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“We have always been in crisis”

An ethnography of austere livelihoods in Northern Portugal

Leidereiter, C.

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CONCLUSION

Austere Livelihood

Just as this thesis opened with a quotation by one of my informants (Carlota), who summarized her life experience as one structured by crisis, so shall this conclusion be prefaced by the words of Peixoto, a retired factory operator and communist party member from Pevidém. Since entering early retirement at 53 years of age, Peixoto has made it his business to study the expansion of industry in the Vale do Ave and I was fortunate to count on his knowledge and historical insights both during fieldwork and after. More often than not, his diverse knowledge of local, national and international events provided a frame of reference and reality check against which my own analytical thoughts could be balanced. The following quote is from a conversation we had towards the end of my fieldwork period, in early 2017.

The real tragedy, if you ask me, is that people today, they think we—my generation—we're lazy. That we're not entitled to retire at 55, or 60, because the legal age for doing that should be 65. And that denial of entitlement contains an ignorance. An ignorance coming from the young generation of this country, to some extent. But much more so an ignorance coming from the media, from public opinion and from politicians, both in this country and elsewhere, about the real struggles that have defined our life. [...] When I was 6 years old, I would wake up at sunrise every day to take the cows to pasture. Before school. When I was 10, I started working in the factory. 12 hours a day, 6 days a week. My childhood ended when I was 10 years old. I was no exception. All the boys my age worked. And the girls? They went to the houses of the rich: as maids, servants and the like. Having had such a life and being told today that we have lived above our means... it's frankly an insult. To be told that we can retire only with deductions from the pension payment because there was "a crisis" that changed the retirement age? That's a gross and painful misrepresentation of not just my life, but of the hardships that have been all our lives since we were very, very little. I had to work so my family could eat, you know, and no one helped us survive. No state, no law, no politician. We have literally always lived in crisis. It's like that journalist said: 'the right to a pension for those who didn't have a childhood'. Well, no one is going to give my childhood back. But to deny me the right to retire early and get a full pension on the grounds of some financial crisis?! When, in fact, our crisis continues...?! I find that ignorant and tragic.' (Peixoto, in interview, March 2017).

The main purpose of this thesis has been to ethnographically investigate the chronic state of crisis that my interlocutors identified and which I termed the “crisis of livelihood”. As a persistent, deprived mode of making a living that has structured the life-worlds of people in the Vale do Ave for decades, it is the very crisis Peixoto points to in the quote above. As a crisis notion distinct from the many other crisis referents also present during the time of fieldwork, I highlighted the many different kinds of “work” performed by the ‘crisis of livelihood’ trope. That is, I charted the following: the questions that it opens up for the asking and those that 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 responses and consequences it causes.

Tracing the trope of persistent crisis through Portugal’s history and into the present, I have revealed that the pervasiveness of this concept is a direct result of the many years of Portugal’s livelihood being embedded in extra local factors. I mapped how changes in institutional interventions, cycles of capital accumulation, and political power come to impact what avenues for livelihood-making are available to households. I have shown what happens when austerity is imposed on a livelihood reality that is already austere, providing an anthropological and historical account of what living in that particular working class world looks like.

As livelihood-making is reshaped by the interplay of state regulation and the needs of capital and historically-rooted provisioning avenues, the everyday manifestations of the crisis of livelihood are also altered. I showcased the material, social and affective effects of this process, as well as its political implications in regard to the possibility of collective organization or class-based solidarity. Herein, registers of suffering and particular performances of personhood have become assets through which citizens access resources in a harsh economic and political climate. Displaying how such positionalities can become assets or liabilities for family survival, visibility or recognition, this work illustrates the interactions between the livelihood crises, the modern state’s spheres of knowledge production, and people’s normative, moral and teleological positioning therein. In what follows, I draw out some of the patterns that recur throughout the preceding chapters and connect them to some of the questions I posed at the beginning of this thesis, suggesting answers where possible, and avenues for further research where necessary.

“We have always been in Crisis”: Permanence, Crisis and Continuity

If we accept Roitman’s suggestion, that the declaration of crisis is always a transcendental placeholder that invites a diagnosis of what went wrong to cause a crisis, and that it is also a call to a particular kind of action which can “end” the problem (Roitman, 2014). What, then is the crisis of livelihood a transcendental placeholder for? The popular “we have always been in crisis” is used by ordinary citizens of the Vale do Ave to mobilize a wide array of moralities, income strategies, resources and affective

dispositions in favour of making a living. Granted, this is frequently achieved through the undertaking of highly precarious jobs and volatile piece-meal production or at the expense of uncertain reciprocities and familial care. Nevertheless, people are successfully negotiating the crisis and, more often than not, they do so selectively combining time-tested strategies with highly innovative ones. That they are able to do so is a result, at least in part, of their awareness of “always having been in crisis”. The notion of permanent crisis therefore works to supply the imaginaries and lifeworlds of my interlocutors with the urgency and creativeness necessary for continuing to make a living in the most adverse of circumstances.

