materialized in the relationship between the degree of vulnerability, immediate needs, accessible resources, and social risk (Calado et al., 2022).

When we analyse resilience from the perspective of its results and consequences, we unravel complex interconnected processes of transferring costs and risks in family roles and across generations, in the temporal sphere (short term vs. medium/long term) and in the type of action (reactive vs. strategic). In short, these practices are inevitable, but mainly consist of strategies to manage needs and aspirations to adapt to poverty, without the capacity to reverse the dynamics of poverty reproduction.

9.3. Resilience discourse and social policy implications

The political implications of the prominence of the resilience discourse are better understood if contextualized with the onset of the financial crisis. As we saw earlier, the development of the resilience perspective in the scientific and political fields happened simultaneously and within a logic of mutual influence. Despite its centrality in the political and popular discourse (Meyen & Schier, 2019), the concept of resilience remained imbued with ambiguity and has revealed problems in demonstrating positive results or manifestations of its effectiveness. Thus, it is important to analyse the appeal of resilience discourse and the reasons behind its widespread appropriation in social and economic policy.

In this dissertation, we advance the argument that the continued political interest in resilience is related to the connection between its implicit ideology and the configuration of power relations in the political-institutional framework that emerge from the financial crisis (Calado et al., 2022; Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023). When we analysed the social implications of resilience discourse in the political agenda, whether at the individual or structural level, it becomes clear its strong compatibility with neoliberal interpretations of crises and how to deal with these scenarios (Dagdeviren et al., 2020; Calado, Capucha, Wódz, 2023; Hall & Lamond, 2013; McKeown, Bui & Glenn, 2022).

The first manifestation of this connection is the way resilience discourse and neoliberal thought relate to social risk, specifically the occurrence of systemic shocks. The resilience discourse promotes the idea that we should not think about escaping or avoiding the possibility of traumatic experiences. Disasters are characterized as learning experiences from which individuals and societies grow and prosper. Thus, the exposure to hardship and risk are considered positive and necessary aspects for individuals be able to function in societies characterized by rapid, sudden and constant change.

For this reason, resilience does not seek to mitigate vulnerability. It thrives precisely because social experience is eminently fragile. In this condition, people must break with any belief or expectation of ensuring a degree of security or protection, thus accepting that his life is a permanent and continuous process of adaptation to threats and risks beyond their control. Furthermore, by emphasizing recovery and adaptation, resilience discourse is designed to support incremental change over radical transformation, favouring stability and protecting the political and economic status quo against uncertainty and change.

Success in resilience involves individual accommodation to the permanent state of crisis that characterize contemporary societies (Evans & Reid, 2013). Coping with crises is constructed as an entrepreneurial exercise in a self-regulated environment, in which subjects who know how to take advantage of opportunities and are more available to deal with risk have better chances of succeeding. Resilience thus proposes a realignment of the available solutions and resources to deal with socio-material insecurity compatible with the interests of the market (Donoghue & Edmiston, 2020). The incorporation of these principles in social policies represents the transition from citizen or user to a status of customer or consumer (Murphy & Dukelow, 2016). From this perspective, welfare services assume a status equivalent to charitable organizations, social economy organizations, private companies, or sociability networks, which are configured as externalities that individuals can resort to and establish service provision contracts.

Accordingly, resilience discourse is rooted in a positive attitude towards socio-material insecurity and, above all, self-dependence. Fundamentally, it redirects social protection against vulnerability and risk from a collective objective to an individual need (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017; Calado et al., 2022). Underlying this proposal is the acceptance of people's inability to change structural conditions and the framework of opportunities. Without the ability to resist or to bring about change, the outside world ceases to be a concern to the individual, implicitly accepting its instability and unpredictability. What people can change is themselves, so the focus becomes individual subjectivity, manifested in adaptability, reflexivity, autonomy, and creativity (Joseph, 2019). This discourse has been used to justify the loss of rights in social protection and the retrenchment of the welfare state, in favour of measures that enhance self-reliance, using “hidden resources” or “own resources to be exploited” (Promberger et al., 2019).

