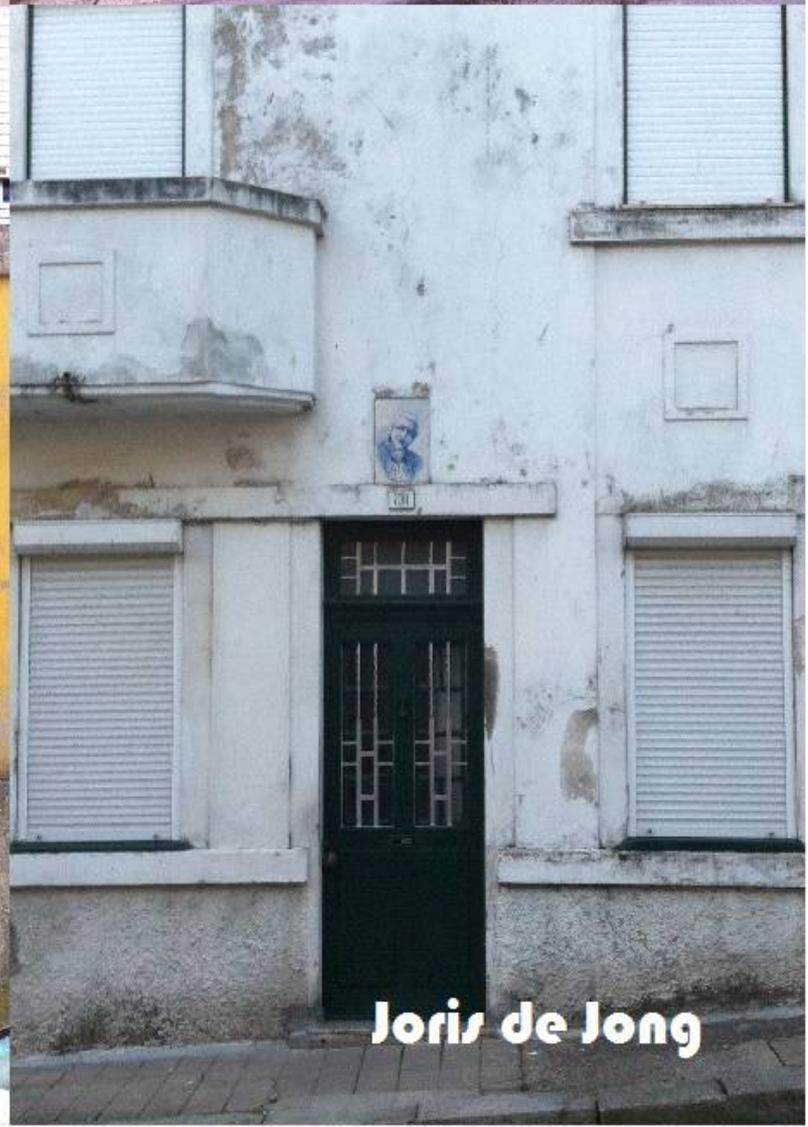


let's see what happens

An ethnographic study of the economic crisis as it relates to narratives, history and cultural change in Porto, Portugal

2014

António e Isabel



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These are people of suffering, not of joy. [...] Of pain, of drowned sorrow, of wet eyes, of thoughts of the past. Of bleary gaze, of deep-rooted fear, of lack of future, of disillusionment; of resignation.

Pedro Neves, 2012. "Água Fria"¹

¹ A short documentary about being Portuguese.

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Prologue

I was sitting in the car with Filipe. We were on our way towards the training ground where I was allowed to train with him and his football team during the time of my fieldwork. Getting to know each other little by little, I told him that I was doing a research on the economic crisis in Porto. I asked him: “Do you ever talk about the crisis, here in team?”. “We don't really talk about that kind of stuff”, he said. “This is just for fun you know. These guys like to make jokes, it's not serious”. Arriving at the small local football club, as soon as we entered the dressing room and shook hands with everyone who was present, jokes and curse words started flying around. Although my Portuguese was getting better, I did not understand a word that was being said – or rather, shouted. After a while I could make out quite a lot of curse words, said to be common for the people of Porto, or the *Portuenses*, as they are called. On the way back we talked about the crisis. “Yes, things should change”, he told me. “People should perhaps be protesting, but the Portuguese people are too soft”.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This introduction is divided in three parts. First of all I will define the research, its aim as well as its scientific and social relevance. Secondly, I will outline the research methods. Thirdly, I will outline the theoretical framework.

