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Silva, Manuel Carlos; Cardoso, António

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Crisis and the Impacts of Crisis on the Inhabitants of Rural Space: the Case of a Village in North West Portugal*

Crisis e impactos de la crisis sobre los residentes del espacio rural: el caso de un pueblo en el noroeste de Portugal

Manuel Carlos Silva ^a mcsilva2008@gmail.com
University of Minho, Portugal

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8462-9516>

António Cardoso
Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo, Portugal

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8223-8594>

Abstract: After suffering the impact of the 2008 crisis, both for internal and external reasons, Portugal requested in 2011 financial assistance from the *Troika* (IMF/ECB/EU). The Portuguese experienced company bankruptcies, cuts to salaries and pensions, rising unemployment, job insecurity, and difficulties in paying their mortgages. Despite severe austerity programs and formal exit of the *Troika*, Portugal failed to reduce public debt. After giving a brief overview of development models, in this article we will focus our attention on the impacts of the crisis in rural areas and the diverse perceptions of crisis by different groups and families. As a case study, we will consider the strategies employed by residents of a parish in the municipality of Barcelos (Braga, Minho); strategies deployed in order to reduce the damage caused by the crisis. Against the mainstream liberal perspective and the traditional Marxist thesis, we sustain that rural people adopt an attitude of resiliency in relation to the austerity program and, on the basis of empirical qualitative research methods, we can witness creative familial strategies to survive: migration, exploitation of the potentialities of the land, as well as actions that take advantage of artisanal and commercial opportunities in order to cope with the difficulties caused by the crisis.

Keywords: crisis, development, underdevelopment, poverty, survival strategies, Minho, Portugal.

Resumen: Después de soportar el impacto de la crisis de 2008, que fue ocasionada por razones endógenas y exógenas, Portugal solicitó asistencia financiera de la *Troika* (FMI/BCE/CE). Los portugueses han experimentado la insolvencia de empresas y bancos, cortes en sus salarios y pensiones, desempleo elevado, inseguridad laboral y dificultades para pagar sus hipotecas. A pesar de los severos programas de austeridad que implementó, y de su salida formal de la *Troika*, Portugal no ha conseguido reducir su deuda pública. Luego de ofrecer una breve exposición de los modelos de desarrollo, este artículo enfocará su atención en los impactos que la crisis ha acarreado en las áreas rurales, enfatizando en las diversas percepciones de la crisis que han tenido diferentes grupos y familias. Como estudio de caso, analizaremos las estrategias utilizadas por los residentes de un pueblo en el municipio de Barcelos (Braga, Minho); estrategias implementadas con el objetivo de reducir los daños causados por la crisis. Al contrario de la perspectiva liberal y la tesis marxista tradicional, sostenemos que la población rural adopta una actitud de resiliencia con relación al programa de austeridad. Asimismo, con base en métodos cualitativos de investigación empírica, podemos verificar las estrategias utilizadas por las familias para sostenerse: la migración, la explotación de los potenciales de la tierra, así como acciones que sacan provecho de las ventajas ofrecidas por oportunidades artesanales y comerciales; alternativas adoptadas para enfrentar las dificultades que ocasiona la crisis.

Palabras clave: crisis, desarrollo, subdesarrollo, pobreza, estrategias de supervivencia, Minho, Portugal.

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Introduction: Problem, Objectives and Research Methods

Despite progress in recent decades, particularly since the Revolution of the 25th of April of 1974, Portugal remains a semi-peripheral country. This is the result of internal and external factors blocking its development, which have their roots in the past but are still felt today. Also, despite the formal exit of the *Troika*, Portugal remains bound by *Troika* conditions and its underlying economic and financial interests are the deep causes of the crisis (see Peck, 2010; Aalbers, 2013; Silva, 2013). The prescriptions of the so-called *adjustment program* include the following measures: (i) stabilization of public finances at the expense of austerity, which affects the poorest and most defenseless (the elderly, pensioners), and a significant reduction in worker salaries, not only among the less qualified classes, but also among highly qualified individuals, incorrectly referred to as *middle classes*; (ii) counter-reform of labor laws, in particular increased flexibility and facilitation of dismissal; (iii) (re)privatization of public enterprises, particularly the most profitable, and damage to the environment; (iv) an increase in food dependency, deregulation of economic activities, and almost total liberalization of capital markets and trade (WTO); (v) decentralization of services and erosion of the Welfare State and rights acquired over several decades by assigning State functions to the private sector, particularly in the fields of health and education. These measures, which were applied to Greece and Portugal, have previously been imposed on other countries in Latin America, during the 1980s and 1990s, leading to condemnation of such policies by the 1993 International People's Tribunal in Tokyo.

In 2007 and 2008, we faced the collapse of financial markets in the United States, notably the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers. In Europe, the effects of this were felt, not only in the real estate bubble and the insolvency of several banks, but also in the shape of painful sovereign debts. As well as transferring public funds to the banks, several countries found themselves on the verge of requesting the intervention of the so-called *Troika*: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Union (EU) and European Central Bank (ECB). In that context, Portugal was economically vulnerable and unable to cope, being forced *in extremis* to request the financial assistance of the *Troika* in the face of acute insolvency problems. But, what is the meaning of this request for 'help' and what are its implications?

In both cases, the (neo)liberal model of 'help' was justified as being a pragmatic solution; an opportunity for timely intervention, mutually beneficial to both the donor countries and the aid recipients, in this case, the best interests of European Union cohesion and the sustainability of the euro. But, was this the case? Or is there a need to use other theoretical and interpretive instruments to problematize and demystify the concept of *help*?

The foundations for this liberal type of aid scheme were laid by the United States, initially assisting their European allies through the Marshall Plan (1947-1952) and, later, as part of the decolonization

processes of (neo)colonial powers (Great Britain, Holland, France and, of course, the United States) in Asia and Africa, both for expansionist, economic, and ideological reasons, pertaining to the then USSR.

Just as, in the post-war years and again in the 1970s and 1980s, there were countries with agricultural surpluses, more recently, some central countries have financial surpluses, including the Nordic and Central European countries. With Germany as the helm, they have adopted a strategy of exporting capital at a high interest rate, unfavorable to (semi)peripheral countries.

However, the impacts of such interventions are widely known: the transfer of funds from taxpayers to the private sector, in Portugal, particularly for banking institutions experiencing difficulties (5 000 million euros to BPN, and 7 000 million euros to Banif and BES) in the period from 2007 to 2013 (Eurostat, INE); an increase in public and private debt; the imposition of austerity measures with a strong impact on peoples' lives, in particular low demand for, and consumption of goods; reduced investment and company bankruptcies, especially among SMEs; auctioning off of family homes; cuts to salaries and pensions; a sharp reduction in purchasing power; unemployment, often without any social protection, especially for the long-term unemployed and those faced with a succession of precarious contracts; and a gradual, or even rapid, increase in poverty. All of these effects have, to a greater or lesser extent, been experienced throughout Portugal, particularly in urban areas. However, in this article we aim to investigate and discover more about the impacts, manifestations, and perceptions of the crisis in rural areas, in particular in the context of smallholders in a village in the Minho region.

Conventional neoliberal economists tend to forget that crises, especially in contexts already marked from the seventies by European and national centralist policies, and the abandonment of the countryside and the country's interior, have a regional, social, and ecological dimension, leading to the devitalization of towns and villages. They have caused, and will continue to cause, greater regional and social inequality, resulting in double polarization between countries and, within each country, between classes and social groupings. Furthermore, they lead to speculation of financial capital while giving rise to regional and social inequalities, and despite eco-friendly rhetoric, cause and enable the gradual destruction of ecosystems and fail to respect biodiversity (fauna and flora).

