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“We have always been in crisis”

An ethnography of austere livelihoods in Northern Portugal

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INTRODUCTION

The Crisis of Livelihood

The opening words of this thesis belong to Carlota, a 38-year-old woman, who was among the first people I met in Guimarães, Northern Portugal when I moved there in May 2015 and who has been one of my closest interlocutors in the field.

I expected an easy life. Not in the sense that anything would be handed to me, or that I wouldn't have to work. But in the sense that it would be easier than my mother's life and in the sense that I knew what it would be: I would finish school, get a scholarship to do a degree, and enter the factory. Not as a seamstress or operator, but higher up: a designer or perhaps a machinist. At worst I would have an office job [...] My family had many connections in the factory, it should be easy to get in. [...] I would try and marry up ... My husband and I would buy a house at the outskirts, in which to raise our children. We would go and have Sunday lunch with my parents, listen to them talk about how hard life used to be, way back when, and consider ourselves lucky. [...] None of that happened. I am 35 years old, married but childless and we live with my parents for six years already. We can't afford a family, but it's not like there would be enough space for one here anyway. I did finish school and get a degree, but my parents paid for it—I am indebted to them in so many ways. [...] In this house, I am the only one officially employed. Not by the factory, the factory is no more. I freelance doing web design online and what I earn barely covers our food. My parents get a small pension; my husband finds *biscates* [small, odd jobs] wherever he can. For the rest...? We *desenrascamo-nos* [sort ourselves out] somehow—the way my parents and grandparents did. The way maybe, we always have done". (Carlota, in an interview, 2015).

This thesis is an ethnography of livelihood-making in Guimarães, capital of the Vale do Ave subregion in Northern Portugal. The Vale do Ave [literally: Valley of the Ave river] is located about 30km inland from the Atlantic coast. The city of Guimarães lies on a historical trading route that connected the mountainous interior of the country to the port city of Porto since the Middle Ages. At that time, Guimarães was the market hub for artisanal leather, linen, wine products, as well as agricultural produce that went to Porto using the region's many rivers and waterways. As the crowning place of the first Portuguese king in 1109, and former capital of the country, Guimarães has a long standing in the country's national history. This history is also the reason the Guimarães

castle, inner city and Palace are today recognized as UNESCO world heritage. The Vale do Ave became industrialized as part of the capitalist expansion towards the hinterlands of Porto in the 1800s. Since then and until the early 2000s, the Vale do Ave has been the centre of Portuguese textile industry, where many factories of Portuguese, European and international fashion brands and the associated satellite industries are located. This status was altered with the opening of EU markets to international competition in 2001 and the expiration of international trade agreements on textiles in 2005. Since then, many larger factories downscaled and moved production abroad, leaving only SMEs and other small production sites that were unable to absorb the surplus labour made redundant by the closure of big factories.

The purpose of this thesis is to showcase the crisis modes of livelihood-making currently at play in a mountainous, interior region of Portugal as well as the effect on those modes that Portugal's 2011 austerity measures may have had. A decade has passed since the most recent financial crisis¹ and the subsequent Great Recession² forced the governments of Southern European countries into adopting of a wide set of austerity policies. Since its signing with the troika in 2011, Portugal's structural adjustment program, called 'the Memorandum of Understanding' (MoU)³ has been marked by harsh tax increases, budget cuts, and the reduction of welfare benefits.⁴

Similar to other countries in the indebted southern periphery of the Eurozone, the core objectives of the MoU were the reduction of the government budget deficit and the curbing of public debt. The designated methods to achieve this were internal labour devaluation through labour market deregulation, wage and benefits regression, fiscal surveillance and tax hikes. The prior two, according to the underlying logic expressed in the MoU, would increase the country's external competitiveness, while the inevitable decrease of internal demand would be compensated by the expansion of goods and ser-

1 A multi-year debt crisis that has been taking place in the European Union since the end of 2009. The eurozone member states of Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Cyprus were unable to repay or refinance their government debt or to bail out over-indebted banks without the assistance of other eurozone countries, the European Central Bank (ECB), or the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—the troika

2 Great Recession: a term commonly used to describe the period of economic decline between 2008 and 2012, that recalls the 1930s Great Depression. The Great Recession stemmed from the U.S. subprime mortgage crisis of 2007 to 2009 as well as the collapse of the housing bubble and real estate markets across Europe.

3 A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding between Portugal and the troika, as well as the Letter of Intent addressed by the Portuguese Government to the Manager of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) can be found online at: http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/eu_borrower/mou/2011-05-18-mou-portugal_en.pdf. In a nutshell, the MoU identified a need for comprehensive financial and institutional intervention "on three fronts": fiscal expenditure controls, fiscal revenue generation and financial sector regulation and surveillance.

4 In a nutshell, the MoU identified a need for comprehensive financial and institutional intervention "on three fronts": fiscal expenditure controls, fiscal revenue generation and financial sector regulation and surveillance. On the side of fiscal expenditure, the designated measure was "cost controls", by cutting funding in the national health sector, education system, pension payments and unemployment insurance. On the side of fiscal revenue generation, the designated measures included a revision of the VAT, property and income tax codes. On the side of financial controls and surveillance a whole set of measures was designed to protect against deleveraging and further debt.

vices as exports (Costa and Caldas, 2013), presumably to the Northern core states of the EU. While the latter two would purportedly work to curb tax evasion and eradicate the informal sector. As stable employment, salaries, and transparent government were slowly eroded, the collapse of life structures and livelihood security—already well under way since deindustrialization—quickly followed suit.

When, in the spring of 2015, I first moved to Guimarães, I was interested in exactly these recent changes. In line with the general focus of the Grassroots Economics Project (GRECO), the question with which I arrived to the field was: How do people organize for a livelihood during and after austerity? On a theoretical level, my interest could best be described as ‘a political economy of post-crisis livelihood’. I wanted to problematize the macro-economic models that formed the theoretical basis for austerity policies by documenting how they were imposing everyday hardships on vulnerable families and households.

Of course, as we can glean from the text of Carlota’s interview quoted above, the livelihood struggles and accompanying loss of certainty in the future that furnish the lives of so many people in Guimarães neither begin nor end with austerity. In Guimarães, livelihood making—the daily task of acquiring whatever is necessary for survival, be it income, food, childcare or medical treatment—has been ‘in crisis’ since long before the onset of austerity, the 2008 financial crisis, or even Portugal’s European integration. What is more, the people I worked with and sometimes befriended during the total of 21 months I spend in Guimarães were not interested in discussing austerity. On the contrary, they wanted me to see, appreciate and participate in the struggles that had shaped their lives in the long term.

“We have always been in crisis (and coped with it)” was the most common response to my initial questions about the 2008 financial crisis. What I had previously imagined to be a sudden rupture brought on by austerity, actually turned out to be a persistent reality that had already been underway for decades, albeit with differing levels of intensity. I became determined to study how people organized for a living in this reality, but soon realised that doing so would require that I shift the focus from austerity to precisely this persistent ‘crisis’ that people seem always to have been in.

On Crisis

Crises are commonly thought about as exceptional, short-term periods. In fact, the Oxford English dictionary defines crisis either as “a short period of intense difficulty or danger, when a problem is at its worst point” or as “a turning point when an important decision must be made” (Oxford Advanced Learners’ English Dictionary, 1999). Crises are thus thought to exist in the time-space of exception: a deviation from a state of normality. Certainly, this is the narrative of crisis followed by public policy, the media and political institutions regarding the 2008 financial crisis. Defined as periods

of great upheaval, uncertainty and instability (Roitman, 2015, 2016; Koselleck, 1979; Makropoulos, 2016), the narrative of crisis as exceptional served to legitimize the austerity measures that were introduced in order to end the crisis. Applied to the context in which my fieldwork occurred, this would seem to suggest that the current crisis of livelihood is merely a short period that can be remedied with the ‘medicine’ of austerity.