We are thus witnessing the deepening of a long-term trend towards the individualization of social policies, heightened by the reduction in social investment and the marketization of welfare services and provisions (Calado, Capucha & Estêvão, 2019; Calado, Capucha et al., 2023). The main role of the State becomes that of facilitator and motivator of social agency, in the form of activation or entrepreneurship, through the development of skills in individuals to deal with the rapid and sharp change in socioeconomic life, leaving people to create or find their own solutions. In practice, resilience policies basically consist in training and activation measures, aimed at increasing people's psychological capacity to tolerate and respond in adverse conditions, encouraging learning, mental strength, resourcefulness, and perseverance (Seccombe, 2002). Under the pretext of being "tailor-made" interventions, the social policies focus on the "problems" or "limitations" of the recipients, acting on immediate and singular solutions and not on the framework of opportunities.

Complementarily, mechanisms are created to encourage (or force) recipients to exercise this training, with the increasing incorporation of conditionality in social benefits. The introduction of punitive forms of conditionality, associated with work-first measures, is explicitly intended to motivate beneficiaries to make the transition to the labour market. The main effect of this approach is the loss of capacity of the unemployed to negotiate the terms of their reintegration into the labour market (Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023). Social justice thus transitions from a distributional logic to a procedural logic (Grove, 2013), in which the burden of responsibility for the results of measures is transferred from policies to the individual.

The discourse of resilience within the framework of neoliberal thought is built on top of a fundamental paradox. Resilience is presented as a strategy through which individuals can withstand and overcome socio-material insecurity, but for people to be able to exercise such capacities they need financial and ontological security, which provide them with resources to manage risk (Donoghue & Edmiston, 2020).

In the context of a recession, relying on own resources or social networks is not sufficient to reverse the paths to impoverishment of most affected individuals and families, and therefore does not constitute an effective social response (Calado et al., 2022). On the contrary, the incorporation of these principles in policies to combat the socioeconomic impacts of crises tends to postpone solutions to long-term vulnerability, contributing to the perpetuation and legitimation of socio-material insecurity.

The claim of individual agency and self-reliance is perfectly contradictory with the elements that make resilience successful. In order to create conditions for people overcoming the crisis it is necessary to provide resources and develop capacities (Sen, 1985, 1999) either through financial support, services or training. In this regard, the State is the main institution with the capacity to implement and coordinate these policies for any set within society.

This discussion of the ideology implicit within the discourse of resilience should not be taken to imply that public policies can only be read and interpreted based on their theoretical implications. It is important to distinguish conceptually and in empirical analysis the rhetoric of policies from their implementation and the change processes they generate, distinguishing between what a "policy is and what a policy does" (Murphy & Dukelow, 2016). However, the function of political discourse is to frame the measures and interventions on the ground, in a narrative that interprets the problem, its causes, the needs to be met, the objectives to be achieved and the expected benefits, thus establishing the terms within which these policies will be interpreted and discussed. As the empirical analysis has shown, many of the crisis response policy measures for building resilience are nothing more than the repackaging of existing measures (Brown, 2011), which served as vessels to promote a rhetoric aimed at legitimising the "(neo-)liberalisation of welfare governance" (Donoghue & Edmiston, 2020).

9.4. Governance and resilience as a preventive strategy

The most recent, and potentially most profound, development of the appropriation of the notion of resilience in the political field is its promotion as a preventive strategy in the face of crises and future threats. This approach had its genesis in EU policy in vulnerability reduction programs in "developing countries" (European Commission, 2012, 2013). With the financial crisis it was reoriented towards the interior of Europe (European Commission, 2017, 2018), and currently plays a central role in European narrative in the post-pandemic crisis (European Commission, 2020a, 2020b).

When we consider the experience of the financial crisis as a whole, the various phases of policy responses and the respective effects on institutional arrangements, we can elaborate an interpretative guide that connects these different phases and give an account of how resilience discourse is being appropriated in EU's strategic planning and structural investment (Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023).