Against the current backdrop of global crisis and the questions that this raises, we must ask ourselves why regional and local development issues –and the related questions of security and wellbeing, as well of those pertaining to the environment and quality of life– have become the burning issue faced by citizens of a modern society, such as Europe. This question necessarily leads us, as a first goal, to briefly revisit the major theoretical models of development, which, as we shall see, present to us very different diagnoses and solutions. But the second and more relevant objective of this paper, in the rich tradition of rural studies, is to challenge, not only the traditional Marxist perspective about the non-revolutionary behavior of rural people in an adverse situation of impoverishment,

but also the active and defensive familial strategies to survive in a context of neoliberal politics and ideology. Against the mainstream liberal perspective and the traditional Marxist thesis, we sustain that rural people adopt an attitude of resiliency in relation to the austerity program and we can witness creative familial strategies to survive: *migration*, exploiting the potentialities of the land, and *pluriactivity*, taking advantage of artisanal and commercial opportunities in order to cope with the difficulties. Grammont and Valle (2009, p. 9-ss) distinguish several types of pluri-activity, out of which two are worth to be mentioned: (i) as resistance against impoverishment and as a mode of subsistence, and (ii) as a mode of appropriation and accumulation of capital under medium and high producers, offered by exogenous or endogenous factors.^[i]

Analysing the 2008's crisis in the Greece society, Gkartzios (2013) and Gkartzios et al. (2013) studied the *counter-urbanization*^[ii] caused by the crisis in situations of unemployment, poverty, social insecurity and political instability, and even fear of urban violence, due to the presence of migrants and drug addicts. This is the reason why many urban dwellers have left Athens for urban and mainly rural areas, where their extended family and the community are able to provide accommodation and opportunities to face the crisis (see also Kasimis & Zografakis, 2012). With these studies, the authors contributed to densify and diversify the concept of *counter-urbanization* as elaborated by the dominant Anglo-Saxon understanding, as a movement composed of artists, alternative groups, retired and, as a rule, ex-urban or anti-urbanized middle class members who have abandoned the city and constructed idyllic representations of the rural area as a natural, relaxing, and communal space, although in tension with the locals or with differentiating elements in terms of locality, motivation, and social group (see Newby, 1979; Urry, 1995; Halfacree & Rivera, 2011; Hedberg & Carmo, 2012).

Hedberg and Carmo (2012), following Kayser (1990), Cresswell (2006) and Woods (2007), contest the traditional understanding of the rural as fixed, isolated, stagnant, or regressive, and the urban as mobile, connected, and progressive. It is worth to note that these authors have compiled results from several studies. Without denying some situations of depopulation, marginalisation, and ageing or tensions between marginalization and urbanization in rural areas, already analysed by Kayser (1990) and Carmo and Santos (2012), in these studies predominate analyses of productions and metamorphoses of rural space recognized as heterogeneous, as well as the interdependencies and functional reconfigurations between the rural and the urban, largely due to the mobility of capital and persons within the framework of globalization. Also, the rural areas are trans-local insofar as they have a particular ability to be attractive; and they are composed of various types of social actors (established inhabitants, migrants, refugees, and global entrepreneurs). Being mediators between locales, they are interconnected and imbued by flows and networks not only at a local-regional level, but also nationally and internationally (see Rau, 2012; Stenbacka, 2012;

Silva, 2012; Camarero, Sampedro, & Oliva, 2012; Du Bois, Copus, & Hedstrom, 2012; Hedberg & do Carmo, 2012).^[iii]

Following the designed theoretical framework, this research paper was based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, even though special emphasis was put on qualitative techniques. Therefore, we used the population censuses carried out between 1960 and 2011, as well as the results of an earlier survey completed in 2002, and some secondary sources, to provide a socio-demographic and historical picture in section 3. From April to July 2014, we conducted a semi-directed interview focused primarily on the objective conditions of life; on the different strategies undertaken by the various families belonging to the different social groups; and on their respective representations of the crisis and the ways of dealing with it. Twenty-five interviews were selected among groups of families differentiated by type of activity, with cases of peasant families, artisans, internal migrants in the country, particularly in the Minho region, and was extended, through snowball sampling, to external migrants, namely in Spain, Luxembourg, France, and Switzerland, who replied to the surveys during their vacation. The interviews were subsequently analysed. Other testimonies were gathered during the weekends, where some participant observation was made in the village in a previous research. Different from the centrifugal model of the research of Gkartzios (2013), Gkartzios, Garrod, & Remoundou (2013),^[iv] and others, which analyse the leaving of Athens or Tesselonic by urban dwellers, whose crisis caused a dynamic of counter-urbanization, and led to relocation in provincial urban and rural villages, in Portugal there was not a massive delocalization of urban dwellers from big or medium-sized cities to villages. In Portugal, those most affected by the economic crisis left urban and rural places to move abroad (150.000 per year) while the economic counter-urbanization to the villages was not as extensive as in Greece. Moreover, in Portugal there is not a massive movement of migrants and refugees, and the subsequent fear of urban violence there is in Greece, nor the emerging ultra-right political movements such as *Aurora Dourada*.

After a short summary of the development models and a brief discussion between the (neo)liberal and Marxist positions towards rural impoverishment, we agree with the thesis of moral economists centered on the constraints and strategies of rural dwellers oriented by survival and a 'safety first' principle. Next, we make a brief historical and socio-demographic introduction to Durrães. In the third part, we will focus our attention on the impacts and perceptions of the recent and ongoing crisis on rural areas, using the population of this peripheral parish in the municipality of Barcelos as a case study.

Development, Crisis and the *Safety First* Principle in Rural Areas

As we have explained in a previous paper (see Silva & Cardoso, 2005, p. 24), *development* is a polysemic concept. Such notion can be understood

(i) as economic growth, measured on the basis of certain quantitative economic indices (increase of per capita income or GDP); (ii) as economic development, measured using indices of economic growth and changes in quality of life (life expectancy, quality of life, prosperity); (iii) as social development, assessed on the basis of social and human criteria (reduction of poverty and social exclusion, welfare and social justice, level of participation, and democratization of society).

Focusing on the issue of local rural development, we are aware that policies of agricultural abandonment date back to the 1980s, coinciding with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) agreements, and the faltering Portuguese Government (then led by Cavaco Silva), which allowed an increase in imports from Northern and Central European countries interested in draining their respective agricultural surpluses. At this time, Portugal was given a period of several years to modernize, adjust and adapt itself to the new European Community framework. However, the role of 'good student', which Portugal adopted in order to win the favor of stronger European partners in return for capital advances for infrastructure projects –European social funds–, often squandered for the benefit of the few; the then-Government accepted conditions of agricultural stagnation, with the establishment of milk quotas, the abandonment of certain crops due to European surpluses, and the incentive of high subsidies for certain areas, irrespective of production and value creation. Finally, this led to the abandonment of production; the early retirement of farmers, or a shift from a role as agricultural producers to 'guardians of nature' and the environment; and the promotion of leisure programs and rural tourism with a view oriented towards the increase of the so-called *multifunctionality* of rural areas. In addition to the abandonment of agricultural production by countless farmers, this process involved repurposing farming and forestry areas, which caused relative desertification, especially in the country's interior.

Although the impacts of this policy varied according to the actors involved, we now have a more *wide-ranging* and clearer understanding of the negative impact of agricultural policy on low capital-intensity farming, subjected to CAP regulations designed according to the interests of the central countries, in particular France.

To briefly summarize developmental models, it can be said that until the 1960s, the linear, liberal evolutionist model was dominant. This took the view that underdeveloped or less developed countries and regions should grow and be guided by the criteria and standards of developed countries, on the basis of private investment and the law of supply and demand. This means: to behave according to the logic of competitiveness and the ideological assumption of comparative advantages in economic exchanges between developed and underdeveloped countries. Such design, mainly espoused by economists (see Rostow, 1964), had fervent support from ideologists in other social sciences, including sociologists such as Hoselitz (1982) and, as we will see, notably, Parsons (1988).