The ethnographic findings I will present in this thesis, however, testify to a grassroots level understanding of crisis and austerity as being far from incidental and exceptional. Rather, this work will show that the sense of emergency, uncertainty and anxiety that is so endemic to the lives of people neither begins nor ends with austerity. Carlota’s quote above is but one of the many life stories collected during research in which chronic instability and the constant struggle to make ends meet emerge as the structuring theme. It is not my intention here to recount the history of Portugal or even the Vale do Ave. Rather, this thesis is theoretically framed on the premise that how human beings experience the economic and social crisis is mutually informed by local history and structural power (e.g. Narotzky and Smith 2006). Since the expansion of industry along the region’s many waterways, three broad spectra of livelihood activities have been available to households in the Vale do Ave: manufacturing, services, and agricultural work. During certain periods of time, the possibilities to procure an income within each sector were altered by extra-local factors, such as land enclosure, proletarianization, industrial conditioning, the regulation of specific activities, trade liberalization and finally, austerity. The array of livelihood tactics was never stable or cohesive therefore. Rather, extra-local shifts have shaped the composition of livelihood’s intricate fabric, and people’s interpersonal relationships and their rationalities for pursuing certain livelihood activities.

In the world of working people, volatility, insecurity and a constant need to reshuffle livelihood activities have thus been a structural reality for a long time. This thesis is an ethnographic investigation of precisely this chronic crisis as it has been identified by my interlocutors. What is this persistent state that people seem to have always been in? How does this crisis shape the pursuit of livelihood in the long run versus the short run? How can we make sense of a state of crisis which appears to be permanent? And is not the notion of permanent crisis itself an oxymoron? These are the questions I engage with in the following text.

It is my hypothesis that, in the context of livelihood in the Vale do Ave, ‘crisis’ loses its denotation of exception. Instead of a deviation from the rule, crisis seems to be the very rule that best describes people’s lives. I propose that far from an exceptional, recent event, crisis is in fact the persistent mode of livelihood-making for households. This thesis is thus not about austerity per se. Throughout my fieldwork, austerity appeared ‘only’ as the most recent euphemism for crisis. It is the current, institutional name for what I propose may best be termed the ‘crisis of livelihood’: a grassroots notion that furnishes the political and economic imaginaries of my interlocutors with the necessary urgency to pursue their survival strategies. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the trope of persistent crisis as an everyday notion used by ordinary people to make sense of, and continue to engage in, livelihood sustaining activities.

At first sight, the crisis of livelihood seems far from straightforward. Rather, it appears as a situation in which all the possibilities for livelihood-making available to households are either disappearing or are made impossible by state-led regulation. This is an adverse reality to inhabit and has economic, social, affective and political implications for my interlocutors' lifeworlds. It is a reality, moreover, that my interlocutors are attempting to variably negotiate in the pursuit of livelihood. It is also a reality made no easier by austerity's infringement of basic citizenship rights.

In attempting to study this reality of the crisis of livelihood, I found it necessary to shift my attention away from the immediacy of austerity, and toward the everyday economic activities that made livelihood possible, alongside the meaning-making, identity, temporal and collective struggles that these activities brought on. Of equal importance was an investigation of the livelihood crisis' historical entanglement with the cycles of capital accumulation; politics and local power relations; and the role these played in setting the conditions of possibility for household social reproduction and social life more generally. Given this context, each of the following chapters takes up one aspect of the crisis of livelihood and investigates it in detail. My aim is to account for both the material and social relations of the crisis of livelihood from the perspective of the household as well as the ways people have learned to engage policy interventions, regulation and political practices as a matter of everyday survival. The crisis mode of livelihood thus seems to be the result of a deep entanglement between household survival and the reproduction of capitalist cycles of accumulation.

Crisis Implications

I should stress, however, that the focus of this thesis is not on institutional interventions, cycles of capital accumulation or political power. Rather, I aim to showcase how shifts at extra-local scales become facts to be tinkered with in peoples' immediate life. Following the main hypothesis that the crisis trope in general, and austerity in particular, have become part of what it is like to organize for livelihood, I highlight the crisis' effects in the intimate sphere of the home, on the domain of individual bodies and in people's visions of the future. Understanding the way that this crisis is embedded in a particular form of capitalist development makes for an in-depth appreciation of the conflicts, divisions and struggles that households confront today. Based on this analysis, I offer an anthropological and historical account of the production of a particular lifeworld in times of austerity: a lifeworld in which crisis is a long-term, structural reality for the many.

Revealing crisis as a reality of life then refutes the notion of austerity as incidental or exceptional. If the many media narratives on austerity in Europe's "decaying peripheries" (Beck, 2011: my translation) were true, people in the Vale do Ave should be on the brink of starvation and depression. But, although many struggle in the pursuit

of livelihood, the majority of my interlocutors are managing to organize for livelihood in spite of the odds being seemingly against them. Granted, this often occurs by relying on highly precarious jobs and volatile piece-meal production. But the people I met in the Vale do Ave were not, necessarily at any rate, starving or failing to make a living as a result of austerity and crisis.

Therefore, this thesis is intended to show that the popular “We have always been in crisis” refers to both the pride local people feel at their ability to get by in times of persistent deprivation *and* their existence on the receiving end of structural violence, institutional abandonment and material deprivation. Such a focus works deliberately against the media-proliferated image of the Southern European recipients of austerity as ‘culturally lazy’ or ‘living above their means’. It is not that the current problems of Portuguese households’ survival cannot be, in part, understood by accounting for what Stolke (1995) termed a “fundamental culturalism” that punctuates so many discussions of difference within the EU. But to hide the structural consequences of political and economic decisions regarding European integration behind the smokescreen of ‘culture’ does not help us to better understand crisis or difference. ‘Culturalist’ references detract attention from the actual political, social and economic divisions and their direct relation with, or rather subservience to, the extractive needs of capital.

By documenting the livelihood crisis and its manifestations, I hope to reveal them as being part of much broader changes in the nature of social reproduction, cycles of capital accumulation and the so-called ‘regional economies’ of Southern Europe. Documenting the livelihood crisis thereby casts doubt on the project of European integration and its associated promise of socio-economic convergence. More importantly, however, it challenges wide-spread stereotypes of inefficiency, blame and hopelessness in Southern Europe. Such a study is relevant to the European Community at large, because, by its very nature, detailing the creative inventiveness channelled into survival everyday displays the hope, ability and possibility of ordinary people—a message much needed in times of European-wide racist, sexist and xenophobic responses to uncertainty and precarity.

In of the remainder of this introduction, I explain the theoretical background to the study of the crisis of livelihood. I then discuss the research methodology used and provide an introduction to the field: Guimarães and the Vale do Ave.

Theoretical Framework

The objective of this section is to provide an overview of the theoretical and analytical concepts most useful for making sense of the fieldwork findings and data. Building on the work of Narotzky (2012) and in line with the premises of the GRECO project, this thesis adopts a grassroots approach to economic processes which focuses on the agentive capabilities of people in their everyday economic responses to crisis. I draw on several theoretical threads: critiques of political economy, studies of rules and regu-

lation inspired by the Foucauldian turn, and a historical and semantic analysis of the crisis trope. Although seemingly at odds with one another, it is my suggestion that these three threads come together most clearly in the analytical space of the household.

What Crisis?

The trope of crisis may seem self-evident. I submit, however, that this is far from the case. As this thesis aims to demonstrate, it is exceptionally difficult to pin down the crisis my informants experience to one particular event with a historical beginning. Nor is it possible to understand ‘crisis’ as a single referent: individuals and families use it to point to the hardships of livelihood in the past and present; employers use it to legitimate redundancy and restructurings; and politicians refer to crisis when speaking about the environment, deindustrialization, or social provisions. Crisis is also a historical narrative, employed by many to describe selective versions of the past. As Joan Smith observed already 30 years ago: “all crises are not the same” (1990: 128).