1.1 Defining the research

Can the economic crisis that started around 2008 be seen as a period of societal or cultural change? In this thesis I will attempt to answer this question by looking at the context of the city of Porto and to some extent, Portugal. It is an ethnographic account that explores “the crisis” with a holistic view by putting it in a broader perspective; the way it relates to society, history and culture. It is thereby in some way a tentative product in the sense that it explores to what extent such a question can be researched – and what knowledge can be gained – through an ethnographic account and the anthropological emphasis on culture. The aim of this research is to provide insight into the broader dynamics of the economic crisis; the way it embeds in a local context and develops over time, being shaped by the context's history and culture. Anna Tsing argues that we should stop making a distinction between “global” forces and “local” spaces as “the cultural processes of all “place” making and all “force” making are both local and global (2000: 352). The crisis is an example of how the two – the global and the local – come together, entangle and grow until the distinction between the two is almost unrecognisable. Can we acknowledge that the economic crisis also exists on the cultural level? And does that mean the crisis can be seen as a period of societal or cultural change? And if so, can any cultural change be attributed to the crisis or is it merely a process going on regardless of its occurrence? In looking at the crisis in such a way I hope to provide insight on the way people's experience of the crisis is shaped, as well as the crisis itself, and the way cultural narratives play a part in this process.

Portugal as a country has witnessed several large societal transitions over the last four decades. These include the transition from dictatorship towards democracy in the 1970's, the process of modernisation and increase of prosperity after joining the European Union in 1986 and an increasingly individualised and consumerist society as well as an increase of neoliberal policies and retreat of the welfare state (Glatzer, 2012; Baumgarten, 2013). Porto as a city also experienced changes, albeit of different sorts, the latest being the rise of the city as a tourist hot-spot. The economic crisis and its impact is strongly visible in both contexts but my research will focus more on Porto as this was the context of my fieldwork.

The central argument of this thesis is that although the crisis in the context of Porto can be seen as a distinct period to some extent, it is at the same time a continuation of historical processes in which certain cultural narratives persist and resurface. Indeed, I will argue that certain cultural narratives have their influence on the way the crisis has taken shape in the context of Porto.

To answer the main question, I have formulated the following subsidiary questions:

- ³⁵₁₇ Can the crisis be dubbed a disaster, and thus as a distinct period in time?
- ³⁵₁₇ How does the crisis relate to other historical periods or events in the context of Porto and Portugal?
- ³⁵₁₇ What narratives do people use in making sense of the crisis?

With these questions in mind, I will sketch a broad image of the crisis in the context of Porto, some characteristics which extend to Portugal as a country as well. This image includes description of people's experience of the crisis, their narratives and stories as well as the reality of the crisis and relevant changes in the context of Porto. This thesis is about whether, we can – or should – view the crisis from a cultural perspective. How does one evaluate societal or cultural change at a moment in time so close to the 'event'? To be able to relate and differentiate between viewing the crisis as a global economic phenomenon and the crisis as a period of societal or cultural change in a local context, this thesis builds upon the following theoretical pillars:

- ³⁵₁₇ The analogy of a disaster or 'disaster-theory'
- ³⁵₁₇ The constructive elements of narratives
- ³⁵₁₇ The concepts of cultural change and the role of crises within this concept
- ³⁵₁₇ The transition from modernity to liquid (or late) modernity