As well as failing to resolve the contradictions of the system, the old liberal perspective has shown itself to be inconsistent and weak, especially

at times of crisis, since the stock market crash and the depression of 1929, which sparked another theoretical perspective embodied by Keynes. Later, after the Second World War, this would be referred to as *neo-institutionalism* (Myrdal, 1974; Seers, 1977). Indeed, faced with deadlock and the failure of the neoliberal proposals, these authors linked economics and ethics, arguing for indicative planning and the reform of State intervention, in order to promote full employment through public investment, particularly in the construction of public works and infrastructure; boost citizen participation; fight parasitic and decadent elites; correct market distortions and reduce poverty; and, on an international level, reduce inequality between countries and regions. Since the 19th century, the main, enduring criticisms of liberal theories have come from a Marxist perspective (see Marx & Engels, 1976). Based on the labor theory of value, and the idea that capital is the result of surplus value not paid to workers, these led to new developments in the debate on imperialism (Lenin, 1971; Luxembourg, 1967), perceived as the unequal relationship between colonizers and colonized countries and regions in the early 20th century. Also, from the 1950s onward, these led to theories of dependency (see Prebisch, 1963; Furtado, 1961; Frank, 1961, 1979; Cardoso & Falleto, 1970) and center-periphery relationships (see Wallerstein, 1990) based on historical and empirical studies. According to these authors, underdevelopment of peripheral countries and regions is the result of the development of central countries, these being two sides of the same coin or, more accurately, of the same historical process, underway since the 16th century.

In this regard, Frank's dependency theory and Wallerstein's center-periphery theory –in addition to responses from (neo)liberal theorists and modernization– have been the subjects of critical objections from the Marxist front. Also, Laclau (1971), Arrighi (1971), and Brenner (1977) claim that they take the colonial mercantile structures as the only constant basis for reproduction of the relationship between the metropolis and the satellite, and fail to differentiate between class structures in different countries, which explains the success or failure of development to 'take-off'.

As mentioned previously (Silva & Cardoso, 2005, p. 55), taking into account the bankruptcy of the neoliberal model, the ineffectiveness of the neo-institutional model at making any significant reduction to the gap between developed and underdeveloped countries and regions, and the utopia proposed by the Marxist model, several authors (Stöhr, 1981; Bailly, 1999) tend to argue that, in today's globalized context, the most appropriate and reasonable approach, at least in the short to medium term, is to aim to boost local or, at most, regional development on a territorial and equitable basis. In other words, as Reis (1994), Yruela and Guerrero (1994), Giménez (1996), Villasante (1998), and Grammont and Valle (2009) note, as long as certain levels of population density, certain technical and economic dimensions, and a human and institutional capacity for internal management and external trade are present, it is possible to mobilize individual and collective actors

(associations) to local development. This is argued in order to reduce inequality, add value to endogenous resources, create networks, and enhance sustainable bottom-up development, whether in small and medium-sized cities or in rural areas (although these do not necessarily need to be entirely agricultural).

These various theories, as well as the diverse resulting diagnoses, are not free from the interests of class and other social groupings, and, for this reason, solutions to the issues surrounding uneven development between countries and regions also differ, with the (neo)liberal and Marxist views, for example, being antagonistic. While the former theory is based on growth and modernization, losing sight of the historical perspective of colonialism and not taking into account the specific economies and cultural patterns of non-Western societies, the Marxist model, and the dependency and center-periphery theories in particular, present a historical dimension and an effective means of explaining the asymmetric relationships that exist between developed and underdeveloped countries and regions. However, the latter model represents a macroeconomic and macro-sociological perspective, which is somewhat teleological and deterministic in character, underestimating the micro-sociological level, the role of social actors and their transformational capacity, and potential social configurations emerging from the interplay there is between structure and collective action. This, however, is fostered by certain aspects of neo-institutional theory and, yet more so, by the territorial approach, particularly when used to promote agro-ecological models, as advocated by Sevilla-Guzmán (2003), or networks in rural development (Lowe, Murdoch, & Ward, 1997). Since these do not call into question the nature of the State or the market economy, they only permit gradual change, but are certainly an important factor in the ongoing transformation of the system and the improvement of the living conditions. Consequently, dependency and center-periphery theories, with the possible incorporation of elements of neo-institutional and territorial approaches, are not only applicable on a global level, but also on the national, regional, and local scenarios. They are, therefore, relevant and appropriate in the context of regional and local development and of the (des)continuities from the rural to urban societies. If the rural-urban dichotomy was subject to different analyses among the classics under various topics, already in the first quarter of the 20th century Sorokin and Zimmerman (1929) pointed out the rural-urban continuum. In the 1960s, the traditional spatial dichotomy was also questioned by Pahl (1966) who, in addition to space, pointed out that class, gender and the life cycle phase structured behaviour in rural and urban contexts. And, in this sense, in southern countries there are continuities between the rural and the urban (Silva, 1998; Damianakis, 2001; Davoudi, 2002).

We have already pointed to some of the general outlines necessary to understand the emergence and dynamics of *evolution/involution* of the crisis. It is now important to discuss its specificities and consequences in order to obtain an adequate analytical framework to understand and explain the behaviours of the rural residents in

relation to the crisis. In fact, the liberal perspective has some variants in relation to the peasants and other players in rural areas: (i) on the one hand, old liberals (Smith, 1776/1956; Ricardo, 1817/1975) and, even in the mid-twentieth century, conventional economists and sociologists such as Parsons (1988), considered that peasants and other rural actors, behaving in accordance with the pattern variables of the old traditional community (ascription, particularism, collectivity orientation, diffuseness, and affectivity), would be induced by local mediators and by various methods to be guided and oriented by the cultural standards of modern society (universalism, achievement, self-orientation, specificity, and affective neutrality). In other words, in order to pursue their strategies of survival and possible social mobility, traditional players would have to adjust to the aforementioned modern standards; otherwise, they would succumb to the imperative law of supply and demand, particularly in a situation of crisis and vulnerability. On the other hand, (ii) other theorists, belonging to second-wave liberal-inspired studies about the peasantry, such as Popkin (1979), assumed that peasants and other rural dwellers were as rational as any social actor, and this rationality manifested itself, not only in their economic activities and markets, but also in political terms, namely in patronage relations, and religious and symbolic dimensions. In political terms, the liberal conception, namely pluralist, supported by Dahl (1989) in relation to peasants and other social actors, assumes that, since democracy is the effect of autonomous and free decisions of each and every one of the voters, the liberalization of the various markets would guarantee democratization; consequently, the crisis is an integral part of the teleological process on the way to an open, democratic, and modern society.

In turn, the traditional Marxist approach (Marx, 1974; Lenin, 1977 and, in Portugal, Cunhal, 1976) assumed that, with the exception of a minority of middle-class and rich rural dwellers, the vast majority of the peasants, faced with the process of industrialization and penetration of capital in the agriculture, would be experiencing disintegration and proletarianization processes. In other words, while a smaller proportion of peasants, especially middle-class peasants and farmers, could become small rural bourgeoisie, the majority of peasants and other poor rural dwellers would undergo a process of 'deruralization', being dispossessed of their meagre means of production (land and livestock) and then turned into an enormous mass of rural and industrial proletarians. Although it may be verifiable in the long term, this traditional Marxist thesis, that is based on the English Agro-Industrial Revolution, has not always experienced such a linear and accelerated process in all societies, especially in those that belong to the so-called Third World, and even in societies of southern Europe, such as France and Italy, and especially Spain, Greece, and Portugal (Silva, 1998; King, 2000; Alesina & Giuliano, 2007). In those cases, the lag in the penetration of capitalism in the countryside has delayed considerably the process of industrialization and proletarianization with correlative artisanal and

peasant family-oriented economies and societies. However, contrary to the Leninist thesis, in Russia itself, and subsequently in the Soviet Union, there was a populist tendency embodied in the economist and theoretician Aleksandr Chayanov (1976): author whose thesis held that the Russian peasants would not suffer the alleged and rapid process of proletarianization, not only by delaying the process of capitalization of the agriculture but also, and above all, by the prevalence of the strategies of survival and resistance of the peasants themselves, whose economic logic diverged from the capitalist market economy. This line of thought and interpretation of peasants' economic and social behavior in various societies on different continents was later to be developed by moral economists and peasant theorists such as Thompson (1979), Shanin (1973), Wolf (1974), Mintz (1973), Sevilla-Guzmán (1983), Scott (1976, 1990), Damianakos, Zakopoulou, Kassimis, and Nitsiakos (1997), and Silva (1998), whose basic principle is that of survival, focusing on safety first. Else, survival and improvement pathways stem from external factors: rural tourism, the search for labor power by markets of central capitalist countries or side effects of the globalization process (Grammont & Valle, 2009; Woods, 2014).