“We have always been in crisis” should not necessarily stand in as a formula on how to make a living in times of crisis. Rather, the crisis of livelihood makes for a situation in which all the possibilities for livelihood-making available to households are either disappearing, as is the case for secure jobs and employment in the textile sector, or are made impossible by state-led regulation. Refracted by state institutions and regulation, capitalist relations come to be embedded in the everyday crisis of household livelihood. 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 negotiating in various ways in order to make ends meet and it is one made no easier by the context of austerity’s infringement of basic citizenship rights.

The ‘crisis of livelihood’ is therefore a placeholder used by people in the Vale do Ave to point to their pride of continuing to make a living in spite of anxiety and uncertainty and the odds being against them. It is also, however, a reflection of the *longue durée* in which they exist at the receiving end of material deprivation, exploitative industries, institutional abandonment and political neglect. To my interlocutors, crisis is the best description for a mode of livelihood-making that is permanently structured by uncertainty and anxiety.

In this capacity, the crisis my interlocutors’ experience is anything but exceptional, incidental, or any of the other temporally-confined definitions commonly associated with the crisis terminology. The crisis of livelihood in Northern Portugal is durable and chronic and thereby stands in sharp contrast to the narratives of exceptionality that have been widely used to describe the most recent financial crisis. The issue returns us, I think, to Janet Roitman’s leading question: Is not the idea of a permanent crisis an oxymoron? Well, yes. And no.

Recall the series of questions Makropoulos prompts us to ask, such as who might be in a position to declare “this is crisis” and then to diagnose and narrate said crisis and subsequently devise a set of “solutions”. Much like Makropoulo’s questions, the issue might be extended to ask who might have the power to declare a crisis finished? ‘Experts’ in the specific field of crisis, politicians and persons of public influence come to mind, as does the role of the state and institutional incentives. Being in the position to declare the crisis over does not by definition suffice to convince those in a state of crisis, who acutely experience anxiety or uncertainty. In fact, it stands to reason that they would be the hardest to convince, especially if their tangible experience of crisis (uncertainty and anxiety) doesn’t cease.

The lack of radical change commonly expected from crisis situations—the absence of the institution of a new order, as Koselleck would have it—emerges as a result of exactly this disconnect between expert definitions of crisis and “laypersons” experience of a situation that they might define as “crisis” (Roitman, 2014: 22). While a crisis narrated by popular discourse might thus be declared over, a crisis experienced by “laypersons” may well endure. Crisis can be permanent due to the inequality in power between those who most acutely suffer it and those in a position to declare a crisis, narrate it, and then declare it over.

If we follow Koselleck’s argument that the declaration of a crisis being over closes off all horizons of possibility (1979), then we must ask which horizon of possibility remains at the end of a crisis? That is, which possible futures are closed, and which of the many possible futures come to be defined as the new state of normal and by whom, and with what effects on those crisis affects? In the case of the declaration of the financial crisis, the diagnosis was clear: it was a crisis caused by individual greed and overconsumption and the medicine to resolve this diagnosis was to be called national austerity. Austerity took the form of harsh tax increases, budget cuts and the roll-back of welfare, social and healthcare provisions.

Throughout this thesis, I have highlighted how living in a reality of permanent crisis is fundamentally at odds with the other crisis definitions—financial, political and policy—also active in the Vale do Ave region. Most importantly, the ‘financial’ crisis explanatory model, which mobilized policy-makers and politicians alike in favour of austerity, did not match my informants’ understanding of their livelihood crisis. Nor is the solution enacted in response to this explanatory model, austerity, functional in putting an end to the crisis of livelihood. While austerity may have been effective in curbing national deficit and maintaining international creditworthiness, it also instituted a wide variety of punitive sanctions that exacerbated people’s struggles to get by. At the same time, the downward mobility and search for ever more scarce socially secure employment, already well underway since before austerity, has all but escalated during the period of national saving.

That is why the phrase, “we have always been in crisis”, offers us not only a view of austerity from below but also a glimpse into a grassroots form of contestation. By detailing the durability of the crisis of livelihood and insisting on its continued existence, people in the Vale do Ave define their own version of what constitutes crisis. Theirs is a declaration and narrative of crisis fundamentally distinct from the financial crisis explanatory model and its austerity solution because their crisis is one that is very much ongoing. They refuse to accept what policymakers, politicians or institutional incentives try to pass off to them as the ‘new normal’ Instead, they insist that their old normal (the livelihood crisis), has not actually changed. Thereby, the livelihood crisis makes for a competing conception of crisis and who gets to declare a crisis as having started, who get to define it and subsequently, who gets to declare it over, with what ‘new normal’ outcome.

Austerity was therefore most certainly not effective in ending or even so much as bettering the chronic crisis my interlocutors still experience. However, the declaration of a financial crisis and the positing of austerity as its solution permitted the setting forth of a ‘new order’—a new state of normal—in which not only livelihood-making became critically complicated. But a wide array of extra-local, institutional, political

and economic interventions also became factors to be dealt with in people's everyday lives. While people can and do contest these interventions, they often have no choice but to arrange their livelihoods around them. In the remainder of this conclusion, I draw on the combined findings of the previous chapters in order to draw a cohesive picture of precisely what this new, post-austerity world looks like, and highlight the ways people engage this new reality in their pursuit of livelihood.