In fact, it seems to be precisely the multifaceted crisis term itself—its “loaded and problematic content” (Makropoulos, 2013: 1) and its ability to assimilate many different meanings to different people—that makes it an appealing notion used to describe a variety of current phenomena. For this reason, it is important to be conceptually and analytically rigorous when establishing what we mean by crisis.

Most commonly, crises are understood as momentary conditions of hardship, for example in the sense of a personal health crisis. A crisis, wrote Paul Valéry, is the “transition from one functional order to some other one” (1925: 1041). Thus, crisis testifies to an extraordinary condition precisely because its transitional character implies an experience of a discontinuity between the past and the present. But how does such an extrapolation tally with the notion of persistent crisis that people in Guimarães identify? To quote Janet Roitman’s leading questions: “Can one speak of a state of enduring crisis? Is it not an oxymoron?” (2014: 2).

Reinhart Koselleck’s genealogy of the crisis concept proves to be insightful in this regard. Tracing the concept etymologically from ancient Greek, Koselleck proposes that the main characteristic of crisis is a state of irreducible contingency (1975: 617). In this contingency are located the two constitutive experiences of crisis: uncertainty and anxiety. Crisis implies uncertainty for many of the same reasons that Valéry described, i.e. the breakdown of a functioning structure. But much more so, crisis is most often experienced as anxiety. The reason is found in the watershed moment character of a crisis: Not only does it mark the breaking down of an old order (uncertainty), but it points to the endless possibilities contained in the prospect of transitioning to a new order. “The only security in a crisis is that there will be a different future, but the contours of that future are as yet blurry” (Koselleck, 2006: 72). Thus, “during a crisis, the nature of time seems to alter its appearance. Temporal sequences seem to change their order so that instead of symbolizing durability, the course of time becomes a sign of instability and change” (Markopoulos, 2006: 13). While it is certain that there must be a new order,

namely, neither the temporality nor the epistemology of that future order have as yet been set. This state frequently leads to anxiety, but can also contain the seeds of hope, although the resources necessary for accessing hope might be unequally distributed among intersecting lines of difference, such as race, age, sex and class (Hage, 2016).

A crisis is thus the moment in which the status quo becomes untenable, and in which a new future must be decided. It is also a moment in which the decision regarding the contours of that future has not yet taken place. What is more, any possible future competes against all other not yet realised but possible futures. Crisis thus marks the existence of a possibly endless supply of open futures on a multitude of conceptual levels: temporal, epistemological, social, political, and economic. This results in a seemingly endless supply of unactualized potentials. “Crisis therefore conjures the question of the future of history” (1979: 105) Koselleck maintains. With this insistence he creates a link between the crisis trope and what he defines as the modern conception of history, i.e. a teleological narrative. Crisis therefore entails a moral demand (Koselleck, 1979: 98-137; Roitman, 2014: 22), insofar as the modern conception of history posits an expectation that the future must be different from the past.

The work of Janet Roitman has been seminal in the thinking through of the process of moulding crisis towards a future. Roitman’s objective is not to define crisis *per se*, but to investigate the “work crisis does” (Roitman, 2014: 8): the kind of questions, decisions and actions that the crisis-designation of a particular situation (“this is crisis”) allows for asking, and which it forecloses. She proposes that crisis may best be conceived as a “transcendental placeholder” (2014: 13) for an apparently endless supply of open diagnoses, all answering to the “what went wrong to cause a crisis?” question. Contained in the crisis is a judgement and a call to action: For the moral dimension of teleological history to be met (i.e. the actualization of a future different from the past), a diagnosis of “what went wrong” is necessary. And based on this diagnosis, we can then take action to shape a future that is different from the past. Crisis does not therefore end by itself, it is ended only when action is taken in order to end it in favour of particular direction. The declaration of a crisis thus also “engenders a certain type of action or practice” (2014: 23): the closing off of all open “horizons of possibility” (Koselleck, 1979: 349).

With Roitman’s functionalist approach in mind, the question then becomes, as Koselleck’s student, Makropoulos, has phrased it: “*who* will be able and powerful enough to manipulate the openness of the crisis duration in order to direct it towards *which* particular future, with *what* motives and within *what* time frame” (2013: 20, my translation, my italics). Makropoulos thus invites us to ask a series of questions: Who has the power to declare “this is crisis”? What is this crisis a “transcendental placeholder” for? How and by whom is the crisis narrated? Who ends crisis and towards which future? What horizons of possibility are foreclosed in favour of which particular future, so that which “new order” comes to be established as ‘normal’? It is for this reason also that the crisis tropes—their declaration, narration and conclusion—lend themselves to manipulation by power (Smith, 1990). Crisis thus contains the possibility for a multitude of

power struggles and manipulations. So, in addition to asking what kind of questions and answers usage of the crisis concept permits, as Roitman does, there is also the need to interrogate the very declaration of crisis for its content, narration and future-orientation.

These interrogations are essential for investigating the trope of persistent crisis narrated by my interlocutors. With the knowledge of these analyses in mind, my approach to crisis necessarily implies understanding the trope as a powerful notion that performs a multitude of works. The declaration of a crisis and its narrative that interest me here are distinct from the many other crisis tropes at work in Guimarães, because they refer specifically to livelihood. The notion of a persistent crisis of livelihood may, I propose, be best understood as an emic or folk term: a grassroots notion that various actors use to make sense of their lived experiences. It is a grassroots concept used by ordinary people to make sense of, and continue to engage in, livelihood-sustaining activities. Even as a vernacular notion, however, the crisis of livelihood assimilates many different and often contradictory meanings. Throughout this thesis, I therefore attempt to highlight the “work” performed by the crisis of livelihood: the questions it allows for asking and those it forecloses; the types of actions, interventions and problem-solving approaches (i.e.: livelihood strategies) it engenders; the significations, moralities and temporalities it contains; and the affective, physical and psychological consequences it has.

In charting the different kinds of work crisis performs, I will necessarily engage several of the other crisis references at work in the region, most importantly the ‘financial crisis’ one. I do so to show that the crisis tropes used by my informants permit a particular definition of their livelihood crisis to be set, and a particular set of avenues for action to be open, while others are foreclosed. That is, I explore the declaration of the crisis of livelihood and its narrations for the social relations, material conditions and subjectivities it contains. Thereby, I highlight how the crisis of livelihood is fundamentally at odds with the other crisis definitions also active in the region. Approaching crises in this way, I hope to highlight that the ‘financial’ crisis explanatory model propagated by ‘experts’, politicians and policy makers doesn’t match my informants understanding of their livelihood crisis.

Political Economy of Crisis Livelihood

Everyday livelihood, whether in crisis or not, is involved in the current moment of capitalism at a multitude of scales. Accounting for it requires that we necessarily make sense of the time-space in which it occurs. David Harvey (2003) is the author that has perhaps most clearly systematized an understanding of the economic and political restructurings of the present by identifying the two processes constitutive of neoliberal capitalism: accumulation by dispossession and the increasing capacity of capital to capture an ever greater portion of the social product by dismantling the social wage. If Marx speaks of original accumulation, Harvey emphasises that this process is effectively ongoing as “expanded reproduction”, for instance, in the financial sector’s capturing of real-estate and nature, e.g. land grabs (De Angelis, 2007).

A growing body of literature also discusses the manifold facets of expanded reproduction in the manufacturing and labour sectors, for example in the insertion of non-productive middle men in surplus value extraction (Kasmir, 1999; Kasmir & Carbonella, 2006; Ghezzi, 2007), as well as the violent processes that accompany these dispossessions (Fraser, 2014; Narotzky and Goddard, 2015). Following this body of work, I will detail what expanded reproduction looks like in the daily lives of people. I suggest that it is precisely the nitty-gritty struggles for making a living at the level of the household that are important when we want to consider what the livelihood crisis looks like when it is embedded in the context of austerity. I therefore detail the material and social relations engendered by deindustrialization, the emotional and personal costs of toiling with institutional incentives, and how these may be changed by new forms of exploitation, extraction and commodification. These become the crucial elements in accounting for the material side of the crisis of livelihood.