Although this thesis is verifiable in a number of situations in dependent countries, notably in the countries of southern Europe subject to financial rescue, their social and political manifestations differ. Thus, in the case of Ireland the capacity for recovery was more visible, and its effects were not as dramatic as in Greece or Portugal. Also, it was possible to observe notable differences in the organization and resistance process between the Greek and the Portuguese cases.

In Greece, the family networks and, foremost, the social structures of the social economy (Gkartzios, 2013) would be the main anchors of support to displaced and vulnerable people. These networks were supported and nurtured by rising solidarity movements in the countryside and by political parties such as Syriza. These were counterpoints to the disaffection and contestation towards traditional parties that were seen as corrupt –New Democracy and, especially, Pasok–, which led to a strong electoral shock and their demise. However, in Portugal not only there was not an erosion of main political right parties (PSD and CDS) and Socialist Party (PS), but rural dwellers, besides relying on familiar support, also outlined atomistic resistance and resilience strategies such as emigrating; exploiting the latent potentialities of land not used for agriculture, artisanal or commercial activities, and triggering aid applications, not so much from the State –whose policies of austerity and impoverishment led by a right-wing government PSD/CDS aggravated their living conditions– but from private social solidarity organizations and institutions (IPSS). It is worth mentioning that, contrary to the Greek experiences, those organizations are chiefly controlled by conservative ecclesiastical entities conveying a narrative of atonement and conformism among dependents and resigned dwellers.

Durrães: Brief Portrait of Population, Economy, and Social Structure

Durrães is a peripheral parish in the municipality of Barcelos. It is located in the Valley of the River Neiva, in the sub-region of Lower Minho (Annex 1). Until the 1980s, it was predominantly characterized by family-run farms, with a range of crops, but it has, since then, become increasingly pluri-active, as its residents earn a living by combining agriculture with occupations in the small and medium enterprise, commerce, and service sectors.

Compared to other parishes, Durrães has had a significant transport link since the late nineteenth century: a train station on the Porto-Viana-Vigo railway line, built in 1887. Comparing the current situation to that of the sixties, Durrães has, in general terms, seen some improvements to infrastructure, including roads, pathways and access to minor roads, as well as socio-cultural developments, such as the Day Center for the elderly and the People's House (*Casa do Povo*) community center, with its cultural activities (e.g. theater). However, the parish still lacks or is, at least, comparatively lacking in public infrastructure, mainly in terms of basic sanitation and running water, and other socio-cultural facilities (Cardoso, 2012).

Between 1864 and 1960, the population of Durrães grew from 384 to 770 inhabitants, an increase of 386. Looking, once again, at the situation since 1960, we have gathered information that shows the change in the number of households and residents in Durrães in the period that extends from the previously mentioned date to 2011. Figure 1 shows a slight dip in the resident population between 1960 and 1970, with a 30 % decline in the male population, although the number of females saw a slight increase of 4.5 %. This confirms the prevailing pattern of men emigrating, while women remained in the village. The demographic decline was, however, recouped over the course of the 1970s and particularly in the 1980s, due not only to returnees from the former colonies but also to the increasing return of emigrants. The 1991 census (Figure 1) shows a new, although slight, demographic decrease, probably related to rural exodus and internal industrialization.

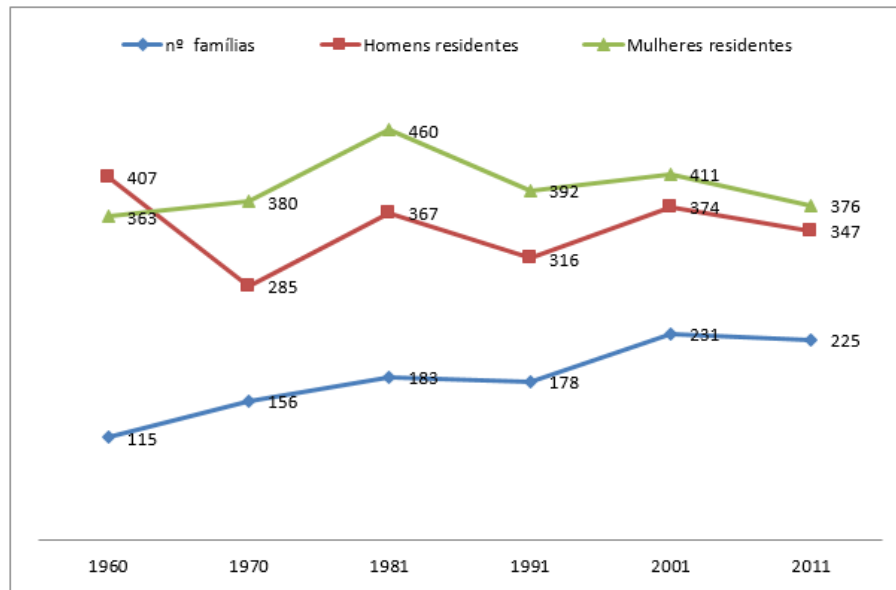


Figure 1

Durrães: families and resident population (1960-2011)

Source: INE population census of 1960, 1970, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

Comparing the results of the 1991-2001 censuses, we can see another increase in population, this time, thanks to the return of retired emigrants and initiatives or projects in small business and trade. However, Durrães remains a rural parish, in demographic terms. The situation today has changed, as the majority of young people have once again emigrated, due to the crisis that began in 2008. There is also an ageing trend in the population.

Between 1960 and 1991, there was a profound change in the social and economic structure of the parish. The following points must be highlighted as dimensions of change: (i) the transition from traditional polycultural agriculture to a pluri-active agriculture and, as a result, a shift away from exclusively agricultural employment on the part of the active population; (ii) continuance of, and changes to patterns of social stratification, especially due to the growing number and diversity of persons employed in non-agricultural occupations, both inside and outside the village, but still living in the territory itself; (iii) a noticeable change in educational profiles that, although the village still has a low level of schooling, has resulted in a sharp drop in illiteracy and a relative increase in basic education, and, albeit on a very small scale, further education; (iv) changes to ways of life, especially increasing female participation in agricultural and non-agricultural work and, considerable changes to patterns of consumption.

Like most parishes in most rural areas of the country, Durrães has experienced deruralization, particularly from 1960 to 1980. From the eighties onward, this was coupled with the beginning of a desagrarianization process, as experienced in other countries (for France, see Hervieu [1995], and for Spain see García-Sanz [1999, p. 44]), although in the case of Portugal, this started relatively late and slowly. This process

involved decreasing dependence on agricultural activity on the part that corresponds to the rural population.^[v]

Until the 1970s, the rural way of life tended to be associated with polycultural farming activities. The economy was therefore essentially peasant, based on polycultural production –cultivation of cereals (maize, rye), vegetables (beans, tomatoes, and lettuce), wine, olive oil, and various fruit crops (apple, pear, cherry, and chestnut). In a peasant household, the use of human energy and animal traction was prevalent (for plowing, sowing, harvesting, and transporting agricultural products). In addition to traditional peasant activities, the local rural economy included craft and some services subsidiary or complementary to agriculture.