Regulating Austere Livelihoods: Austerity Rule(s)?

Throughout this thesis, I hope to have shown how changes in capitalist relations came to be embedded in the everyday crisis of household livelihood: the labour and working arrangements that are available, the avenues for provisioning that are opening or closing, the responsibilities that individuals accept for systemic short-comings, the future projects that seem desirable, and the value constructions that are shifting. Due to the increasing infringement of regulation and repression that austerity heralded, the lives of my interlocutors are in a process of constant change, perhaps even more so now than in the past. Although austerity is the most recent in a series of similar state interventions, its effects have been particularly striking, because it impacted not only livelihood, but extended much deeper, even into the intricate fabric of people's subjectivities, self-presentations and their recognition as ontologically valid persons.

To recap, part of my objective in this thesis has been to account for a shift in governmental morality and the way it impacted access to the possibilities for social reproduction for households. Part of my argument was that the political import of, and tolerance towards, age-old livelihood activities changed in the context of austerity. In this way, citizens came to be sanctioned, and even criminalized, for practices that are absolutely necessary for their survival. I charted both the effects of this sanctioning and dispossession, and the paths by which people have learned to engage regulation, austerity and interventions in order to survive. Thereby, I showed how state-led regulation became a fact to be tinkered with in people's daily lives.

The other part of my argument was that with state-led regulation infiltrating people's most private spaces—the home and their bodies—the neoliberal agenda is critically furthered: There is an institutional push not just towards obedient officiality and tax-payment, but crucially also towards the assumption of individual, personal responsibility for faults that are exclusively systemic. By showcasing how the productive organization and micro-workshops interact with the ideology of entrepreneurialism, I display a shift in personal and governmental logic. With the examples of the entrepreneurial subjectivity and the guilt and shame that people with afflictions feel for their incapacity to meet all the demands that are placed on them, I have showcased the extent to which institutionally sustained moral frameworks impact people's subjectivities and personhood.

A question that remains, however, is: what the institutional push of a new moral frameworks tell us about the nature of government in the context of austerity? Many studies on rule and regulation in times of austerity have emphasized the tension between institutional measures of regulating the economy, economic life and the de facto ways of making a living at the grassroots (Peck; Peck & Theodore; Brenner). Similarly, in parallel to expanded reproduction, the role of the state in facilitating the conditions necessary for social reproduction has also come into focus. Extending this analysis to anthropological studies of government, this thesis has attempted to identify the changes brought about by the escalation of governmental orthodoxies following the onset of austerity.

Drawing on the work of Mitchell (1999), Fisher (2009) and Rose (1996), I have highlighted that such definitions of informality as tax-evasion emerge from a partial and faulty grasp of the livelihood-making realities that are experienced by local populations. There is thus a gap between what institutions assume drives people to pursue a certain livelihood activity, and why they actually do so. This thesis has shown that the tools available to states and governments to ‘see’ their population—statistical, fiscal and bureaucratic measurements—cannot fully apprehend the livelihood crisis as it is experienced and suffered by people at the ground level.

One example of this gap is found in the misrecognition of tax evasion as greed and selfishness. The livelihood crisis and its personal consequences are inapprehensible to an institutional system based on liberal capitalism’s categories of identity (Brown, 2008, Mitchell, 1999) and recognition (Fassin, 2012; Fraser, 2016; Moore, 1988; Mmembe, 2003; Coulthardt, 2014). This observation contains a great deal of potential for further research because it speaks to a more general discrepancy between what policy targets and what it affects.

My contribution to this body of work consists in, on the one hand, crediting the role that the many crisis referents play by calling to the stage a variety of programmes and interventions, especially exemplified by the MoU and austerity measures. But my showcasing of shifts in institutional orthodoxies and population management also remind us of the contradictory manner in which institutional interventions are absorbed at the level of the household. I have charted how, to a people accustomed to institutional abandonment and political neglect, the negative presence of state-led regulation is experienced as painful because it is categorically different from what there was before. The new governmental morality that came with austerity was, after all, one that emphasized taxable formality and attempted to sanction into compliance (Donzelot, 2008), even criminalize, those who tried to resist it. It was thereby a morality that tried, quite violently at times, to perform a type of state-led sanctioning that would push citizens into what I have been calling tax-paying ‘obedient officiality’. It was completely contradictory to what people had learned to expect from institutions and regulation.

On the other hand, the types of violence and sanctioning—their existence at the receiving end of structural violence—were also familiar to people as a result of capitalism’s expansion and extraction that, in Northern Portugal at least, has always

been facilitated by state-led regulation. Austerity was therefore both, a radically new intervention with materially devastating consequences, and the culmination of a *longue durée* of repression and exploitation. It would be wrong however to conclude that the ability to develop strategies with which to engage institutional interventions and secure a living was a universally positive experience for my interlocutors. In fact, the very fact that they continue to refer to their current state as crisis underlines the adversity of their living reality.