In the aftermath of the global pandemic crisis, resilience is at the heart of financial instruments to address its socioeconomic impacts and the sustainability and future of European societies. The EU post-crisis agenda frames recovery and resilience plans on a “crisis continuum predicted to create perpetual economic strain”, that threatens human health and wealth, economic prosperity, and political stability, stating that “creating greater resilience by design, not by disaster should be at the core of a coordinated EU recovery response to the COVID-19 outbreak” (European Commission, 2020a: 1-2).

This rhetoric evokes the idea of resilience as a preventive strategy (Baldwin & Effland, 2022; Tacnet, 2018), inspired by socio-ecological and natural disaster management research. We argue that this strategy provides an imaginary for political responses that construct a state of permanent existential crises and threats, which serve the interests of capital and the political status quo to the detriment of the populations that the responses "ostensibly aim to empower" (McKeown, Bui, & Glenn, 2022). Therefore, this approach is more than a prevention model that implements vigilance, defence and protection, through learning from previous disasters or crises. Resilience asserts itself as an interpretative framework for how societies should relate and deal with future threats and challenges.

Within this framework, resilience gains the quality of an attribute of social systems, which is instrumental for the response and recovery capacity of societies or communities in times of crisis. The adoption of this perspective favours the reorientation of societies towards a “catastrophe policy” (Grove, 2013), within which crisis prevention transitions from an approach based on mitigating structural risk factors and system vulnerabilities to an approach based on increasing adaptive or transforming mechanisms after the occurrence of a systemic shock.

The very characterization of the shock – sudden, unpredictable and external – establishes a distance and inaccessibility of the structural factors, placing them outside the domain or control of the systems, and at the same time it creates a false sense of security in relation to known vulnerabilities (Neocleous, 2013). In this sense, there is transference of the present manifestations arising from the threats and risks on socio-ecological systems, to an indeterminate future when this threats and risks take the form of catastrophes, thus devaluing the urgency and need for intervention on the known factors of vulnerability and effects caused by these hazards, which in turn shape the capabilities to respond to them.

Resilience thus assumes the realization of the existential threat as inevitable, favouring policies that promote the flexibility of individuals and structures to increase the response capacity after the onset of the crisis (Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023). This perspective is thus based on the theoretical assumption that naturalizes the existence of systemic crises, assuming that greater adaptability will represent a decrease in vulnerability and maintain a predisposition for change and the adoption of risk.

Consequently, resilience approaches tend to devalue social stratification or the unequal distribution of resources, in favour of implementing ad hoc crisis adaptation strategies. The implication is that the priority of prevention strategies must be placed on protecting the institutional order and social norms in the face of a threatened future, to the detriment of the distribution of resources and power to face the social inequalities of the present, which in turn shape future capabilities.

The emphasis on the problems of the present does not intend to deviate policies from hazard prevention that jeopardize the future of socio-ecological systems. On the contrary, the priority focus of prevention must be directed towards the factors that cause hazards and contribute to their perpetuation, to find solutions to deal with their manifestations in the present and to implement measures to mitigate their danger and avoid the occurrence of a catastrophe.

However, resilience strategies tend to address these problems in the present from the standpoint of the compatibility with the market and the objectives of economic growth. From this perspective, the idea is not primarily to reduce the risk factor to protect citizens from the occurrence of a systemic crisis, but rather to avoid disrupting the political and financial status quo, under the argument of protecting of economic prosperity and political stability (Calado, Capucha & Wódz, 2023).

For this reason, prevention in this framework can be interpreted from two core notions: “exception” and “fear” (Grove, 2013). The establishment of a state of “exception” is both a condition and a norm for defining and guiding policies. Catastrophes generate exceptional situations that place social systems in existential danger, opening windows of opportunity in which laws can be suspended to preserve the laws themselves. In the struggle for survival, the implementation of exceptional measures or procedures that promise social order is accepted as legitimate, since it keeps people connected with the knowable instead of facing a bleak and unknown future.