The first two concepts serve as analytical tools to evaluate the crisis as a distinct period of time; to which extent is it distinct from other periods of change in Portuguese history? Is the crisis still going on or has it reached the phase of 'aftermath'? By using the analogy of a disaster and looking at the narratives people use, I will look at the way the crisis is experienced and how this experience is being shaped, constructed, and keeps developing over time. This is relevant because in order to bridge the analytical gap between seeing the crisis as an economic hard time and seeing it as a period of cultural change, the emic perspective of the people living in the context can provide the meaning the crisis carries in the social reality of Porto. Their experience is shown through the narratives they use concerning the crisis, thereby constructing, in a sense, the crisis itself, as I will

show throughout the empirical chapters. The latter two pillars: theory on cultural change and liquid modernity are necessary to put the crisis in perspective of the larger processes of change in western society. The concept of cultural change and the role of crises within this process is necessary to be able to assess and analyse the economic crisis in the context of Porto further in this respect. What is cultural change and to what extent can one recognise the influence of the economic crisis on this level? To elaborate further on the nature of any potential cultural influence of the economic crisis I will view it in light of the concept of late or liquid modernity. Later on in this chapter I will elaborate on these theoretical pillars further.

1.1.1 Scientific and social relevance

Although the crisis can be seen as a global phenomenon I will not go too much into its existence on a global level, but rather the way it is embedded on the local level; the way it experienced and shaped locally. As Karen Ho speaks of the need for “ethnographic engagement that tracks the global as cultural action grounded in specific practices and locales that can be thickly described”, this thesis is an attempt to view the crisis in that regard (2005: 68). The evaluation of the crisis as a disaster fits into this approach as it emphasises the emic experience and local specificity as opposed to the view of the crisis as a global monolithic event. In that sense, I agree with Anna Tsing’s statement that: “The specificity of global connections is an ever-present reminder that universal claims do not actually make everything everywhere the same” (2005: 1). As stated before my intention with this research is not to give an overview of the impact of crisis in the domains of the economic, the political and the social. Rather, it is an emphasis on the cultural side of the crisis, which demands a holistic view of the context. In that sense, I hope to add insight in the economic crisis as it relates to different sides of society. Specifically regarding Porto, this might aid to reflect on social-economic policies. I will reflect more on the research and its limitations in the fifth chapter.

1.1.2 Thesis build-up

This thesis contains three empirical chapters, the fifth chapter being the conclusion.

Chapter 2. The crisis as a disaster. In this chapter I will explore to what extent the crisis can be seen as a disaster. By doing this, it will become clearer if the crisis amounts to a distinct period of time, which would help to assess the crisis as a period of change. Furthermore, I will introduce the cultural narratives which I believe shape the crisis as an experience and as a period.

Chapter 3. The crisis in perspective of history. This chapter focusses on the cultural narratives as introduced in the first chapter and the way it relates to past events and periods. Acknowledging that every disaster is preceded by a process, there is a need to look at the historic build-up which has played a role in both the crisis as well as the narratives that still seem to resonate today.

Chapter 4. The crisis and its aftermath. In the last empirical chapter I will elaborate to what extent certain cultural narratives shape the crisis – in both experience and reality – as it, to some extent, reaches its aftermath in the context of Porto. I will assess certain processes that are going on in the city as they relate to the crisis as a period of cultural change.

Chapter 5. The crisis as a period of cultural change? In the concluding chapter I will add up the findings from the empirical chapters and draw my conclusions to the extent this is possible. Also, I will reflect on the value and limitations of these findings and the research itself, as well as propose suggestions for further research.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Research context and doing fieldwork

The data used in this thesis is the result of three months of fieldwork, which has been done under several considerations. First of all, I will explain the choice of the context of the research and the way the subsequent fieldwork has been done. I have chosen Porto, as it is a large city in Portugal, a country that is amongst the countries most severely hit by the crisis. As Greater Porto amounts to a fairly large urban area of around two million people, it can be seen as the economic and cultural centre of northern Portugal – opposed to Lisbon in the south. As large cities are dynamic and socially complex, I expected to see different and more dimensions of the crisis there than in a small rural town. This being said, I do believe as much as the researcher chooses his or her research context, the research context also determines the research itself. As is often seen, anthropologists are guided by what they find in the field, sometimes changing the research(question) altogether. In that sense, choosing any other city in Portugal would have resulted in a different thesis. The important thing is, in my opinion, that one allows these unexpected – and perhaps even random – directions and encounters as they might prove to be beneficial to the research. The distinctive features of the field required for me as an anthropologist to be flexible, perhaps inventive to some extent², and to persevere in looking for informants.