One reason for this continued adversity lies in the unprecedented value-frameworks that are contained in the governmental morality of austerity. When there is an institutional push towards obedient officiality and tax-payment as dominant preconditions for recognition, people's worth changes. By the example of Lara and her family's affective struggles, I have highlighted how in the context of austerity's reshuffling of human worth, the very conditions of liberal citizenship are themselves at stake. What happens to equality before the law in a context where a tax paying employee may receive fundamentally different bureaucratic treatment than a day labourer who is trying to be recognized as discriminated against?

Scaled up to the level of institutions, people's worth is then subject to constant fluctuation (Narotzky, 2019). Not only is the validity of people's life experiences reshuffled, but it is in fact recast in a heterogeneous manner. Perhaps the most important marker of citizenship in this construction is tax-paying 'officiality'. Both a precondition for access to the rights and protections nominally associated with liberal citizenship and the simultaneously desired outcome of most disciplinary strategies, obediently official implies being recognized as a waged, tax-paying, law-abiding individual. Only those duly recognized in this way can then go on to claim resources, social protections and fair legal treatment (Joseph, 1999).

Positing such an ideal type of personhood also creates differentiation in the way people can or cannot secure the conditions of possibility for livelihood. A *de facto* exclusion from citizenship protection comes to be built into the system due to the creation of this ideal type of citizen (one that many of the people in this thesis would not qualify for). During austerity, unlike in previous forms of government, the underlying discriminatory rationalities of government become visible. Insofar as the capitalist mode of production always reproduces inequality (Wolf, 2001; Tilly, 1998), the state's discretionary power of enforcement emerges as a core method with which certain livelihood avenues can be rendered available while others are foreclosed.

Here, the findings of this research intersect most clearly with the works of a variety of postcolonial scholars and those of critical race theory, who have long since argued that the ontology implied in modern citizenship is effectively reserved for those who can bureaucratically register as "citizens" (Coulthardt, 2014; Simpson, 2014; Joseph, 1999). Not only does access to the rights and protections of citizenship then hinge on the performance of a particular kind of subjectivity, but the very fact of such a performance's necessity, leads in the long run to differentiation. Because not all people are equally able to measure up to such performances, inequalities in

the institutional treatment they receive are pre-programmed. Austerity therefore does mark a “shift”, because in its bureaucratic and institutional manifestations, pre-existing discriminatory mechanisms become visible. Citizenship here appears to be increasingly conditional: a privilege to be won rather than an unimpeachable right received at birth (Auyero & Swistun, 2009; Petryna, 2002). This observation might prove an intriguing challenge to especially Fraser’s (2010) notion of recognition in the post-westphalian justice.

But my work also points to the continuous emergence of new or, at any rate, newly-premised, forms of conditionality that go beyond access to welfare (Dwer, 2004; Dean, 2006; Foster, 2017) and instead extend into the very realm of citizenship. Here, conditionality forecloses a wider range of accesses: basic human dignity, ontological validity, moral personhood, to name just a few. This is a trend that austerity may have exacerbated (Collins, 2008). As people see and feel their worth changing, they increasingly attempt to perform within the kinds of categories of subjectivity and identity that are recognizable to the liberal state institutions, such as ‘victimhood’, ‘suffering’ or ‘officiality’. They do so not out of choice, or belief in the new moral frameworks that are pushed on them, but in an attempt to be make themselves legible to the state, and subsequently successfully positioned to access resources and make living. Tracing such positioning, I have shown how people have learned to stake claims in a harsh political and economic climate.

Finally, I have highlighted that whatever value constructions may dominate people’s domestic setting or private worlds, when it comes to tinkering with the state, these convictions must be cast aside in order for people to make themselves bureaucratically intelligible. The extent to which people always perform a certain role when tinkering with the state (Joseph, 1999; Ong, 2006) appears to be exacerbated to a status on constant performativity during austerity. Herein, we encounter the adversity of multiple valuation struggles co-existing. True, the values and moralities put forth by institutional interventions contradictorily adopted and at best only partially reproduced by the people they target (Narotzky, 2006). But a lifeworld in which recognition depends on making oneself intelligible still makes for a contradiction of lived experiences, so deeply entrenched, that I am sometimes no longer surprised that it results in psychological breakdown, depression or violence.

This is also why I showcased anger as a quest for recognition. Although this quest cannot be admitted into the categories for ‘registering victimhood’ (Fassin, 2012) available to the modern liberal state, I wanted to give credence to the deeply intimate consequences of the livelihood crisis, by showcasing how they, too, still attempt to meet institutional demand. The impalpability of such endeavours, despite their emotional and physical toll, reminds us of the direct link between embodied crisis and the need to sustain the body’s capacity as labour power. Embodied crisis and austerity regulation’s remaking of the lines of differentiation and entitlement are thus part and parcel of expanded reproduction during neoliberal capitalism, on which I will elaborate in the next section.