While it is true that for servants and, above all, day laborers, work was insecure and precarious, the remainder of the population carried out their agricultural and handicraft activities in a relatively economically and socially self-sufficient context, based on the homestead, which provided housing, a barn, and a yard.

In terms of selling agricultural products, with the exception of the few wealthy landowners and farmers, most households consumed all of the goods they produced or, at most, sold some agricultural produce on a small scale.

Today, while agriculture continues to be a source of employment and income for a few families in Durrães, less time is dedicated to farming. For retirees in particular, the main income sources are their Portuguese retirement and invalidity pensions, or the foreign equivalents in the cases of returning emigrants. The traditional polyculture that used to occupy the majority of villagers' time has been replaced by pluri-activity and occupational diversification, not only outside the village, but also inside it. This occupational diversification follows a pattern of social reproduction. While the sons of farmers and other residents in stronger economic and political positions, and those who succeed academically, achieved better paid as well as more prestigious positions (civil servants, teachers), the children of day laborers, poorer workers, and peasants were forced to earn a living in very harsh workplaces with lower wages, such as factories and in construction, as already highlighted by Silva (1998) and Sobral (1999). This is linked to agriculture and the diffuse model of industrialization adopted there, in which the continuity between the rural and the urban is due to a later and less abrupt model of industrialization and urbanization, in comparison with the English paradigm of industrialization; a model that is present in Portugal and in other social formations of the countries of southern Europe.^[vi]

In order to demonstrate the structural changes in this parish between the sixties and the present day, it is necessary to define the main social groups present in 1960s, despite the persistence of a certain *standardization* in behaviors and dominant cultural attitudes in the village. We must therefore distinguish between: (i) farm owners; (ii) medium-scale farmers (2-10 ha); (iii) smallholding peasants (0.05-2 ha), group that includes small tenant farmers, craftspeople, peasant workers (for example, miners) and small traders, who are also usually smallholders.

Finally, to these we can add (iv) a considerable number of day laborers and/or poor peasants, who form a fourth group, and (v) a small number of servants, forming a fifth group. In all cases, land was the most important resource and the key factor in ranking and classifying the social groupings that existed during this period.

Both landowners and farmers employed temporary laborers and poor peasants, over whom they felt a certain superiority. As for the relatively autonomous peasant smallholders, these occupied a middle position in the local social structure. On the one hand, they exhibited closeness and compassion towards the poor while, on the other, they aimed to depend as little as possible on those more affluent.

With regard to the ownership of agricultural land and mechanical equipment by each family, it was possible to conclude that 8 % of households, generally craftspeople, owned no land whatsoever. Another group, composed of small tenant farmers and smallholding peasants, representing about 88 % of households, owned up to two ha each. Meanwhile, a minority of 3 to 4 %, composed of farmers and wealthy landowners, owned considerable amounts of rural property, namely the “farms” (Cardoso, 2012).

Today, land remains the main criterion for social stratification and classification of groupings within the village, which has a hierarchical pyramid structure. It overrides other resources, particularly education, as the basis of differentiation and social hierarchy (see Silva, 1998; Sobral, 1999).

Another important facet of village relations is the increasingly strong rivalry and competitiveness between families. It seems that as a result of money sent home by family living abroad, those who were poorest in the past are no longer dependent on others, except in terms of their increasing integration in the local market economy. In recent decades an improvement in living conditions has been achieved for the vast majority of Durrães residents, not only enabling them to access durable consumer goods (cars, household appliances), but also to (re)build their houses and purchase land, as well as to maintain some established small businesses (bakeries, textile and construction businesses, car repair shops, supermarkets, and cafes).

In terms of income sources, whilst in the sixties and even the seventies most income came from agriculture, which employed over 80 % of families full time, by the nineties, this situation had changed considerably. Focusing our attention specifically on Durrães, survey results regarding the income sources of several households confirm this marked tendency since the nineties. According to local surveys carried out in 1990 (Cardoso, 2010), the percentage of families exclusively devoted to agriculture was about 25 %. The remaining families earned a living from a variety of different activities and income sources outside of agriculture. What is more, of all of those carrying out agricultural activities, 65 % depended on agriculture for less than 50 % of their income. Since then, the situation has shifted further, and the main sources of income are now non-agricultural pensions and, notably, paid employment. In early

2000, the main income source was paid employment outside of the agricultural sector, while about one third of the households relied on pensions, particularly the elderly.

In short, the vast majority of residents earn a living from a combination of agricultural and non-agricultural activities, and/or predominantly from paid employment. This is mainly in the industrial sector, in particular civil construction, vine nurseries, and the trade and service sectors, in addition to money earned as owners of small family businesses, reproducing or innovating different forms of pluri-activity. In addition to the traditional pluri-activity based on subsistence agricultural production combined with other craft activities or part-time service or employing one or another family member (Almeida, 1986; Lourenço, 1991; Silva, 1998), certain units of agricultural production –although combining, in a complementary way, with other activities– invest especially in a chemical and mechanical intensification of agricultural production or, by external dynamic, process products adding value.^[vii]

With regards the level of education of Durrães inhabitants, in the sixties few teenagers pursued studies. The overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Durrães were illiterate, with few being able to read and write, and even fewer having completed basic schooling. Thanks to the educational reform policy initiated by Veiga Simão at the end of Marcelo Caetano's administration, and continued by the successive governments following the April 25th Revolution, there was an explosion in the rate of schooling, leading to a considerable decrease in illiteracy, particularly among the young. These changes, although slower in rural areas, also had an impact on communities such as Durrães. Data on education gathered in local surveys between 1990 and 2002 shows a progressive increase in basic and further education, the former increasing from 53.3 % to 63.3 %, and in the latter from 0.7 % to 5.1 %.

Given the low level of schooling, the majority of the inhabitants have traditionally worked in low-skilled professions, and continue to do so, filling the roles that emerge from a diffuse industrialization process, low in capital intensity and high in labor intensity.

The Population of Durrães Facing the Crisis

Insofar as villages generally have access to the bare minimum of economic resources provided by agricultural production, besides the parental or vicinal solidarity in the field of the so-called *social capital*, the impacts of the crisis on the villages are not, as a rule, as severe as on the cities. However, in addition to the differentiated but real impacts of the crisis on the villages, there are, in fact, different or even conflicting perceptions of the crisis, often reflecting a lesser or greater alignment with the political power then in force. Therefore, after accounting for the different perceptions of the crisis, we will show some creative strategies of several social groups to face the impacts of the crisis; the conflicts between families but, also, resilience and solidarity as ways to cope with the everyday difficulties.

Social construction of contradictory perceptions of the crisis

The first impact to manifest itself in village life was unemployment,^[viii] which affected several social strata, from smallholders, engaged in pluri-activity, combining several local income sources, to employees in the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. Since the 1960s and, more markedly, since the 1980s, agriculture alone ceased to be a safe and sufficient source of income for survival, especially as a consequence of the devaluation of the land and of the agricultural products; phenomenon rocked by internal and, more importantly, external competition. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) encouraged producers to abandon production and therefore, for many years, there was no real support for small-scale agriculture, which only aggravated the situation. But for the families of residents employed in small businesses in the village and surrounding area, the situation became dramatic with closures and bankruptcies of businesses. On this subject, one of the residents affected, the owner of a small painting and decorating business, says:

Yes, here in Durrães, AMS, the largest local construction company, which employed a lot of people, went bankrupt, and that has made life difficult for people in the village. But in addition to this major [company], other small ones disappeared, like mine. Everyone [...] emigrated [...] because they didn't have resources [...]. Some were older and retired, others who were more 'full of zest' emigrated. The so-called 'trollhas' [construction workers] left [...], emigrated. They used to earn 150 000 escudos [750 euros]. Today, 500 euros is all they get. (E2)^[ix]

When residents were asked if new companies had opened in other sectors at the same time, the answers were mixed. According to a few (ACPE3, JDPE4), while some companies have disappeared, others have been created, compensating for this, and the situation was not one of extreme poverty, "People having a hard time? I don't see many. When it comes to the crisis, it is felt more in large settlements than in villages. The people of the villages have not suffered from the crisis as much as those who live in large cities" (E4).