1.2.2 Data and informants

The data I gathered during my fieldwork can be put into two main categories: data gained from talking to my informants and data gained from observation, which includes reading newspapers and articles and watching (ethnographic) documentaries as well as plainly observing daily life in Porto. The one stream of information I would reflect upon and mirror with the other – as well as between individual sources – to achieve some level of data triangulation. In practise, this meant discussing the topics that one informant would come up with, with other informants to see what their opinion on the matter was. Also, I would follow their mentioning and directions on sources, historical events and other references. For both participant-observation and interviewing I have used the technique of *noting*. This resulted in jot notes, field notes and methodological and analytical notes – all in a little notebook I carried with me at all times. Also, I used a recorder as well as a camera in addition to notes and memory, providing auditory and visual data.

²I have, for example, used ethnographic documentaries as sources.

Over time I encountered numerous people willing to talk to me about my research topic, where in the beginning of my fieldwork I was struggling to find informants. Perhaps this is common in fieldwork, as it takes time to set up a social network necessary to find informants. Due to the nature of my topic and the field of research, everybody I would meet was a potential informant. This made it more difficult in terms of looking specifically for a certain group in which to mingle, but easier in the sense that everybody I encountered could help me with my research.

My informants can mostly be divided into three categories. The first group consists of those who I met at my regular place for having lunch; a small cafeteria in the centre of the city. These were mostly young people ranging from twenty to thirty-five years of age. Many of them studied or had studied at the school of fine arts which was nearby and many were working in the ‘creative’ sector: architecture (and some in construction), (tattoo) art and so on. The second category includes those who I met through contacting several organisations; one of the organisations was politically active while the other was not, although concerned with the future of the city by developing ideas of all kinds. The third category includes all the people I met whilst living in Porto; some through the social proximity of living in the same house, some through the snowball method (referenced by other informants) and some via social media. All three categories were by no means closed groups, but often there would be some level of acquaintancy between the individual informants. Overall, I had many informal conversations, mostly in public spaces, of which ten to fifteen could be regarded as interviews. Often the conversations and interviews happened spontaneously or was I unable to record it due to circumstances such as background noise. As I have become efficient in taking notes during conversations, I still could derive and reproduce enough useful information. Sometimes, I would also bring up a certain topic again in a second conversation or through email or social media.

1.2.3 Participant-observation and interviewing

According to DeWalt and DeWalt participant-observation entails: “the use of the information gained from participating and observing through explicit recording and analysis” (2011: 2). It can be regarded as the starting point of any ethnographic research as it opens the doors to the use of subsequent qualitative research methods such as different kinds of interviewing. Interviewing can be done in different ways and I used mostly the more informal kind as many of my conversations were spontaneous and without rigorous structure. Although I had prepared questions for my informants, often I would let them talk freely to see where our conversation would take us, hoping to find out best what the crisis meant to *them*. Instead of always pushing the conversation in a particular direction, I would try to adapt the questions to the discussed topics and the way the conversation developed. These kind of interviews are therefore best regarded as conversations that

allow for “new insights into the point of view of the participants” – to borrow the words of DeWalt and DeWalt – and in that way I tried to gain as much of the *emic* perspective of my informants as possible (2011: 137).

1.2.4 Ethics

Important to note are the ethical issues that play a part doing fieldwork. Although I did not encounter any grave ethical problems while doing fieldwork, it would be easy to forget about them. However, protecting ones informants and gaining their informed consent are requirements for doing fair and ethical research. I informed my informants of my intentions of writing a thesis based on their contributions and I asked for their consent, which due to the nature of my topic – not necessarily a ‘sensitive’ topic – was agreed to by all. Moreover, I anonymised the names of all my informants in order to protect their identity.