Reproducing the Household: Work, Value, and Expanded Reproduction Gone Intimate

By charting which livelihood avenues remain available to households and how the choice between different strategies is made, this thesis considered the types of actions and decisions the crisis of livelihood trope made possible, and which it foreclosed. This mapping was premised on the assumption that changes in capitalist relations come to be embedded in the everyday crisis of household livelihood. I suggested that the household is the space in which this entanglement and its effects can most clearly be witnessed because domestic social reproduction is embedded in a particular form of capitalist development on a multitude of scales. Recounting the everyday provisioning venues that the particular definitions of the “crisis of livelihood” engenders also necessitated charting the ways in which these paths are subject to regulation in general, and altered by the onset of austerity, in particular.

The analysis of the crisis modes of livelihood was intended to account for both, livelihood strategies and their entanglement with forms of dispossession, exploitation and regulation, which are in turn mandated and interest-driven from above. In particular, I detailed how property becomes a critical asset for income generation via petty rent and the continuation of small businesses from inside the home; the reshuffling of the textile productive landscape in favour of highly fragmented subcontracting regimes, the insertion of non-productive intermediaries who extract a large part of the profit and the working realities people who are forced to accept these dispossessions. I showcased people’s continued determination to make a living as well as how the creative inventiveness channelled into survival is informed simultaneously by the hardships of the past and their successful re-initiation in the present. Simultaneously, I accounted for how the neoliberal prerogatives (Rose, 1990) that are in place to push people into accepting responsibility for something they have no control over, lead to anxiety and affliction (Matthews, 2019; Sennett, 1998).

While long-established ways of making a living come increasingly to be at the centre of a statist gaze, the attempts at regulating livelihood are not unequivocally accepted by the people they target. Rather, families in particular attempt to escape such regulation and state-led ideological projects by retreating to the home. As a liminal space between public and private, in which livelihood activities can still be continued, social reproduction in the home increasingly relies on non-monetized relations from which little or no surplus can be extracted. At the same time, families also attempt to go deeper underground in an attempt to better hide what extractable income they do have. This attempt is not always successful and mobilizes a variety of contradictory responses and effects: domestic conflict, physical and psychological affliction, performances of victimhood, and struggles over resources and recognition.

My mapping of household social reproduction also went beyond the material, however. I have showcased how the peculiar form of embeddedness found in Guimarães has shaped the crisis of livelihood at the domestic level. While cycles of capital accumulation

and their mediation by state-led regulation are certainly crucial in mapping domestic social reproduction, I have suggested that the nitty gritty daily struggles at the household level are of equal importance. In the context of the livelihood crisis, the household becomes a site where different forms of exclusion and claim-staking take shape; where tensions around reciprocity and its linchpin of care are exacerbated; and where members negotiate various often contradictory moral and normative frameworks.

Thus, it is only in the interplay of both the extra-local factors and the daily struggles of families that we can see and make sense of the crisis of livelihood. By showcasing how what is effectively highly dependent labour controlled from above is recast as autonomy, I detailed how the state withdraws from the responsibilities of social reproduction and pushes petty entrepreneurs into blatantly exploitative work relations. My analysis also reveals how turning once jointly employed people into competitors on the 'free market', effectivity dismantles the possibility for class-based solidarity and collective social bargaining.

What this insight reminds us of in theoretical terms, is that changes in the structure of capital accumulation, ideological projects and governmental morality are not simply superimposed on households and individuals. Rather, value frameworks are complexly and contradictorily apprehended and articulated by the people they target. In turn, these values structure people's pursuit of livelihood. Most immediately, I have showcased this in the weighing of the merits of subsistence versus the opportunity of a wage foregone, and by the contradictory adoption of the ideal entrepreneurial subjectivity. Moreover, the future visions of socially and environmentally just food production and distribution as it is projected by the farming coop highlights people's ability to live by directives not contained in state-led disciplinary strategies and ideological projects. Rather, both farmers and Maria's household attempt to resist state-led disciplining in order to live by what they considered to be good and proper principles.

As the most immediate and simultaneously most intimate scale of social reproduction, the household makes for an essential element in the successful strategy for livelihood. . But it is also the space in which precisely this complex interplay of desires, values and self-worth are balanced against the obligations implied in reciprocity, caring obligations and mutual responsibilities. Households are therefore the epicentres of the livelihood crisis. This in turn causes conflicts and pulls into question the model of Southern European familial welfare purportedly underlying household social reproduction. It also underlines Carsten's (2018) cautioning reminder that, despite being related by blood, family relations are suffused with endless conflicts.

Next to the embeddedness of domestic social reproduction in extra-local factors (Mingione, 1991; Palomera, 2014b), the household thus is also a space loaded with multiple "value struggles" (Collins, 2017), such as between income and subsistence, personal worth and economic value, or uncertain reciprocities around fuzzy notions of care. The values and moralities inform daily practices and future vision thus also can lie outside that which state-led regulation demands. Value systems and moralities may therefore be expressed, adopted, rejected or partially assumed, but it is always in their interplay that livelihood is negotiated.