These avenues of provisioning are not drawn up on a tabula rasa, however, but are embedded in cycles of capital accumulation and exploitation (Moser, 1980; 1993; Beckert, 2014), as well as driven by ideological projects (Narotzky, 2015). In the last 40 years or so, the interest in so called ‘informal economies’ has driven much anthropological and social science research. Most often, the informal sector was defined as those activities not (or unsuccessfully) regulated by the government (Hartnett & Dawdy, 2013; Portes, Castells & Benton, 1989), and defined in relation to “the formal as the rule” (Hart, 1973: 63). At the same time, especially anthropologists have challenged the orthodox separation of the economy into these two spheres by pointing out their continuous interaction and factual co-dependence (for a recent Marxist critique, compare Han’s 2018 review).

In the course of this thesis, I therefore stay away from rigorous definitions of activities as formal or informal and view the various livelihood strategies pursued by my informants as income or provisioning. However, part of my argument is that the political import of, and tolerance towards, allegedly informal activities has altered during the course of austerity and the accompanying shift in governmental morality (Rose & Miller, 1992). It is thus necessary to recount how formerly tolerated activities came to be defined as ‘informal’ and ‘tax evasive’ by the selective enforcement of regulation. Recounting the state’s logics for criminalizing forms of labour, trade and exchange does not, however, foreclose the possibility that these activities are still partaking in the exploitations and dispossessions of capitalist accumulation.

This is the case even more so because the integration of informal activities into textile manufacturing—arguably Guimarães’ oldest and perhaps best established income source—has been a foundational feature of the industry (Collins, 2002; Beckert, 2014). The body of literature discussing the Third Italy as an ideal type of productive landscape relying on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and family firms (see Ghezzi, 2016; Rossi, 2004) has been particularly revealing in this analysis (Blim, 1990, Hadjimichaelis, 1998; Piore & Sabel, 1983; Sabel, 1989). These studies showcase not only how formalized work relationships and informal or familial arrangements can produce a landscape of highly competitive, international firms, but the way in which these firms are predi-

cated on precarious and volatile, albeit state-tolerated, labour market dualism (Ghezzi, 2003; Cooke, 2013). Emphasizing the coexistence of different modes of production in the same societal context added to the informality debate an appreciation of the changing forms of production under flexible accumulation regimes (Kasmir, 1999). It also alerted us to the changing structures of vertical and horizontal networks that made them possible. These latter networks would become particularly relevant for analysing the patterns of subcontracting and outworking arrangements (Goddard, 1996) now so common in the textile sector.

Moreover, the literature on the Third Italy model underscores how non-market forms of social relations and surplus value extraction at various scales co-exist with formal means of getting by. That is, it reflects on the forms of exploitation and extraction (Fraser, 2009) that today jeopardize the means to a secure livelihood. Much work has recently been undertaken to show that austerity is merely the latest ideological and policy intervention aimed at redistributing wealth from the population to the financial markets (Lapavistas, 2009). The particular case of the dispossession of the means of livelihood in northern Portugal may prove to underscore these arguments (compare Hadjimichaelis, 2014 for the case of Greece). As I hope to show, the ability of capital to insert itself into an ever increasing portion of social and private life is one of the core elements that drive the chronic crisis my informants experience.

Regulation & Government

The account of what expanded reproduction looks like in the everyday lives of people reveals to us the many roles that the crisis trope can play in the conditioning of social life. This is because it permits the linking of broader scale changes to the intimate scale of household social reproduction. If crisis is in fact the persistent mode of livelihood-making for households, then this mode is the result of the deep entanglement between household survival and the reproduction of capitalist cycles of accumulation. The role of the state in declaring a crisis and facilitating the conditions of possibility for capitalism's expanded reproduction during it require analysis (Brown, 2005; Brenner, 2002; Sharma & Gupta, 2008; Abrams 1988).

This line of inquiry is, in fact, encapsulated by one of the GRECO project's core questions: "How is (economic) behaviour regulated?" I find it useful to recall Akhil Gupta's (1995) theoretical and methodological suggestion—as well as its timely reappraisal by Krupa and Nugent (2015)—that the closest we can get to "encountering imaginations of the state at the local level" is in the daily experiences that citizens have with it (Li, 2007). In as much as I am interested in everyday provisioning avenues that the particular definitions of the "crisis of livelihood" engenders, it appears to me paramount to chart the ways in which these paths are subject to regulation, in general, and altered by the onset of austerity, in particular.

Institutionally, the process has been described as "technocratic reduction", where the "real work" of administration is brought down to the regional level, while the de-

cision-making is interest-driven “from above” (Swyngedouw, 2005; Brenner, Peck & Theodore, 2007). Austerity here appears as a ‘legal’ agreement between institutional powers that neglects the political and constitutional agreement of citizenship’s right to protection, such as provisions for basic needs. I explore how these different scales of economic practice are regulated (Rabinow, 1984) experienced and negotiated, as well as what effects this may have on people’s ability to organize for a secure livelihood.

Besides an analysis of the material and economic relations at the grassroots level, a core theoretical question weaving through my thesis is: how did the novel forms of state regulation and control that became entrenched as part of the austerity package correspond to contemporary understandings of modern citizenship (Rose, 1996) and the state’s responsibility to care for its constituents? Embedded capitalism, in the form of welfarism, produced a normative framework of citizenship that expressed itself legally⁵ and contained moral obligations in which the state cared for its citizens. Neoliberal capitalism, by contrast, in the form of structural adjustment, appeared to free the state from these obligations (Fassin 2012, Muehlebach 2012; Mbembe, 2008).

I aim to chart the tension between formalized institutional procedures of regulating the economy and other forms of regulation, paying special attention to how they overlap or diverge at different scales (Narotzky, 2012). For example, we can see this when a financial crisis is declared over, but people’s subjective experiences of a livelihood crisis persist. Another example would be when long-standing provisioning avenues are foreclosed under the auspices of combating tax evasion.

Households

In everyday life, all manner of livelihood-making activities become entangled with forms of dispossession and exploitation, which are in turn mandated and interest-driven from above. It is my suggestion that the household is the space in which this entanglement and its effect can most clearly be witnessed. Insisting on a household level analysis however requires that we situate the household both empirically and theoretically.

As a contentious symbolic and political category, the household has found a variety of usages. In much economic theory, the ‘household’ is treated as the dominant pre-capitalist unit of production, which relies on traditional forms of organization and political allegiance (Chevalier, 1983; Friedmann, 1980; Smith, 1985). Examples of this include family labour and the support of a spatially close, extended networks of kin. Household economies of this kind tend to own at least part of their means of production, retain at least some control over the labour process and are thus not “formally subsumed by capital” (Chevalier, 1983: 155). Accordingly, it would appear problematic to study households using the tools provided by the Marxist analysis of capital’s socially transformative powers (Pine, 2001).

5 For example, in the welfare expansion towards a Western European model, regulation of the labour market and social bargaining.

At the same time, it is equally troublesome to treat the household as a single cohesive unit destined to disappear with the expansion of capitalist relations of production (Friedman, 1980; Osswald, 1990). Many of the livelihood activities I discuss in this thesis cannot be dismissed as ‘pre-capitalist,’ ‘non-market,’ or ‘de-commodifying,’ because they are integrated into a variety of distinctly capitalist production cycles and partake in the exploitation that they herald. Instead, I propose that studying the ways in which domestic social reproduction is embedded in a particular form of capitalist development is essential for understanding the forms of division and conflict at the level of the household.