1.2.5 Ethnography and thesis writing

Acknowledgement to the influence of the researcher on the research findings should be given. Partly, this happens through the writing of the end-product, in this case, a thesis. Jerome Bruner notes that: “knowledge is never point-of-viewless” (1991: 3). Thus, as writing a thesis is an attempt at *creating* knowledge, this is very much shaped by the author's point of view. Also, the choice to use certain theory as analytical tools shapes the result of the research. In that sense, I do not believe in suggesting an objective image of reality through ethnography (or social science for that matter). Rather, I see this thesis as proposing an interpretation of, in this case, the crisis in the context of Porto and subsequent topics.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

1.3.1 *The analogy of a disaster or 'disaster-theory'*

Let us return to the analogy of the crisis as a disaster. Disaster theory emphasises the way in which any disaster – whether natural or human – is always a *process*, although it might be experienced as a *sudden* event (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, 2002: 1). It is a process in the sense that the *vulnerability* to a particular calamity, and for it to have the impact it has, has been constructed and developing over a period of time. Oliver-Smith and Hoffman call this a “historically produced pattern of vulnerability”, which means the origins of a disaster are traceable historically (2002: 1). Disasters, in terms of cause and effect, do not occur out of the blue. That being said – if one would for example picture a volcanic eruption – disasters are by definition *experienced* as unexpected.

Disasters can be said to 'challenge' society as its adaptations do no longer suffice and the shortcomings of its institutions are shown. In that sense, they show a need for change. Regarding the crisis, similar logic would mean it could be viewed as a potentially society-changing event or period in time. That is why Oliver-Smith and Hoffman call for an anthropology of *disaster*, as they argue that: “disasters unmask the nature of a society's social structure” (2001: 7). In that sense, there is much to learn from disasters. If the crisis could be considered a disaster, this ‘social structure’ – which would include economic, political and social institutions – would be revealed for their shortcomings, ineffectiveness, unfairness and so on. Such a disclosure could play a role in the following *aftermath* of the crisis. According to Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, the aftermath of a disaster: “generally involves tensions among diverse interest groups and values [as it is about] what has been lost and what is to be reconstituted” (2002: 10). It is in the period that constitutes the aftermath of a disaster, that cultural change might occur.

1.3.2 *The concept of cultural change in regard to the crisis*

Culture is negotiated and contested, and when a system does not reproduce its logic automatically – as happens during a crisis – projects for a new system emerge (Castells, 2012: 7). It should be emphasised that cultural change is very much a process in which negotiation and power relations within society determine the outcome. As such, it remains to be seen whether the crisis has meant, or will mean, a rupture or new period as it depends on how this process of negotiation unfolds. Ideally, this would lead to a *cultural compromise*, in which “all actors involved can recognise [elements] as congruent to their respective long-term interests” (Wimmer, 2002: 28).

Let us return to the question how to view the current economic crisis in this regard. It is on first glance a crisis of the financial system and the economy. Indeed, Castells et al. note that: “The current crisis stems from the destructive trends induced by the dynamics of a deregulated global capitalism [...]” (2012: 2). This current form of capitalism has developed through the increasing manifestation of neoliberalism ever since the 1980's, which has meant an increasing number of policies of deregulation favouring corporations, business and financial institutions (Castells et al, 2012: 2). As, on a conceptual level, a crisis is really a *systematic* problem, “the crisis” could be seen as the *failure* of financial capitalism itself. At the same time, however, it can also be seen as inherent to how the system of capitalism *works*. Zygmunt Bauman calls it a “parasitic system” as it lives off its host – a local economy or resource – until there is nothing left to gain from it, only to move on to its next victim. He notes that: “the present credit crunch [or financial crisis] does not signal the end of capitalism – only the exhaustion of the latest grazing pasture” (2010: 16). This assessment would mean capitalism in its current form is far from being in crisis itself. Viviana Zelizer notes that, whenever there is a systematic crisis, there is an indication of a *cultural* crisis (*in* Castells et al, 2012: 13). However, in that sense, there would be no need for change as capitalism does not appear to be a malfunctioning system. That being said, from a societal point of view, the crisis has been detrimental in its effects, making some sort of change desired.

1.3.3 The transition from modernity to liquid (or late) modernity

As before I discussed the analogy of the crisis as a disaster and that this would mean viewing the crisis as a distinct period of time. However, opposed to this is the view of Bauman and Bordoni, who, in their book *State of Crisis* argue that that the current crisis is really a symptom of a larger societal transition towards *liquid modernity*. Processes which have led to the crisis in the first place, are endemic to our current day and age, and perhaps are continuing in the same fashion as before. Indeed, they state that the crisis is a permanent one:

A special feature of this crisis is its duration [...]. Now the crises – so vague and generalized because they involve much of the planet [...] never seems to end. The crisis is here to *stay*.