In the next step, I revealed the cumulative effect of these livelihood strategies as resulting from people's exposure to structural violence, institutional abandonment and political neglect. That is, I detailed a situation in which household reproduction has for a long time hinged on family members' willingness and ability to tolerate overexertion as they attempt to counter balance the persistent insecurity and anxiety that structures their livelihood crisis. The extent to which insecurity as a disciplinary strategy enables exploitation and dispossession by facilitating continued surplus value extraction may have been somewhat underemphasized thus far. But it must now be fully attended to. In virtually all the examples I provided, the very immediacy of the need to make a living pushes people to accept, or continue to engage in, blatant exploitation or dispossession. In fact, the very definition of the livelihood crisis that I extrapolated from the perspective of work and income underlines this insecurity: whichever avenue for livelihood-making that people choose, they always meet criminalization, exploitation and institutionally-sanctioned injustice at every turn. Finally, documenting the personal, bodily and psychological consequences of this mode of livelihood opened the door for examining the forms of contestation and protest devised in this context, for example, when the one critical asset of reproduction (the home) is dispossessed.

Thus, the exacerbation of the livelihood crisis with austerity also constitutes a theoretically relevant moment from more than just the perspective of regulation and neo-liberal expansion. Most recently, in this context, austerity has been described as the coming together of political and economic powers precisely for the purpose of expanded reproduction (Lapavistas, 2009; Rakopoulos, 2011). The shift in governmental morality (Li, 2006; Rose, 1996; Gordon, 1991) that came with the onset of austerity certainly underscores these points. But austerity also rendered undeniably visible the regulation of social life via the tools of insecurity and institutional abandonment and how that makes for a useful strategy of accumulation (Li, 2017; Povinelli, 2011).

The "we have always been in crisis" of my interlocutors emphasizes their constant struggle to reshuffle, reallocate and mediate what funds and income opportunities are available to them. But the point remains that struggling even at the cost of one's personal exertion, may still not allow for making ends meet. Try as people might, their livelihoods continue to be structurally austere, marked by deprivation, downward mobility, affliction, fear over the future and conflictual social relations. The maintenance of this state of permanent insecurity, which my interlocutors define as permanent crisis, serves the cycles of capital accumulation and those in power, who are able to manipulate the narrative of permanent crisis to work in their interest.

Part of my objective in the historical backgrounds provided throughout the chapters was to showcase how maintaining a sense of insecurity while permitting people to *only just* get by, has in fact been a strategy of accumulation for decades, if not centuries. It was actively deployed to ensure docility, instil a sense of fear and uncertainty over the future and thereby make people available for exploitation, extraction, and dispossession. Initially, this was achieved by dispossessing them of land to free up that land and labour for industrial ventures and later to ensure their adherence to labour repressive

policies. I have elaborated on the many kinds of work that the notion of the livelihood crisis performs in informing working relations, the acceptance of abuse, insecurity and anxiety. These emerge as present-day tools by which local populations are made available for surplus value extraction.

While those in the positions of power to declare a crisis, narrate and mobilize the trope on their behalf may be shifting over time, the strategies to maintain uncertainty and anxiety are remarkably constant. Equally constant is the way that the people who experience such insecurity and anxiety suffer from these strategies. This is the persistence aspect of the crisis of livelihood: its historical and political rootedness as a living reality for *gente à baixo* who are in a position of durable inequality and whose ability to mobilize alternative hegemonic visions is limited (Tilly, 2001).

Part of my contribution to this field lies in showcasing the class differences inherent in the experience of crisis: while those with some basic security or resources may indeed be able to recast the open-endedness (Roitman, 2014) of the crisis situation as an occasion for hope (Hage, 2016) and opportunity, those without access to the resources necessary for hope are exposed to the full force of insecurity and anxiety. More often than not, they lack even the resources to resist the furthering of their exploitation and so, suffer accordingly. Their suffering does not simply take the form of material deprivation, conflictual social relations or feelings of neglect, but comes to increasingly impact their mental and physical health.

With these insights, my work contributes to a growing body of literature detailing the relationship between transforming labour relations and the regulation of social life under neoliberalism. As announced in the introduction, the findings seem to make several theoretical suggestions possible. For one, in the situation of austerity, expanded reproduction seems to infiltrate the very possibility of households' social reproduction. Herein, it produces not only previously unknown forms of exploitation and surplus extraction, but patterns of making a living in which literally putting food on the table can become a challenge. As such, applying Harvey's analysis of expanded reproduction, dispossession, and extraction, to the question of household social reproduction, reveals capital's increasing ability to insert itself into the very fabric of people's lives. Accumulation by Dispossession then occurs, not only in the financial sector and the real estate market, but in people's everyday livelihood.