As a seemingly self-evident analytical category, the household has, moreover, found a variety of uses in policy-making, too. Most commonly in the context of Southern Europe, institutional and policy incentives seem to equate households with ‘families.’ This conflation is at least in part responsible for the allegedly “familialist model of social welfare” that has structured many of the debates about the Mediterranean. The assumption has been that families act as so-called passive subsidiaries (Kazepov, 2008; Mingione & Andreotti, 1999). As a result, the proposition of familial welfare argues that, since kinship arrangements play a large part in livelihood organization, state support should play a less pivotal role in social reproduction. In the context of austerity, these assumptions have culminated in the argument, advanced mainly by Northern European policy-makers, that in a situation where family support supplements or even replaces state transfers, austerity cuts hit less hard (Epsing-Andersen, 1990)⁶. Here, we encounter a political and policy interpretation of the ‘household’ category as a unit for analysis linked with the state’s delegation of ‘survival responsibility’ to families and a withdrawal of social provisions. A question that emerges is to what extent the households I describe actualize the familial models of social welfare that policy and regulation assumes they provide?

I find it useful to conceive of the household in the way Carol Stack’s (1974) seminal analysis did: as the most intimate scale of social reproduction, albeit one loaded with critical (political) tension, and unpredictable incoherence and conflict. The household thus offers a unique scope for analysis, because it is a crucial in mapping the social organization of the poor or downwardly mobile. This mapping goes beyond the material, because the household is a space loaded with possibilities for articulating multiple “value struggles” (Collins, 2017), for example, between income and subsistence; autonomy and dependency; self-worth and conflicting entitlements; or recognition and misrecognition.

Most immediately, these tensions articulate around multiple vague notions of reciprocity. The very fact of reciprocity’s inherent theoretical ambivalence (Narotzky, 2008) here indicates the need to unpack the social relations within the household. This is done in order to understand their variable location “simultaneously in market and non-market circuits of provisioning, in universal and particularistic modes of claiming, and between beneficial and predatory outcomes of redistribution processes” (Narotzky,

⁶ Epsing-Andersen offered a three-teared, sociological interpretation of different welfare regimes and their relation to capitalism. His work’s applicability to Southern Europe has since been hotly contested.

2015: 184). In other words, the household-level analysis enables us to make sense of the ambivalences and contradictions produced by the embeddedness of social reproduction (Mingione, 1991; Palomera, 2014b).

Yet the study of households tends, more often than not, to complicate the picture of social reproductive embeddedness. If household social reproduction is embedded in a particular form of capitalist accumulation, the forms of rationality defined by market values do not necessarily penetrate the domestic sphere in a uniform fashion (Narotzky, 2006). Far from obliterating familial values and motivations, the logics driven by governmental demand are contradictorily absorbed, and at best only partially reproduced, in everyday economic behaviour. Charting these intricate value struggles is essential for understanding the forms of conflict at the level of the household and, in turn, their implications for negotiating livelihood.

Stack's analysis also cautions us however, that conceiving of households as self-contained, coherent units for analysis results in complicated and practically impossible generalizations. The households I discuss are not simply economic survival resources. Instead, they are places that are regarded by all inhabitants as suffused with endless conflicts, power struggles and impossibilities; spaces moreover, that especially the younger generations, like Carlota, are trying hard to escape from. Part of my challenge thus lies in taking on board some of the structural, theoretical and policy backdrops that help situate household livelihood today while, at the same time, doing justice to the intricate material practices and conflictual social relations that deep ethnographic engagement with a domestic group can reveal (Carsten, 1997, 2018).

Personal Consequences of the Livelihood Crisis

In summary, critiques of political economy are used to investigate the grounded economic responses and regimes of meaning and morality that mobilized by households and individuals confronting the livelihood crisis. At the same time, the insights provided by the Foucauldian studies of government and regulation highlight the curtailing, enabling or mobilizing of livelihood activities by ideological projects and interest-driven incentives. Such a combination of approaches also sometimes falls short, however, for example in accounting for the effects of crisis as unequally diffracted around intersecting lines of difference, such as gender, age, class and sex (Smith, 1990; Li, 2007). Because in Anthropology too, the personal is political (Moore, 1988), I take recourse to feminist philosophers to make sense of some of the conundrums I encountered during fieldwork.

Besides being a survival resource, the household is also a space pregnant with critical political possibility. While my study certainly reveals the importance of households as assets for family survival, the people's existence in a permanent condition of crisis has had consequences that extend far beyond the material level. Disproportionate increases in the reliance on precarious and often female incomes heighten the chance of juridical consequences, while also increasing the dependence on the informal sector to make ends meet. As the responsibilities for household livelihoods have come

to be unequally borne by women, pressure on their emotional and caring labour also mounts (Collins, 1990; 2008; 2019; Blim, 2001; Pine, 2001). The feminist critique of political economy resurges here, because this body of literature has provided nuanced explanations of the complexities of unpaid work and the ethics of care (Lima, 2016). It has also shown the way in which household tensions and inequalities are directly linked to the forms of inequality that sustain capitalist accumulation (Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Kessler and Brodtkin, 1987; Collins, 1988). As the successful negotiation of the livelihood crisis came increasingly to hinge on women's ability to withstand physical and mental overexertion (Federici, 2006; Orloff, 1993; Fraser&Gordon, 2013), increased conflicts and even psychological breakdowns appeared inevitable (Collins, 1990; 2008; 2019; Blim, 2001; Pine, 2001).

Uncertain futures lead not just to conflicts and inequality. The anxiety implied in crisis also has severe effects on people's mental and physical well-being. These manifest as physical affliction, chronic disease, mental health trouble, depression, anger and violence. Gradually, I came to think of such corporeal and affective registers as elements of the profound effects that exposure to sustained structural violence (Farmer, 2004; Bourgois, 2003; Hansen, Bourgois & Drucker, 2013; Lorde, 2007) discrimination (Povinelli, 2011; Moore, 1988; Lugones, 2002, 2006) and durable inequality (Li, 2007; Tilly, 1978; Auyero, 2009) can have on the lifeworlds of individuals and groups. These deeply intimate, embodied expressions of the crisis necessitated a broadening of the theoretical backdrop used to make sense of subjectivities, identities and intimate physical realms of the livelihood crisis.

Keeping in mind Koselleck's definition of crisis, we might extend the issue to ask: what are the consequences of being in a persistent condition of contingency? Raymond Williams was interested in similar questions when he read the changes in 19th century England social experience as "structures of feeling". Throughout this thesis, I therefore also question the personal consequences (Sennett, 1998) of the livelihood crisis. My aim is to pinpoint the effects that persistent crisis can have on people's well-being (Auyero, 2009; Stuckler & Baso, 2013), sense of dignity (Narotzky, 2016; Pina-Cabral, 2018), moral personhood (Yurchak, 2006, Hann, 2002; Ledeneva, 1998; Mandel, 2002) and their sense of subjectivity (Fisher, 2011; Rose & Miller, 1992; Rose, 1999).

Methodology & Positionality

In this section, I provide an epistemological discussion of my methods. When necessary, I pinpoint where certain limitations complicated or contributed to the research. This thesis is based on 21 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2015 and 2017 in the Vale do Ave district, under the auspices of the GRECO Project.

Concerning the participants of this research, I retained the names and titles of public officials. Needless to say, all of the interlocutors were duly informed of my intention

to write a thesis that would deal with their lives. All of them agreed to do so. Among the citizen groups and households that I worked with, some wanted to be named and quoted, hoping their voices would add to the many now speaking out about their livelihood realities. Others wanted their experiences heard but their names altered using synonyms; in both cases I followed their wishes. Statements that interviewees did not want attributed to them are reported as unattributed, or the sources are noted as anonymous interviews. Things that people told me in confidence are not in the thesis.