Bauman and Bordoni, 2014: 6

Emphasising its longevity and permanence, this current crisis is perhaps different than its predecessors. In what he calls *liquid* times, Bauman says that change now has become so ever-present, fast, and intangible that it is to be viewed as a *continuous* process:

The pace of change (inside our cultural area) is currently mind-boggling; changes are continuous and ubiquitous; and condensations of changes dense enough to justify drawing a new generational borderline seem either an almost daily, routine event, or on the contrary, fewer and further between than ever.

Bauman, 2008: 62

Whereas before perhaps a particular occurrence or 'upheaval' was needed for a 're-valuation of values', according to Bauman: “the liquid modern world is in a state of *permanent revolution*” (2008: 64). Taking all this into account will be helpful to see where the crisis stands in relation to cultural change in the context of Porto.

1.3.4 Constructing reality through narratives

Another theoretical tool in analysing the crisis as a period of cultural change is the way people use narratives to construct social reality. To understand how this process works, Ivan Marquez' description of narratives is useful:

[Narratives] can be seen as the locus of a kind of immanent, situated knowledge of social reality. Narratives, in this sense, can be defined in opposition to the kind of abstract, transcendent, theoretical knowledge that is disembodied from the irreducible particularity of social life.

Marquez, 2015: 85

Narratives are thus experiences, opinions and views of a different kind than “abstract, transcendent, theoretical knowledge”. These narratives themselves are again influenced by one's own life-world. According to Bruner this happens through “cultural products, like language and other symbolic systems [which] mediate thought and place their stamp on our representations of reality” (1991: 3). Regarding narratives as such shows a constructionist view of reality and through analysing them I looked at the way “the crisis” is constructed, elaborating on its cultural side. The importance of theory on narratives is that it can be seen as a way the crisis is constructed as an event and a period. On a local level, narratives are a medium through which people make sense of reality, especially in times of “dramatic social change”, to borrow the words of Daniel Knight, such as the crisis (2012: 3). Another important aspect of narratives is the way they relate to *history*. Misia Landau explain this connection:

History can be seen as a series of critical moments and transitions. Once they are organized into

narrative form, individual events that had been conceived of as merely successive often gain additional significance as “turning points,” “crisis”, or “transitions.

1997: 116

As Landau acknowledges the existence of 'critical moments' in history, she also argues that these moments are important precisely *because* they are given significance. This happens through the use of *narratives* which shows that the events themselves are therefore partially culturally constructed. By relating the current event or situation to those in the past, people attempt to make sense of the present. To return to the crisis as a disaster, strategies of adaptation to deal with the current situation therefor often come from history as “history informs cultural repertoire” (Knight, 2012: 2). Not only is the event itself shaped and constructed through narratives, they also serve as a continuation of history, as Knight states, “combining past and present in polytemporal embrace” (2012: 2).

Interlude 1



“Porto is the city of vacant buildings and wandering old men” I thought to myself, organising the observations I had made over the first few weeks of fieldwork. I was still trying to make sense of Porto; to understand what it was like to live there. What can you learn about the field by merely observing? In some streets every other building is empty, either with a collapsed roof or for sale, or in different stages of degradation through time. The combination of heavy rain and a strong sun ages any woodwork quickly if not maintained. A close observer notices the curtains blowing through the broken windows of those which are not closed off with planks or bricks. Sometimes a pattern of tiles – showing an illustration of a saint or with a sentence or name written on it – reminds one of better times and makes you wonder of the reason for such a building to be in its current state. Walking through Porto one gets the feeling of a history of changes – prosperity followed by degradation – and you cannot help but notice the stark contrasts between these grand, old buildings, like relics from the past, and the less elegant modern ones that are spread around the centre sporadically, like symbols of rapid modernisation, becoming more numerous as one approaches the city's outskirts³.

³ Vignet based on fieldnotes

Chapter 2. The crisis as a disaster

In this chapter I will explore to what extent the crisis can be seen as a disaster. I will do this by sketching the crisis in the context of Porto through my informants stories, my own observations and other sources. This is necessary in order to elaborate on whether the crisis amounts to a distinct period of time. Furthermore, I will introduce the cultural narratives which I believe shape the crisis as an experience.