As a result, “fear” shapes policy approaches and priorities. Faced with the inevitability of the occurrence of unanticipated catastrophes, the beliefs and practices of collective life are oriented towards its projected impacts. Policies and investment are directed at mitigating people’s fears in the face of the materialization of these imagined disaster scenarios. The consequence of this approach is the reorientation of prevention policies from the factors that cause socio-environmental threats to the impacts arising from their occurrence, diverting the focus from society's risks and vulnerabilities to the management of devastation scenarios generated by crises.

Resilience prioritizes the short-term sustainability of social systems, avoiding the transformation of structures and institutions even if they are at the origin of insecurity or vulnerability. The introduction of radical reforms to the status quo are represented as a greater threat than the vulnerabilities and social injustices created by the catastrophe, shaping its experience and impact and threatening the balance and the very existence of the systems.

The margin for change is established by windows of opportunity, which offer some opening and malleability for individuals and communities to navigate the "persistence of the system" (Grove, 2013), but which simultaneously establish the boundaries that delimit the potential for transformation. It follows from this that this model tends to reinforce and even crystallize the status quo, that is, the dominant values and norms in the face of the threat of catastrophe become fundamental values and norms that represent the collective identity, for which reason they must be protected at all costs (Evans & Reid, 2013).

The consequence of this approach to adaptation and recovery policies against crises is the externalization of the responsibility from the State and global politics to the crises itself (Meyen & Schier, 2019). Adaptation has the implication that environmental circumstances and conditions have changed, while recovery implies the existence of a loss and the return to the initial or pre-shock condition as its goal. In this context, resilience moves away from the idea of social (re)construction of change, in favour of a strategy of preparing systems to be flexible and adaptable to changes that have already occurred and over which they have no control (Béné et al., 2012). From this perspective emerges a neoliberal governance model for the State, based on: (i) governing populations from a distance, through limited direct public intervention, (ii) promoting individual responsibility, initiative and self-reliance; (iii) enhancing the role of the private sector and civil society, which are presented as the best way to share risks and recognizing the role of society; and (iv) establishing quantitative standards measured by monitoring instruments to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of public investment and the success of adaptation and recovery policies (Joseph, 2019).

In short, resilience as a prevention strategy proposes a model of governance for populations based on self-governance, through the demonstration of initiative, reflexivity and awareness associated with flexibility and adaptability to change. It promotes individual adaptability, where the possible change is accommodation within structural adversity. It emphasizes change, but limits that change to individual behaviour, without addressing the problem of systemic change. Acceptance of the imperative of resilience involves sacrificing any vision of a world in which adverse circumstances can be changed and individuals can live feeling safe. To be resilient is to live in a state of permanent crisis, accepting responsibility for ensuring the necessary means for subsistence, without expectations for the future, in a social framework that is insecure and adverse by design.

CHAPTER 10

Future directions for research

Considering the trajectory of research on resilience in social sciences, we could argue that it is an area of study that is both open and saturated. Effectively, resilience research occupied a relatively circumscribed space of application, but with the advent of the financial crisis, there was a process of expansion in the number and type of disciplinary areas invested in these studies. The close relationship with the crisis could suggest that it is a trend generated by circumstances; however the post-crisis period has not shown signs of regression. On the contrary, these studies continue to expand into different areas and new objects of analysis within the scope of social research. In the political field, taking as a reference the documentation produced by international organizations, resilience gained even greater centrality in the definition of programmatic agendas.

Even so, it is important to emphasize that it is a relatively emerging field of studies in social sciences. While it is true that much social research literature has been produced and published over the last decade, the body of knowledge is still in the process of maturation. The theoretical, conceptual and analytical developments made in this period need to be further tested in empirical research.

In this regard, we propose as a basis for this research the operationalization of the critical concept of resilience proposed in this investigation. From this perspective, resilience is understood as a social process by which individuals, institutions or societies respond to systemic shocks, that account for the readjustments in people's lifestyles to adapt their socio-material conditions to contextual constraints, incorporating the dynamic and complex interaction between objective factors and subjective factors (Estêvão, Calado & Capucha, 2017). In addition, these processes are framed by institutional arrangements, which themselves initiate an internal reorganization of its components. This transition process is determined by the dialectical power relations between social agents and institutions to affect the system's structural foundations, specifically the system of norms, power relations and resource distribution (Dagdeviren et al., 2020).