Secondly, the notion of crisis gone intimate seems to tie in with Federici's (2014) intriguing extension of Harvey's concept, in which she challenges us to chart, analyse and theorize the concept of expanded reproduction from the perspective of the intimate sphere of the body. In this way, "we have always been in crisis" turns out to be a reflection of the way that capitalism has been able to permeate an ever-increasing portion of social and private life. I hope to have highlighted how—in response to the increasing infringement of both capital and regulation into the private sphere—people retreat into their homes and households in order to continue making a living. Here too, however, the logic of capital accumulation and state-led regulation increasingly penetrate: through the sanctioning of alleged informality; in the attempt to squeeze higher tax revenue out of people; in the insertion of non-productive intermediaries; and in the introduction of a new type of ideal citizenship premised on officiality. What is more, capitalism and the state even

seem to insinuate themselves into the very bodies of their subjects, as people try, and sometimes fail, to perform an institutionally recognizable, obediently official, tax-paying citizenship. Extending the concept of expanded reproduction to the sphere of bodies and households showcases how any economic, social, personal, or even affective relation between people holds the potential for being transformed into a relation of exploitation.

Finally, 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. From the perspective of Federici's suggestion, we can come to analyse affliction as intricately connected to capitalism's management and disciplining of the body as labour power. In this way, we can understand the infiltration of deeply intimate realms of being and subjectivity and their subsequent transformation into bases for exploitation. Most immediately, I have identified this infiltration by showcasing how people turn to pharmaceuticals in order to "buy time" for the productive, reproductive and emotional labours required of them (Vuckovic, 1999). In this way, they are quite literally trading health for livelihood. Realising the depth to which this version of expanded reproduction extends, my analysis is but scratching the surface of a whole lot of potential further research. For example, the gender gap of over-exertion, medication and health trade-offs (Hochschild, 1983; Lima, 2016).

"The Right to a Pension for those who didn't have a Childhood"

The crisis of livelihood as it is currently experienced in Guimarães is, most broadly, a result of capitalism's ability to insert itself into an ever-increasing portion of social and private life. If we return this analysis to the parallel accounting of people's lives and their conditioning by the logic of regulation and accumulation, a question emerges: If, as I stated in the introduction, this thesis is not about austerity per se, then why is austerity such a recurrent theme throughout it? Most immediately, I have shown how austerity is merely the current, institutional name for a crisis of livelihood my informants have experienced for decades. Moreover, and building on the concept of expanded reproduction, austerity is also the ultimate aligning of political and economic power to further the stipulations of neoliberal capitalism (Lapavistas, 2009; Smith, 2011).

The ethnography of the crisis of livelihood that I have presented here suggests that austerity goes beyond just rendering neoliberalism incontestable, however. In the push towards the increasing commodification of all social, economic, and political relations, we find more than just previously unknown forms of exploitation rooted in capitalism's penetration of the most intimate spheres of life. Austerity also pushes for participation in an expanded reproduction that is unaccompanied by any promises of emancipation in return for such participation (Harvey, 2003; Kasmir & Carbonella, 2006, Ho & Cavanaugh, 2019).

As regards the broader ramifications of this research, this marks a new dimension of dispossession within the EU. No longer is behaviour in line with the neoliberal ideal

encouraged via the promise of socio-economic convergence. Nor is it made convincing through far-reaching social and inclusion policies, as may arguably have been the method of choice in the northern European Model of the welfare state (Epsing-Andersen, 1990; Mingione, 2010; Ghezzi, 2007). Rather, austerity actually limits access to the welfare state and its social protections and imposes a state-led dispossession on people's livelihoods. In so doing, it effectively coerces them into participation in market-driven exploitation.

Austerity therefore marks the de facto legalization of unprecedented forms of exploitation and dispossession. And this legalization, alongside it being rendered into "the new state of normal" (Makropoulos, 2013: 19) open many avenues for further research.

It is still my contention that while the crisis of livelihood is neither new, nor a result of austerity, the onset of austerity still constituted a key moment in people's understanding of their livelihood, its crisis and the wider socio-economic implications. This is the case because, as we have learned from scholars of post-socialism, moments of systemic breakdown are capable of exposing the patterns whereby processes inherent in the productive and accumulative strategies are exacerbated. What changed with austerity then, was that the exacerbation of exploitative processes made them visible to the very people they target. As a result of this visibility, and the clarity with which it was based on differentiation, cause my informants to become disillusioned with the premise of equality and mutual advancement promised by EU integration.

Austerity thus marks a relevant moment in the lives of my interlocutors because it rendered blatantly obvious the continued existence of stark economic and social disparities within the EU. In part, my contribution to this body of work is an account of the wide traction that the notion of convergence with a northern European model of the welfare state has had in Guimarães. I detailed what people were willing to endure in order to actualize this convergence. Only that now, with austerity, it became clear that there would be no convergence. There is only the production and sustenance of a durable inequality under the banner of "culture" and the allegation of "lazy southerners".