2.1 The crisis in the context of Porto

2.1.1 *Talking about the crisis*

How was the crisis experienced after such a long time after its initial phase? The first people I spoke to about the crisis were those people I had met randomly, through activities such as arranging my housing for the time of my fieldwork. Through these initial conversations they provided me with some first clues on the crisis and its effects on Porto and Portugal in general. This is an outtake of my conversation with Maria, an retired woman in her sixties, living together with her husband Pedro:

“I am here to do research about the crisis” I said. “The crisis?”, Maria asked and laughed, “Then you're in the right place!”. As we engaged in a conversation, she started telling me about the political situation in the country, and her general distrust in politics and politicians. While rolling a cigarette she sighed: “Something has to change. But the young people don't know what's going on. The older people, they remember the poverty that we had [in the 1960's]. Nothing is changing, really. But now we have a new prime-minister, he looks more confident, like he knows the world. Not like the other one, who must've never been outside his room. Do you know the (former) president blamed the Portuguese for not working hard enough [during the crisis]?”

Maria and me

As of the end of 2015 Portugal had a new government – which at the time of my fieldwork in February 2016 was quite recently. The government was now headed by the prime minister: António Costa and in a more peripheral role, the head of state which is the president: Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. Although having a new government was reason for some mild optimism, people seemed to be quite pessimistic in general. Some of my informants told me they did not even care to vote at all and many were not very positive minded about the crisis and politics in Portugal. Although times

could have been better, the crisis for them personally, however, was never that catastrophic. Marta, a middle-aged woman who was my neighbour, worked in a shopping mall close by. I asked her what the crisis meant to her:

For me it is going ok; I still have my job. The government should do more to create jobs. [I believe] nothing is going to change though, not even with this new government.

Marta

Vitor, who was in his early thirties, was educated as an architect and working in construction, voiced a similar opinion:

The economy is still good, you know. It's all relative, because it is still better than 40 years ago. People sometimes forget that. People continue to live more or less well, but the crisis just made it a bit less good.

Vitor

Of course the experience of the crisis depends on one's personal situation which makes the crisis hard to define as a period or event; not just from an academic viewpoint, but also terms of local sense-making. Talking about the crisis seemed to trigger many complaints about the government and the country in general: whether it was corruption, incompetence or injustice, and comparisons to former – and to some better – times were often made. If not hit directly by the crisis by, for example, losing one's job, my informants often mentioned the *austerity* measures of the government – implemented after the country's financial problems – as being the *initial* phase of the crisis, changing the economic situation for many people:

People are more tense now, because of the crisis. For example, I have a pension of 470 Euros, which is not a lot, but I am still working and have extra income this way. They also made the tax system more strict.

Pedro

Despite being a pensioner, Pedro was still working in order to have a more comfortable financial situation. Although the crisis did not directly change the economic situation of these people, through resulting policies and austerity measures by the government it was influencing their daily lives nonetheless. The crisis, in that sense, can be viewed as something more than a disaster; it has been developing over time. According to Miguel Glatzer, the austerity measures implemented as of

June 2011 by the government of prime minister Pedro Passos Coelho were: “a mix of increases in taxes, cuts in public sector pay and reductions or freezing of social benefits” (2012: 23). However, as Vitor argued, many of the changes occurring – economically and politically – were not necessarily instigated by the crisis, but put in motion before the event:

The [economic] reforms were already under way before the Troika⁴, so the crisis is not a big change. The way the market works and the privatisation is the problem, which is [something] forced onto Portugal. They privatised essential things like electricity and airports. This creates a sense of unfairness.

Vitor

One of the characteristics of a disaster is clearly visible here: namely, the way it uncovers and brings to the front elements of society that were previously obscured. Following the logic of disaster-theory, such elements could have played a role in the process to led up to the disaster. I will return to this point later on. First, I will return to the initial phase of my research and sketch a more detailed image of the way the crisis is experienced in Porto.