The outcomes of these processes will define the direction and intensity of change, framing the conditions and opportunities for agency in the new social context (Calado et al., 2023). The interplay between these two levels of analysis (agential and structural) will either boost or hamper the availability of and access to social and personal resources and the ability to transfer or share risks and losses associated with the shock (Calado et al., 2020).

Considering this definition of social resilience, it would be interesting to test them in different crisis contexts, taking advantage of the most recent large-scale shocks, such as the global COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. This research could focus on different objects of analysis, identifying specific social profiles to analyse resilience processes, abandoning the search for "resilient people"; or diversify research methods, among which I would highlight qualitative methodologies of longitudinal analysis, capturing resilience processes of the same subjects in different periods of time and social contexts, or quantitative methodologies, from which could devise ways of measuring some of the properties of resilience processes.

Within the scope of consolidating the foundations and theoretical models of this area of study in sociology, it is particularly pertinent to deepen research focused on resilience processes at the structural level. Published social research has been predominantly focused on individual responses to crises, a function of the prominence of the heroic interpretation of the notion. Structural approaches still lack the same level of interest, even though they are increasingly influential in shaping the political agenda of international organizations and national governments. In the context of this investigation, we made a first advance towards a systematic study of these processes, however it is justified to carry out more studies from this perspective in different areas of activity.

Having as reference the proposals included in this dissertation, the deepening of the investigation in this area would respond to three objectives. First, testing, critically reviewing and consolidating theoretical proposals and models, namely using more complex analytical models, capable of combining different types of empirical data and information sources. Second, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of structural resilience processes in the context of the financial crisis, expanding the analytical scope of institutional change processes to reinforce or review the conclusions obtained from the analysis of changes in labour markets. Third, the deepening of sociological knowledge about these processes can be a valuable contribution to the enrichment of institutional change research, namely of the welfare state or the models of economic growth.

If these objectives are already enough to generate a robust and diversified line of research, a priority and urgent area to define a research agenda would be the incorporation of the resilience discourse in national and transnational policies. When this research trajectory began, resilience still had a rhetorical status in policies, but since then it has gained centrality and materiality, namely in the post-crisis agenda of the EU. A research agenda focused on resilience policies could be structured in two areas of study.

The first area of study would be devoted to the study of resilience development policy measures, whether at the individual, group or community level. The greatest influence of these ideas on policy has been to repackage existing measures, with a view to revitalizing and legitimizing them. In any case, over the last decade experiences have been made in the elaboration and application of social policies specifically designed to increase and develop resilience. At the institutional level, resilience approaches focused on its application in defence strategies and humanitarian aid in "developing countries" have produced results that suggest the introduction of changes in intervention programs and governance models. The study of these measures or programs, their implementation processes and their results and impacts will be extremely important to test the effectiveness of these policies and their implications for social policies and governance.

The second area of study would be dedicated to the study of resilience as a preventive strategy and its adoption by European policies. The adoption of this perspective in the definition of medium-term strategic objectives in the EU and the respective European funding instruments is one of the most relevant political developments in this area of study. The study of how this perspective has been incorporated into the programmatic objectives of the European agenda, how it influences the understanding of societal challenges and action priorities, and the implications it has for the future of policies, are fundamental dimensions of analysis. In this dissertation, this issue was discussed based on the review of EU strategic documents, but it is necessary to deepen and invest in research, through the systematic analysis of the evolution of resilience policies in the EU, interviews with key actors, the study of how these policy lines are operationalized, and the analysis of their implementation and results.

Resilience may have emerged as an empty notion, used to provide a response and a horizon of success when there was nothing but recession and austerity. Its context of emergence and compatibility with neoliberal politics generated distrust and foreshadowed the waning of interest. However, social resilience studies have matured into a dynamic and diverse field of research, which today offer a vital contribution to the understanding of contemporary societies and political trends at both the global and local levels.

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