According to another:

Durrães felt the crisis, its population went down, but I think it's recovering. You see more pregnant women, more child births [...], bricklayers, though some of them have died, the rest are retired or have a lot of work, aside from some of the younger ones [...]. Yes, some big companies such as AMS have disappeared, but they gave way to half a dozen smaller ones [...]; these small businesses were created, some of them here in Durrães. And, as for small-scale farming, everything remains the same, people grow food for their own consumption. You must also remember the two entrepreneurs who run grapevine nurseries, which also offer jobs, although they are temporary. (E5)

According to most people, however, no companies have opened. They also mention the small capacity of the existing companies:

One or two small companies have emerged, but they are not independent companies, as they provide services to another textile company; they are all secondary. In fact, no new companies have been created. For example, Vianense [a chocolate factory] was already here before the crisis [...] its manager is not a real

entrepreneur, he has a lot of resources [...], he is a businessman [...] but he is not good at looking to the future [...], he is stuck in the past. In 10 years he's had four or five engineers [...], no one stays there [...], people complain [...] there's a lack of dynamic [...], he makes life difficult: [...] he treats the employees badly [...], he's still living in the past. He only has a dozen employees, when he should have grown to 100 employees. (E6)

When asked to what extent he considers that the residents felt the effects of the crisis, the president replied as follows:

Essentially, I see no crisis. I don't notice it [...]. Yes, some young people [a nurse, an engineer], young couples, had their homes reposessed, and there are even some artists who emigrated and started companies abroad with dozens of employees, and come home to show off their big cars ---e.g. SCFA---, but here you don't feel the crisis. On Sundays I'm here in the parish and I go to the cafes and they are very full [...], during the week there is no one there because they are working [...] and I don't hear anyone complaining, or any reason for complaint, except for the five families who applied for income support [RSI] but had their applications turned down because they own land, or the elderly women who receive very low pensions of 100/200 euros [...]. But in terms of the local craftsmen and construction workers [*trolhas*], some are retired and went to work in small-scale agriculture, some have moved [to Guimarães and Famalicão], and others are still here. At least three or four small businesses have been founded, in the construction and service sectors, particularly tourism, as well as some small textile companies which provide services to others. (E7)

A few inhabitants of Durrães, however, have adopted a crisis survival and resistance strategy, involving activities which provide some source of income through crops, such as potatoes, vegetables, and vines; “you know, I'm still here digging potatoes, planting vegetables, cutting trees, and pruning the grapevines, because we can always use them at home and, if possible, we can sell some wine” (E8).

Impacts and creative strategies to cope with the crisis

One consequence of the crisis, especially for those who had small plots of land, was that these areas are increasingly used for production, with uncultivated land being turned into farming land, as one of the residents explains:

There have been some changes. Previously uncultivated land [*montulo*] or overgrown areas took on a new function: agriculture. People have adapted to their circumstances and needs. People have become a little humbler. People who used to earn 150 000 escudos [750 euros] now earn 500 euros or less and must make ends meet, despite the higher cost of living. There has been a change to the old ways. Rather than buying a known brand of trousers, people buy them at the market; in terms of shopping, people are more aware of special offers. At the big supermarkets, they pay closer attention to price promotions. Today, there will be a collection for a local festivity. People who used to give 50 euros now give 10 or 20 euros. Basically, it is a series of tiny things, but people have made these changes in order to survive. People take advantage of every opportunity at the local level. People are farming, but if an odd job comes up, they do that [...]. They accept anything, not like before. People didn't grow potatoes. They used to think [...] with 50 euros I can buy a lot of potatoes. Now everything helps us survive [...], now everybody makes use of these small pieces of land [...], now you can see yards being

cultivated. It's a matter of looking. People in the cities don't realize this [...] but it is true. (E9)

Whenever there are workers in a household and an opportunity to earn some money presents itself, those of working age seek to supplement the family income with jobs in the secondary sector, often in the few factories present in the place, or in the tertiary sector, in the civil service, particularly the town council, schools, trade, and other services, including commercial or private cleaning, and caring for the elderly. Many women, therefore, travel by train to the cities of Barcelos and/or Viana do Castelo or other surrounding parishes every day, whether to work full time or just for a few hours a day in such roles. Caring for the elderly is a particularly arduous job, as one interviewee complains:

Because the job of taking care of the elderly, wiping their bottoms every day, wears you down, it drives people crazy [...], some can't stand it, they say [...] is wiping old men's bottoms all I'm good for? There are many people who still see the Day Care Centre or the old people's home as being for people who have no principles. There are some people who take a certain pride in keeping one or both parents at home [...], then they pay a woman [...] and avoid sending them to the old people's home or Day Centre. (E10)

However, while there are still working people, a large number of pensioners in the village, young people, and even some aged 40 to 50, have left due to the lack of stable employment, as we have already mentioned. Indeed, one of the most significant features of the situation in the parish of Durrães is the recent and relatively large-scale emigration to other countries. When one inhabitant was asked how he thought people were facing the crisis, or what they have done to address it, he responded:

What I say is just my opinion [...]. This crossing of the "tunnel", emigration, is once again being used as a kind of crutch, a way of helping people overcome the crisis [...], which still isn't over. I'm speaking mainly of Durrães, though I know other similar parishes. If you look, there are currently half a dozen cars in this carpark in front of the *café*. And this can be very misleading [...] because at eight or nine p. m. there's not a soul to be seen, there is no cafe. There are no young people. The youth isn't here [...], it has emigrated, as have some middle aged people, married couples with families [...] with two and three young children, usually taking the family, not only to other European countries, but also further afield. (E1)

FE10, another small family business owner, shares this point of view:

In terms of the crisis, a lot depends on which class we are talking about [...]: I have clients in Bonaire, an island off Venezuela, who choose us because labor here is cheap. There is little unemployment, because, except four or five who are already over 50, the unemployed simply left: this was well over 50 people. Before, you saw women going to the *café*, but that is no longer the case [...]. They are scraping by [...], maybe cultivating a piece of land to grow onions and green beans, just to survive. People who remained [here] have adapted to needs and circumstances [...], today they cling to anything.

Construction of new homes is stagnant. This is a time of restoration, renovation, and reconstruction of houses, which ends up being a job for the bricklayers because there's no more concrete --except for my son...--, otherwise it's stopped. Today there are no apprentices [...], today, professional training is over. For example, I'm teaching my sons professionalism [...], practical skills, not theory, so that they can

get by. This government blew all of that, the small businesses are gone --C, JR, BG, M--, and so are the large companies [...]: AMS, the Shipyards of Viana. Behind these companies there were a lot of extra services.

Many families, especially young couples, emigrated, because the years of 2000 to 2002 were a time of easy credit and subsidized interest rates, and they built around 35 beautiful houses --with huge kitchens, bathrooms, garages, and the cars to go with them--. Four or five had their houses repossessed. Others were able to make their mortgage repayments, thanks to low interest rates and emigration, and save them. Some were my clients, and I had a feeling that things could turn sour [...]. It is hard to believe, but these people used to make fun of me [...] because they saw me a slave [...], as I was the one who wanted to make money! (E11)

Another resident, LM, attentive to the genealogy of the families of Durrães, provided his view on the impacts of the crisis on the parish population:

We must distinguish the different types of retirees and the active population. There are retirees who had previously emigrated, who have felt little effect, and local pensioners who have very low pensions and use agriculture [corn, vines, and vegetables] to supplement them. And then there are those with better pensions, but who have suffered as a result of taxes and cuts. There is a group of working class families who are receiving help for the first time [...] in Durrães --for example, through the delivery of baskets by the Parish Council at Christmas or the repairs to housing by Social Security: though this had previously been done in the nineties, the poor quality of the work was not worth the money paid by the Parish Council--.