As per the stipulations of the GRECO project, I knew that I wanted and was expected to conduct ethnographic fieldwork at the household level in Guimarães. However, I was not only a foreign twentysomething-year-old female but also a German, unmarried, childless, ethnographer in a distinctly working class environment, who knew no one in the city and had a limited command of the Portuguese language. It was thus immediately obvious that I would confront many barriers of age, class, nationality and language and that my positionality would be volatile, especially in the beginning, because of its being defined by these dissimilarities. Why would, one might ask, people so much as want to get to know me, let alone open their homes to me?

It was from asking myself these questions that I became even more convinced that looking to live with a household would be the best, possibly the only way to gain relatively quick and easy access. Luckily, Guimarães hosts a branch of the University of Minho, and it is relatively common for households to make a bit of extra money by hosting non-local students as tenants in spare rooms or studios—a trend that the recent increase in tourists and the rising popularity of AirBnB and similar intermediaries has accentuated. I thus concluded that to simply look for a room for rent would be the easiest and most straightforward avenue of access, and one I could always abandon later if it proved unsuccessful. I would for now, literally try and insert myself in the everyday patterns of social reproduction by becoming a rent-paying tenant.

Living with Multigenerational Households

While doing a language course in Porto during May 2015, I visited Guimarães on two consecutive weekends. I had already scoured websites, online blogs, the University's hosting site and craigslist for rooms to let. I saw several but most were either located in student dorms or so remote that I would require a car to get around. Luck was finally on my side when, after having had breakfast there several days running, the patron of a café asked what I was doing in the city. I explained that I was looking for a room to rent since I would be here to study for a while, and I added that I didn't think highly of student dorms populated by undergraduates.

Without giving me a chance to finish my coffee, the patron told a customer to mind the shop and took me to the house of Lara and her family, barging into the front garden announcing for all to hear that he had found them a tenant. Upon seeing the room (a small but cosy space next to the kitchen) and learning that we would share the bathroom, kitchen, living room and garden, I paid the monthly rent and returned that very

afternoon to drop off some bags. Lara was initially hesitant to welcome a researcher into her home, but forgot what I was doing for a living within the hour. During the month that followed, I explained my research, interests, and even what a PhD is, over and over again. Soon, “you should write about this!” became a common phrase thrown at me whenever discussions on livelihood, politics or textile production came up.

I would live in the house Lara occupies with her parents, children and, for part of that time, her wayward, soon-to-be-divorced husband until early December 2015. In this period, I spend a significant amount of time around the house. I quickly came to know not only Lara but also her parents and her sister as well as their tenants. I learned about their occupations, schooling, boyfriends, fashion choices and music preference. I accompanied Lara’s children to work and joined them to go out on the weekend. I spent time in the kitchen during meal times; in Lara’s workshop during the afternoons; in the garden, initially to read and later to help with gardening; and in her sister’s living room watching TV. Slowly, I came to help out around the house. I cleaned the kitchen and bathroom when Lara was too exhausted, did the dishes when no one else would, and, to return the favour of being included in their Sunday lunch, I started cooking the family meal once a week.

My room was adjacent to the kitchen so that I could hear most of what was said, and was usually aware when people were home or awake. This close proximity as well as my effectively being within earshot at all times, meant that I invariably ended up being around for both the good and the bad: the shared discussions over how and when to pay the bills; whose cash to use for groceries this week; who had time to mind the garden or the sewing machines; and who would clean, wash and cook. When Lara’s son ran out of antidepressants, I saw and heard all the effects. When the family was fighting over finances or making plans to help out their grandmother with her housework, I would quietly stay in the background. This experience, perhaps more than any other, set me on the path of exploring the emotional, effective and psychological effects of the crisis of livelihood.

For all its advantages in terms of access and proximity, living in the middle of the hustle and bustle of an over-inhabited apartment also took its toll. I soon became tired of being woken up at any hour of the night or day by people needing to cook, upstairs arguments, or Ricardo barging into the house at 3am. In hindsight, I was really living in the middle of the household, which provided great access, but also became very exhausting. During the summer and into the fall, I dealt with the strain by going outside when I couldn’t stand it anymore. I learned to celebrate the rare moments when I was alone in the house and could flip through TV channels at my leisure. However, when winter came, the situation changed: having lost his job, Lara’s husband was always at home and often angry. Lacking his wage, the family needed more income so they decided to rent more rooms and the number of house inhabitant increased significantly. This also meant that there was hardly ever enough hot water to take a shower and the electricity in the house regularly failed due to overuse.

When it came time to finish the first fieldwork period and return to Barcelona, I knew that I would not return to this house to live. I was determined to find a differ-

ent location. Lara's house was a practical place to start the fieldwork and build up a network". It was located at the border between the Couros district in Sao Sebastião and Urgezes, two neighbourhoods directly adjacent to the city centre, spanning the space between the ancient city wall and the train station. Appendix A contains a map detailing the parishes of the council, highlighting those I worked in.

When I returned in February 2016, Lara allowed me to sleep on the living room couch for two weeks, while I set up tenancy in Creixomil, a working class neighbourhood integrated into Guimarães city after the administrative municipal reform in 2005, located about 2 km north west of the city centre. Creixomil is on one side adjacent to Planetas, the social housing district. On the other side, Creixomil is bordered by Fermentões, a middle class private home and apartment neighbourhood, almost completely newly built with the housing boom of the 1980s, and where many aspired to move. Formerly the location of several medium sized factories, Creixomil even today houses many garage workshops and *minifundia*,⁷ often belonging to the same household. I had come to know it via Elvira, the protagonist of the third chapter. It was finally through her that I found a room with a private bathroom that I could rent in the home of a family of four. The father had earlier migrated to France and then returned, using his money to buy, and subsequently convert, several former workers' houses into rooms and studios.

My fieldwork routines varied little from those described above, but living in a more rural parish inevitably meant that I got mixed up in the conflicts and livelihood pressures around the land, ecology, water and livestock. The move also proved crucial because I could witness first hand, and participate in, the running of a garage workshop integrated into the neighbourhood in a way that Lara's was not. Creixomil was, unlike Sebastião and other parts of the centre, still a relatively self-contained neighbourhood where help and care among acquaintances was usual and expected, and people even resented having to leave the *bairro* in order to acquire certain things. Moving there was strategically important because it enabled me to understand the rural land base and *minifundia* as the core pillars of livelihood there. Living in a close-knit neighbourhood also made for an in-depth appreciation of the networks required to maintain home-based textile production. Spending ample time around houses and garage workshops also implied spending time mainly with women.

During the time of my stay in Creixomil, I had a plan to move to Pevidém for a few months, in order to be closer to the industrial legacy. Pevidém is a former industrial barrio about 6 km southwest from Guimarães centre, in the area of Selho São Jorge. To reach there, one has to pass over several waterways and hills. It was once home to the

7 *Minifundium*, pl. *Minifundia*: term refers to farms that are small, usually both in absolute terms and in relation to larger farms in the same agrarian system (compare the *latifundia* dominant in Portugal's south). Activities performed on *minifundia* traditionally include horticulture, livestock rearing, fruit tree planting and other labour-intensive subsistence activities. Few statistical data are available but due to the participatory division of heritage, *minifundia* plot sizes are assumed to have decreased consistently over the last centuries—a fact exacerbated by industrial encroachment. See Brettell, (1988) for a comprehensive overview of the different farm working arrangements and Hayes (1958) for details on crop introduction and rotation.

biggest three, near Fordist style, factories and is today the only district in Guimarães that unanimously votes communist and has the highest unemployment rate. The plan to move to Pevidém fell through, however, due to the absence of rooms for rent and my inability to commit to a 2-year apartment lease.