But where does this knowledge leave us, in regard to the durability of crisis as experienced by people at the grassroots level? And what about Peixoto's allegation of ignorance of policy makers, politicians, as to the reality of living under such circumstances? A few days after our conversation, I discovered that Peixoto's "the right to a pension for those who didn't have a childhood" was quoted from a newspaper article. The article was written in response to a controversy caused by a remark of Jeroen Dijsselbloem³⁷, in which he stated that "As a Social Democrat, I attribute ex-

37 Jeroen Dijsselbloem is a member of the Dutch Labour party (PvdA) and served as President of the Eurogroup from 21 January 2013 to 12 January 2018. He was also President of the Board of Governors of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) from 11 February 2013 to 12 January 2018. He was appointed following the 2012 resignation of Jean-Claude Juncker as president of the Eurogroup, ie. the 17 eurozone finance ministers. His appointment was contentious especially since German Chancellor Merkel had been pressing for Wolfgang Schäuble to be appointed, and the debate about chairmanship of the Eurogroup returned following the controversy around his above statement. Compare: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2015/02/05/europes-fault-lines>; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/20/wolfgang-schauble-70-save-eurozone>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/17/business/global/merkel-presses-schauble-to-head-eurogroup.html>

ceptional importance to solidarity. But those who call for it also have duties. I cannot spend all my money on drinks and women and then hold my hand up for help. That principle applies on a personal, local, national and also on a European level”. It was later alleged, but never proven, that Dijsselbloem was referring to Southern European countries who received a bailout package from the troika following the 2008 financial crisis. In particular, the statement was viewed as a criticism of the relatively low retirement age common in southern European countries—an element of great contention during the MoU negotiations of policy changes in Portugal and elsewhere (FAZ 19/03/17; Financial Times, 21/03/17).

In the week following this interview, one of the most popular newspaper articles was a response piece published in the *Journal de Noticias*. It is written by the journalist and *Bloco do Esquerda* parliamentarian, Mariana Mortágua, and entitled “O direito ao reforma para quem nao teve infancia” (the right to a pension for those who did not have a childhood)³⁸. The article persuasively illustrates Dijsselbloem’s and other Northern Europeans politicians’ ignorance regarding Portuguese people’s history, the country’s industrial and social development, and the lived experience of the population. It is this article that Peixoto was citing.

Dijsselbloem’s assertions, and the controversial discussion on “cultural differences” in the EU that ensued in response, seemed to be a highly pertinent summary of precisely the ignorance that Peixoto was also referring to, and which have structured so much of the discourse on austerity and difference within the EU. Both these allegations grossly misapprehend the living reality—the livelihood crisis—of the respective ‘culprits’, and recast them as laziness or greed. I examined many of these stereotypes throughout this thesis and hope thereby to have shown that many of these assumptions are based on a faulty, culturalist readings of people’s motivations.

As such, austerity has not just shattered a moral arrangement of social advancement via the dual forces of Keynesian redistributive social politics and progressive emancipatory integration. The condition of national austerity has also dispelled the illusion of this arrangement’s essential premise, namely, that of being part of a process of political ‘democratic’ inclusion and social ‘convergence’ (Smith, 2011). In fact, austerity underlined that these structural differences were not effectively challenged, but rather upheld to maintain durable inequality. It appears that, during austerity, the ideal of European convergence was abandoned in favour of the legitimization of national and international sanctions. These would be the very sanctions that made it possible to deny a pension to someone who began his working life at age ten.

This thesis has traced the devastating effects on the people of Guimarães resulting from the realization that this democratic inclusion and social convergence will never come to be. I charted what happens when the tower of anticipated convergence, autonomy, and emancipated economic freedom collapses, and people land in an un-

38 retrieved for thesis purposes, Feb 28th, 2019: <https://www.jn.pt/opiniao/mariana-mortagua/interior/o-direito-a-reforma-para-quem-nao-teve-infancia-6213846.html>

dercurrent of sustained pauperization, decreasing citizenship rights, and durable inequality. In this situation, people often tend to accept whatever avenues make livelihood possible—exploitative, abusive and sickening as they might be.

If the popular media narratives on austerity in southern Europe were to be believed, then my hosts and interlocutors should have been indebted, jobless, homeless, dressed in rags and subject to the wilful rule of corrupt politicians. But, although times are rough and some families struggle to pay bills at the end of the month or adequately heat their homes in the winter, the people I got to know in the Vale do Ave are not, in fact, in any imminent danger of starvation or homelessness. The vast majority of them are juggling their limited resources and organizing for what they deem absolutely essential. Although the pursuit of livelihood is often sustained at great personal expense, people are still managing to define principles of what they deem good and proper and organize accordingly. But the point remains that how they organize for the pursuit of livelihood remains fundamentally inapprehensible to the gaze of the state. Recounting, analysing and crediting the crisis of livelihood and its consequences, in spite of the institutional failure to grasp them, is my personal and political contribution.

Surplus value extraction at the expense of people's physical and mental integrity persists, however, and that means that the crisis of livelihood itself will also likely continue. What has changed due to austerity, then, is that ordinary people are now able to clearly see the false promises of both neoliberal capitalism and EU integration. They are also becoming acutely aware of the punitive and unjust regulations and guilt-games they are being subjected to. They attempt to contest this injustice, both by employing innovative strategies to make a living and by creating crisis narratives of their own. That these facts are now discernible to people at the grassroots level and have come to bear on their everyday modes of livelihood making, may transform the Vale do Ave into a space loaded with critical political possibility. But whether this possibility will ever be channelled into open protest remains to be seen.