As for the working population, borrowers have experienced moments of genuine anguish and, in addition to unemployment in the textile and construction industries --the closure of the large construction company AMS was a terrible blow to Durrães--, there has been a change to labor laws, meaning that overtime previously amounting to 100 to 180 extra euros, was replaced with accumulated hours, which could be converted into holiday or leave. The only families which have not experienced such difficulties are those who emigrated and returned, or are currently overseas. Never have there been so many houses for sale and there is no one to buy them, not even the emigrants. The feast of our patron saint, St. Lawrence, is much poorer in terms of music and entertainment. One thing which remains, and which has been quite positive is the Day Care Centre for the elderly and membership of the *Casa do Povo* community center, home to the Senior University, the GEN [Studies Association of Neiva's Valley], and a theater group, though this only puts on plays once or twice a year.

People have adapted, but many people are still angry because they were used to a certain standard of living. This anger can be seen in conversations. These days, discussions are more aggressive. [...] People are talking about the Government in aggressive terms. (E12)

In terms of strategies involving migration, people are reestablishing inter-knowledge relationships with their fellow countrymen or using other connections, particularly those made during their time abroad, which they call upon during times of hardship; as one relative of a recent immigrant explains, "those who go abroad, do so with references from friends and relatives [...]. It's not like before; they go with some security" (E13).

On other hand, the present upsurge in migration differs from previous movements, in terms of the types of emigrants and their goals, which

differ considerably from those of the emigrants of the past, in the sixties and seventies, as described by one of the respondents:

This is different from the sixties, seventies, and eighties. Now, those who leave go with their eyes open [...], with a higher status and more knowledge. People are more educated than in the old days. Some people even speak foreign languages. [...] But it is also very different from the past for another reason: in the past, immigrants would leave but they would miss home. When they came on holiday, they would take everyone to parties in their cars. Those who leave now do not miss home [...]; they leave without longing. The vast majority take their wives and [...], although, they don't leave all at the same time. The husband leaves first and then his wife and children follow. (E14)

APCE12 agrees:

There must be half a dozen couples and perhaps over half a dozen young men who have left [...] of their own accord, and others with children or even grandchildren. They go to Switzerland, France, Spain, and Germany, but now when they leave, they have contacts in their new countries; there are Portuguese businesspeople over there who welcome them, as they have firms abroad [...] and that is how most of them do it. (E15)

Differentiated crisis effects: familial conflicts, resistance, and solidarities

In addition to the flight of the local population, the scarcity of resources has also had other effects, such as inter-generational, intra-family, or conjugal conflicts, sometimes even leading to divorce.

Today people are more detached from places [...] and for some of them things have not gone well [...], they get divorced. In these four to five years there have been more divorces than ever before, young people [...], because of the crisis. For these young people, divorce has nothing to do with “new experiences”, etc. ...it's not about infidelity [...]. Couples who got along well, suddenly split up. In the background, there are the tensions caused by the unemployment crisis. (E1)

When respondents were asked about whether the bonds of solidarity within the village, and particularly within the family, are stronger or weaker than in the past, responses varied, and were sometimes opposite and contradictory. While some believe that the solidarity remains strong (e.g. “I get the impression that the village has always had solidarity. Look, [...] it is able to carry on like before”), others, particularly in the context of the recent crisis, believe that some family conflicts have become worse, as is the case for N, whose in-laws do not agree about the way property was distributed following the death of their father-in-law:

Look, today family members are exhausted of each other. With inheritances, there are cases where one of the sons or daughters had most of the responsibility of caring for their parents – he or she is trapped into that commitment [...] caring for them morning, noon, and night, on Saturday and Sunday– [...]: the other siblings often fail to recognize this situation, and this generates so much conflict [...], needlessly [...]. But I know that it can become a prison, no one appreciates this; I understand the complaints of people who care for their parents. (E16)

The crisis was severe, but there is no consensus regarding the degree of severity of the crisis and its effects, and above all, on how and when it will

be overcome. Therefore, while some respondents emphasized the lasting effects of economic, social, and cultural devastation, others stress coping skills, capable of substantially reducing its negative effects. According to the first group, the impact of the crisis mainly affected inhabitants who had taken out loans to build, rebuild, or purchase a house. For this reason, it is necessary to consider, not only the poorest families and those with least resources, who were forced to combine various survival strategies, but also more qualified individuals. One teacher, for example, lost his job because the school where he was teaching closed, as a result of which he struggled to keep up with mortgage repayments on his house, which he had bought for 200 000 euros, in the expectation that he would retain his contract for an indefinite period, in his words: “I took out a loan at the bank, because I had a reasonable, respectable salary. However, the school went bankrupt and I lost my job, [I] became unemployed”. According to another resident, this would also affect the status of the teacher: “with the crisis, this teacher lost everything [...], maybe even status. It is terrible, it’s a tremendous humiliation! It is worse than being construction worker [trollha]” (E17).

On the other hand, people whose wages were cut are experiencing a kind of “hidden poverty.” Take, for example, the case of another state school teacher. Though he did not lose his job, his income was reduced considerably:

I used to earn 1250 euros; now I earn just 850. When you add that 400 euros difference to the 400 or 500 euros drop in my wife’s income, it makes 900 to 1000 euros. That used to be enough to pay the Bank. (E17)

Moreover, this reduction in the salaries of qualified individuals has had an impact on the contracting of work, in particular in the construction industry, affecting other tradespeople such as laborers and painters. One of them says:

I have experienced this situation personally, because it was the middle class of Durrães and other surrounding parishes who gave me most of my work; painting the house was the last stage in its construction. This explains why the teachers and civil servants have “let me down”. They have no money because the state stole part of their wages through the cuts and, therefore, they do not want to paint the house or do any small jobs: even replace the door. In other words, we end up being unfairly punished. Not just painters, but other trades too. (E2)

According to MACP, the strategy of migration, even if temporary, has been a lifeline for many families, especially young homeowners, particularly houses with mortgages which, according to MACP, have not been auctioned or sold off, demonstrating a determined and creative resilience in the face of the crisis:

As I see it, two factors explain the ability of people to face the crisis on a family level: the first is emigration. People leave, they come back [...], they stay for three to four months, those that are closer come here every two months, or even once a month, because today air travel makes it easy [...]. Young people have emigrated. It is true that this has weakened relationships, but people left in search of work. Here, you don’t hear about people losing their property [...], people have held on and survived [...]; it is interesting to see is how people have faced the struggle [...]

and have not lost what they had [...]. I'm pretty sure that they are getting by [...]: I think the people who had to leave are managing well.

There is also a second factor, which has more to do with those who have stayed put and have also coped well [...]. Do you know how they've done this? Because here, in our parish [...] there are people who have some money, some savings, and they have offered work, small projects, renovation of houses, for lower rates. They have given people work to do [...], investing in their houses [...], because they have savings and have allowed themselves to spend [...]. We're talking about around half a dozen people; you see? It is now four p. m. now, and you can't see anybody here; everything is working. (E18)

While a considerable proportion of inhabitants emigrated, others remained, showing a great capacity for resilience. For example, FC & Sons, a family-run locksmith, comments: "We're not leaving [...], we'd rather be close to family and friends. For now we're holding on here [...], many have had to leave because there was no work".

Some Conclusions

The logic of accumulation and expansion of capital is not synonymous with development. The current crisis is one caused by the contradictions inherent to the structure and dynamics of capitalism, whose costs are borne by the working classes and other vulnerable sections of society, such as rural populations, and especially the poor. This has been seen in Portugal, where most of the population has suffered its effects.

The solutions put forward are the result of the growth and/or development models highlighted. While growth theory, in positive and optimistic terms, measures progress in terms of growth, and neo-institutionalism advocates for social reform programs to remedy deficiencies in theories of growth and modernization, a (neo)Marxist model equates progress with a revolutionary change, as the only way to fully realize economic and political democracy. This means framing development issues in a historical and political context.