Instead, I got the opportunity, in September 2016, to move into a room in the castle district (São Oliveiro do Castelo), located within the ancient city walls of Guimarães. Had she not already been evicted, Sra. Maria Clara (from chapter four) would have been my neighbour. This location proved to be crucial because I lived in the city centre during the height of tourist season, appreciated its shortcomings and upsides, and participated in the conflicts that structured it. Whenever it was too noisy at night for me to sleep, I would seek refuge at the farm of Renato (chapter five) that was only a few minutes' walk away. There I had a sleeping bag and reading light in the barn and could also sleep in a hammock under an open sky. Being present at the farm in the mornings meant I also spent a lot of time helping with the Coop organization, activities and market. I stayed around the centre until I left Guimarães for the second time in December 2016. In the fall of 2017, during my final return to Guimarães for two months of archival research, I lived in a half finished studio on the farm of Sra Maria (chapter one) in Gondomar, where I eventually met Sra. Maria's whole family as we barbequed, worked the land and drank tea.

After fieldwork, via the phone and internet, I continued to be in occasional contact with my closest informants and some friends,. Through these sporadic conversations, I could trace the main changes in the lives of my informants, the neighbourhoods they inhabited and, more generally, the city itself. It is also thanks to what I learned from these extended relationships that I was able to form some kind of an image of how the most recent national, political and European changes have been received, an issue that I return to in the conclusion.

Workplaces, Public Space and City Politics

As might be inferred, I also did observation outside of the households I lived in. These were in work spaces, farms, gardens, public spaces (like cafés), squares, parks and other places that seemed strategic in gaining access to different population groups. I was surprised by the incredible hospitality of the local people, especially in those parts of the city outside of the centre. It seemed that, in places where tourism had not yet arrived, a stranger walking down the street is not cause for alarm, but rather, cause for greeting. More often than not, when I stood overlooking a street or was lost at an intersection, it was a matter of mere seconds before some pedestrian stopped and offered to help me. My accent almost always prompted the question of where I was from and what on earth I was doing in the peripheral parts of Guimarães. My answers varied, but the point remains that these encounters frequently led to longer conversations and acquaintances that eventually became useful contacts in the field. In hindsight then, my overt foreignness, more often than not, came to be an asset in forging contacts and meeting people. It spiked curiosity and created more good will than bad.

The vast majority of people I got to know were exceedingly warm and friendly, always happy to help a stranger and generally, especially with those of the older generation, gossipy and happy to chat. But they also—and this took me awhile to realise—do not truly trust you unless they have already trusted your grandfather. This observation is important because it reminds us that easily meeting people is a long way from gaining the type of access and intricate insertion into social reproductive choices of families that I was looking for.

As a cultural and touristic hotspot in the North of Portugal, Guimarães experiences an influx of young, middle-class people to its centre every spring and summer. Arriving there in early June of 2015, many people I met simply passed me off as one among many of these young tourists, albeit one with a more pronounced, yet vague, interest in the city's history, people and heritage. When I first visited Pevidém in late June, for example, many people that I met asked me if I was interested in buying one of the old factory buildings to turn it into a cultural centre. As I continued to visit the neighbourhoods throughout the summer and into the winter, however, the change in how I was perceived by those I visited was almost tangible. What had previously been a slightly teasing disdain for my “industrial fascination” (Peixoto) slowly became a much more firmly rooted appreciation of my presence and interest. I was finally, on an afternoon in early November, invited over for a coffee with Peixoto and his wife in their house, followed by a tour of his son's garage workshop and a trip to the worker's association bar.

I am recounting this access to Pevidém because it is, in many ways, emblematic of the kind of access struggles I had in the peripheral neighbourhoods of the city, especially those that I was not living in. Staying after the summer and into the winter, at a time when all the other tourists had left, however, finally provided a type of legitimacy to my interests that any explanations or discussions on my part would not have achieved. Moreover, once I had attained this legitimacy, my relevant fieldwork contacts snowballed. Suddenly, in the still operating factories, garage workshops, industrial parks and workers' associations, I was a welcome, even demanded guest. Returning to the question of why people would talk to me, it seemed as if having a story to tell and an opinion to share became peoples' most compelling reason to speak to me.

My most frequented places in Pevidém as well as Creixomil became the garage workshop and former factory bars, as well as the vegetable gardens and minifundia farms of friends and acquaintances spread across all of the neighbourhoods. All these spaces were liminal in the sense that access was theoretically open but they were also somehow overseen by the parameters of acquaintance and class. These factors facilitated the possibility of being able to speak openly. The only association I officially became part of was the ecological farming cooperative I discuss in chapter 6. But as with factory bars and cafés, many other groups and associations operated spaces that were open to non-members, and I spent time in many of them.

Additionally, I took several trips to the mountain region of Gerês, most often to visit the villages from where informants' families once hailed. I often only make fleeting references to the many different groups of informants I met in public spaces, factories, work places, associations, villages and bars. But spending time with them gave me a

better grasp of the conflicts and tensions at the community level. Therefore, observing these groups allowed for presenting the cases of this thesis not as isolated incidents or particular expressions, but as representative of more general patterns and structures.

Interviews and Recording

During my time in Guimarães, I conducted formal semi-structured interviews, some recorded and some written by hand and later typed. I interviewed members from all the households I lived and worked with, although the questions and type of interviews varied. Additionally, I undertook 'life trajectory' and work history interviews with workshop owners, farmers, and many (former) factory workers, most notably those of Pevidém and Creixomil. I also interviewed city hall officials and councilmen, factory foremen and owners, job centre employees, members of commercial associations, social workers, shopkeepers, home-owners, bar patrons, and the members of citizen groups and associations. Using approaches based on Grounded Theory (Flick, 2009), this first set of interviews was (partly) transcribed, allowing me to identify recurrent themes. Establishing these thematic topics then led to a refining of the research questions and a renewed cycle of more focused data collection.

Along with this formal set-up, living and working with households meant continuous engagement and daily observation. Many of the themes and questions I explored during the interviews first arose in informal, open-ended chats and conversations. I greatly benefited from the shared mealtimes because the discussions launched during them frequently initiated more in-depth and directed conversations later on.

The number of informal interviews that I took is thus much higher than the formal ones. Not uncommonly, I noticed a pattern in which interesting facts or opinions often emerged in discussions among my informants. Some of these situations took place while my tape recorder was on, so I could transcribe them afterwards. However, in the vast majority of cases, I used no recording device, either because I didn't have it with me, or because I felt it was intrusive and caused my informants to exaggerate their reactions. Most often, I would listen and ask questions, and then excuse myself to jot down my notes, trying, and sometimes failing to recall the exact expressions used. Therefore, many quotes reproduced in this thesis are not literal, but analogous reconstructions of what was said. I ask the reader to trust my memory.

In terms of translation and the kind of language used, many of the people I interviewed spoke colloquially or in dialect, often using grammatically incorrect constructions or slang phrases. Where possible, I have tried to translate these to English. Sometimes, I point out the Portuguese original and why I thought a particular, potentially grammatically incorrect translation made sense, or would better capture the historical, cultural or political roots of a particular phrase or term in a footnote.

The use of biography in ethnography

Especially among the households I lived with, but also among the people I got closest too, I attempted to chart their family and personal trajectories in time and space; this was a time-consuming and often arduous task. By applying this tool for biographical and historical analysis, I gained insights into the historical shifts in the avenues available for livelihood making, intergenerational transfers of wealth and property, and social memory of past struggles. From this vantage point, it became possible to understand what made the current moment different from those of the past.

The use of biography as a method for analysis in the social sciences has long been a contentious topic. Perhaps best epitomized by Bourdieu's harsh deconstruction of "the biographic illusion" (1986), critics have suggested that asking to be told someone's life story elicits an inherently flawed narrative. A narrative that is artificially structured around 'fictions of coherence': rhetorical overlays to chaotic experiences, demarcated by seemingly logic-producing temporalities, such as "hence", "thus", and "therefore". The biographer might be tempted to accept these as biographical facts, when in reality, they are little more than post-factual insertions of logic into a lived reality structured by much that lies outside the individual's control.