Although it remains somewhat vague and ambiguous, several authors have put forward the so-called territorial or local development model as an alternative stance, either as a supplement or as a counterpoint to the other models. If a view of local development disconnected from the wider global context is, today, not only unthinkable but also illusory, a design based on center-periphery and dependency theories implies external determining factors likely to result in a certain expectant view, which is often, unsurprisingly, overtly fatalistic. It is, however, critical in terms of the capacity to reduce certain asymmetries, degrees of poverty, and exclusion at the global, national, regional, and local levels, in particular in certain contemporary societies. Perhaps the most appropriate theoretical answer to explain the obstacles to development and the effects of the crisis on people, namely rural dwellers, involves a combination of external neoliberal economic constraints in accordance with the center-periphery theory and the insufficient or lacking resources of an endogenous local development.

Although the economic and financial crisis and the subsequent austerity policies developed between 2008 and 2014 have several causes and ingredients, in order to understand and explain the resilient behaviour of peasants and other rural dwellers, the most appropriate approach is that which is based on the assumptions of the moral economy and its advocates. It is in this approach, together with the macroeconomic factors, the classes configuration and the correlation of the political forces that are present at this conjuncture, that the different defensive family strategies vis-a-vis adversity and the crisis in Durrães can be understood; some emigrating, others creating opportunities for land valuation or even exploiting benefits received, not so much through the State but more through social solidarity institutions, mainly controlled by ecclesiastical entities. Last but not least, it is important to bear in mind the centrality, relevance, and special significance of land not only as the main source of survival but also as a basis of social prestige, nuclear characteristics in traditional or transitional agricultural communities, although already influenced by modern society and urban environments.

In sum, in relation to the case of Durrães, we have not seen a collective response or action, but rather a series of family strategies of various kinds, notably atomistic escaping through emigration, considered the best “solution” to urgent social problems and, in particular, a way to cope with the burden of a mortgage. We must also observe the residents’ capacity for persistence and resilience, and use of creative strategies, even if they entail great sacrifice, to mitigate the damage of the crisis, avoid profound devastation of their ways of life and achieve the goal not only of surviving, but also, in some cases, of improving their lives. Moreover, taking into account the distinction of Grammont and Valle (2009) about types of pluri-activity, in the case study here described and analyzed in this text, we conclude that some families are oriented towards diversification of sources of income having as axis the expansion of accumulation of capital at family level. But the most of pluri-active families developed strategies in order to subsist and cope with processes of impoverishment.

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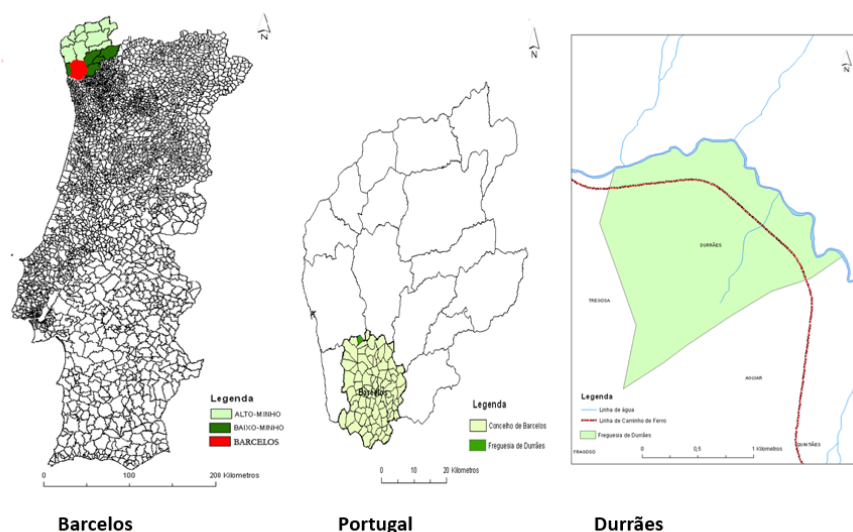
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Annex 1



Maps showing the location of the parish of Durrães in the municipality of Barcelos (Portugal)

Source: Directorate-General for Territory/Portuguese Military Maps, series M888, scale: 1:25000

Notes

- * Artículo de investigación. Volumen 14 N.º 79 (enero-junio) 2017 ISSN en línea: 2215-7727
- i The first type has two variants: on the one hand, the combination of subsistence peasant economy with other complementary activities (salaried or not) by some family members working in industry, trade, or services, or, on the other hand, based on non-agricultural family businesses but with some residual agricultural activity for auto-consumption (see Grammont & Valle, 2009).
- ii According to the typology of counter-urbanization developed by Mitchell (2004) –ex-urbanization, anti-urbanization and displaced urbanization– the type of counter-urbanization analysed by Gkartzios (2013) would be identifiable as displaced urbanization, expressing the effects of inequalities in rural areas for reasons of power and belonging to the dispossessed and vulnerable class (Shucksmith, 2012).
- iii Nates (2012) also analyses intra-European migrations originated in the United Kingdom and north European countries to southern France and northern Spain. Except in some cases of British victims of the Thatcherism, and other relatively deprived in searching subsidies, particularly in France, the author notes the existence of various types of neo-rural immigrants, usually buyers of land and patrimonial houses in a gentrification dynamic but with differentiated motives: some escaping from the ‘civilised’ city and seeking the nature, living a frugal, austere, and ecological life; others returning to the land-living but without giving away the modes and the quality of urban life; and others as farmers or as entrepreneurs in rural areas.
- iv According to the typology of counter-urbanization developed by Mitchell (2004) –ex-urbanization, anti-urbanization and displaced urbanization– the type of counter-urbanization analysed by Gkartzios (2013) would be identifiable as displaced urbanization, expressing the effects of inequalities

- in rural areas for reasons of power and belonging to the dispossessed and vulnerable class (Shucksmith, 2012).
- v On a quantitative level, deruralization is related to the phenomenon of population loss, resulting from issues of rural exodus and migration. In qualitative terms, it refers to the relative devaluation and loss of identity and traditional activities (agricultural and craft).
 - vi This phenomenon is analysed not only by several Portuguese historians and social scientists (Godinho 1980; Silva, 1998), but also in other countries such as Spain (Giner & Guzmán, 1980), Italy (Castles & Ferrera, 1996), and Greece (Damianakos et al., 1997; Gkartzios, 2013).
 - vii Not only in some regions in Portugal and elsewhere in Europe, and in Latin America it is possible to detect, as refer Grammont and Valle (2009), several types of family strategies, in particular, around pluri-activity in rural context. As examples of intensification, it is important to quote the case of Perú (see Cavassa & Mesclier, 2009). Others develop further modalities of pluri-activity creating family businesses for non-agricultural families enterprises in the secondary or tertiary sectors: for instance Ecuador (see Valle, 2009), the Dominican Republic (see Del Rosario, 2009), or Mexico, which also knows different types of pluri-activity (see Grammont, 2009). Others, additionally, diversify the sources of income to the point of accumulating capital, taking advantage of endogenous (see Bendini, Murmis, & Tsakoumagkos, 2009) or exogenous opportunities such as processes of conurbation of rural areas by expansion of contiguous urban space, namely in Brazil (see Pinto, 2009).
 - viii When the pastor of the parish church was asked about how people have felt the crisis of recent years, his response was: “They are not experiencing that much unemployment [...]. I have a feeling that Durrães had more people before [...]. It would be better to ask the President of the Parish. I often hear [...] that a person has moved, that another is abroad [...]. During Easter the number of people through the door has gone down [...], there are empty houses [...], so yes, there is”.
 - ix *E2* and similar references correspond to the codes of the interviewed persons.

Author notes

- a Autora de correspondencia. Correo electrónico: mcsilva2008@gmail.com

Additional information

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