To be sure, the production of artificial sense and coherence in biography are pertinent questions, and awareness of the potential pitfalls highlighted by Bourdieu is certainly crucial when gathering and working with life histories as ethnographic data. However, many of these methodological, even analytical, aspects of Bourdieu's critique have been raised and discussed by philosophers and social theorists of earlier generations. Arendt's *Human Condition* (1958), for example, usefully interrogates the tendency of people to make oneself the main agent and subject of one's life. She assumes, and I agree, that making oneself intelligible to oneself as "I"—as a person with dispositions and identity, however socially constructed—has always been a human tendency. However, being the subject or even the hero of your own life story is not equivalent to being its producer: "The perplexity is that in any series of events that together form a story with a unique meaning we can at best isolate the agent who set the whole process into motion; and although this agent frequently remains the subject, the "hero" of the story, we never can point unequivocally to him as the author of its eventual outcome." (Arendt, 1958: 185).

At the danger of turning this methodology section into an ethnographic manifesto, I should stress that the way I use biography is as a study of subjectivation: the process by which people construct themselves—admittedly as a fiction, perhaps even as a "personal myth" (Pluzhnikov, 1996)—in relation to that which exists outside them. Drawing on Arendt, I acknowledge that the represented narrative should not be taken as fact. But it remains true that people make themselves the lead character in the story of their own life and, in doing so, they provide the researcher with crucial insights into their self-conception. "Who someone is or was we [as researchers] can know only by knowing the story of which he himself is the hero—his biography, in other words" (Arendt, 1958: 186). Knowledge of this construction is indispensable to a researcher

who is seeking insights into the self-construction or subjectivity of a person or group. This is also what I think Talal Assad meant when he spoke of “narrative contingency and connection” (1992), a notion he picked up from Clifford’s “partial truth” (1986).

Methodologically then, taking seriously biographical narratives and the identities contained in them remains a crucial aspect in ethnography. Taking life stories seriously as partial truths is also the reasoning that Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps’ (1996) use in their famous response to Bourdieu’s criticism: narratives create continuity between people’s past and present, and link their lived realities with the imagined world they inhabit. Because these narratives are knowable to the ethnographer, they form an essential method for understanding the lifeworlds of the people we aim to study. As such, the narrative is an interface between the individual and the social order that animates partial or imagined selves into action.

Overview of Chapters

The analytical concepts I discuss above also guide the structure of the thesis. The first chapter draws out what has changed with the onset of austerity. I begin with the ethnographic case of a raid at the municipal market in Guimarães, during which the tax authority confiscated “illegal vegetables”. I show how austerity heralded an increase in performative state regulation, designed not for the people it targets, but as a sign of good will to the country’s international creditors. Explaining how kinds of interventions also have consequences for making a living, I trace these by displaying how families ‘retreat’ into their homes.

Chapter 2 considers the crisis of livelihood from the perspective of labour and subjectivity. It charts the daily lives of home-based petty textile producers who are subcontracted to multinational fast fashion corporations. By showcasing how the productive organization and micro-workshops interact with the ideology of entrepreneurialism, I display a shift in personal and governmental logic. This not only allows the state to increasingly withdraw from the responsibilities of social reproduction, but pushes petty entrepreneurs into blatantly exploitative work relations.

Bringing together the findings of the first two chapters, chapter 3 explores the personal and psychological consequences of the crisis of livelihood. Establishing the intimate realm of the body as a site of crisis, I examine the link between (self-)medication, affliction and structural violence. The experiences of state-sanctioned injustice combined with the conditionality of citizenship rights are ‘taken home’ into the most intimate sphere of the family and the household where they articulate in a variety of afflictions.

The final two chapters widen the analytical scope to include what is outside the household, and analyse the crisis of livelihood as a situation pregnant with critical political possibility. Chapter four recounts the only political protest that I encountered during the time of fieldwork. It came about in order to oppose a spike in property taxes

brought on by austerity and conservation efforts that were targeting inner-city houses. I argue that inner-city residents advance their claims for recognition, housing and social justice by referring to austerity and conservation as mutual forces that are deliberately set up to work against them. Herein, they display their sentiments of injustice while simultaneously making sense of their own mounting marginalization.

The final, fifth chapter presents the case of an organic farmers' cooperative as an example of a group of people who, apparently, are not suffering the livelihood crisis to the same degree. Local responses to global crisis offer us a view of austerity and economy from below and can thereby shed light on the imagination of alternative modes of economic conduct, moralities and meaning-making, such as collective bargaining against dispossession; assertions of class-based solidarities; and future visions of social and environmental justice ritualized in collective food-growing activities. Throughout, I reflect on the questions of value and human worth as they emerge from ethnography.

Appendix A: Map of Guimarães Parishes



Figure 1: Conselho de Guimarães, © Camara Municipal de Guimarães

Appendix B: Rivers and major creeks in the Vale do Ave

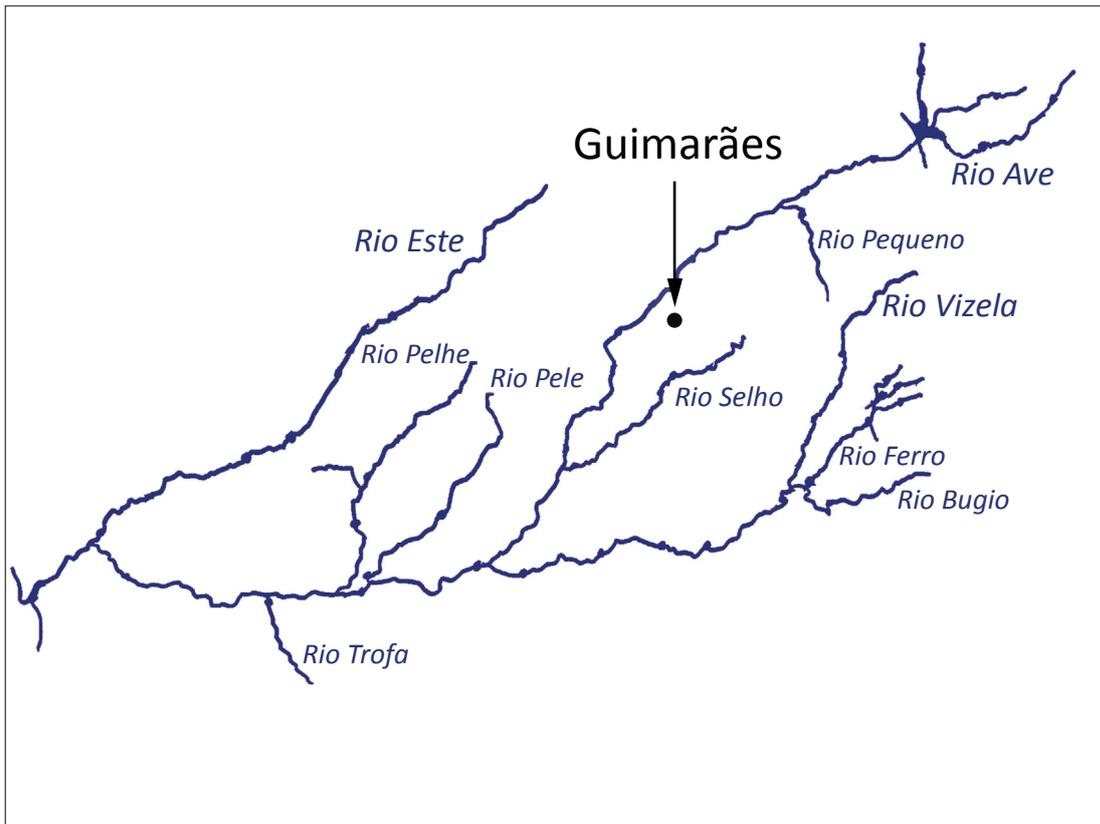


Figure 2: Rios do Vale do Ave; © Rui Appelberg, 2015. Reproduced with Permission