2.1.2 *Is the crisis still going on?*

Through these initial conversations, I was starting to explore the crisis and its edges and dimensions other than 'merely' the economic one. I was trying to understand how it was like to experience the crisis and what it does to a context such as Porto. Being unfamiliar with the city, I went to explore and observe:

Following the Avenida de Fernão de Magalhães – a long, straight road down – I passed cafeterias and little shops as I walked from my house towards the city centre. As I did my fair bit of walking, I soon started to get familiar with the main squares, the main streets that passed between them, as well as the smaller streets and little 'hidden' areas the city is known for. The squares, set up like little parks, provided public space which was used for social purposes as well as being more pedestrian friendly and hubs for public transport. All in all, these areas of the city were fairly busy containing concentrations of cafeterias, restaurants, bakeries and kiosks. Often, I would go to such a place to drink coffee as it was not expensive. The Portuguese like their coffee small and strong, and drinking in an establishment by oneself is a very common thing to do. Many people would sit alone at a small table, reading a newspaper, either taking their time or passing through quickly to continue to their destinations. A very common sight in

⁴Troika is a name commonly used for the decision group formed by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

the many squares and parks were the groups of old men playing cards whenever the weather allowed it⁵.

I could not help to think that – had I not known any better – it was almost like there was not really a crisis going on. Of course, there are the limits of observation, which as it stands alone, can only provide certain kinds of information to the anthropologist. Nevertheless, it does provide a sense of the context as well as a starting point for my conversations with informants. My observations – or rather, the difficulty of observing the crisis – was not something uncommon for outsiders. One of my informants, Filipe, told me about a friend of his visiting him from Spain, making the same assessment: “Why do they say there is a crisis here? The restaurants are full of people! In Spain it's all empty!”. The crisis in its local form is still not a homogeneous event, being experienced differently by people, making it hard to define and to make any general conclusions about it. Observations alone were not enough and as time passed I succeeded in finding more informants, many of them in a local canteen, which became a regular place for me to visit. In order to bridge the gap between subjective observation and experience from my part and the local or emic experience and reality – namely, a country hit hard by an economic crisis – I started asking people plainly: “*Is the crisis still going on?*”. Fábio, a documentary- and filmmaker in his early thirties, was stark in his opinion:

Yes [the crisis is still going on] and maybe it will never stop. The problems are still going on [and] in politics they keep making the same mistakes. There are really only two [political] parties. The thing here in Portugal is: you don't change your political party, the same as you don't change your football club.

Fábio

Other informants gave similar answers, sharing the opinion that the crisis in Portugal is cannot said to be over as the social and economic effects are still felt.

2.1.3 *Losing hope*

The reality of the crisis started to become clearer to me after I made contact with a local solidarity group active in distributing food for the very poor and the homeless. Although they agreed to do an interview, I joined them on one of their daily trips at the end of the workday. Every day, they would go around several private companies, in this case bakeries, receiving the unsold bread in large bags and subsequently put them in the freezer for the next day. It was a secular

⁵ Vignet based on fieldnotes

organisation made possible by volunteers and supported by the church, which provided them with an accommodation where they could prepare and hand out meals. As we started making the food collection round, they started telling me about their efforts:

Since 2009, we started with giving away 40 meals per day. But in 2015 this was around 240. Now it's 300, and with Christmas, we even prepare a diner of 400 meals. There are homeless people, but also families, children [...] These people are mentally broken, they are people who lost hope [because of the crisis]. They are on social support, but this is just a [very low amount] per month. They are on the verge, mentally.

João

João was a volunteer who in his spare-time would help out collecting and distributing while working as a website designer during the day. Later on, he and his fellow volunteers showed me some statistics to illustrate the effects of the crisis. Regarding social benefits, on its highest point, in 2010, Porto amounted to roughly one-thirds of the people receiving social benefits in the country with around 55.000. The statistics showed a development over time: from around 7000 people in 2004, to 27.000 in 2005, rising steadily to then jump from 50.000 to 86.000 in 2006, reaching its peak in 2010 with 132.000, with the national total being 407.000. In 2013 it dropped again to 72.000 and 255.000 in Porto and Portugal respectively. Between 2004 and 2013, on average 81.000 people received an average 88 euros in benefits every month. These statistics gave me a picture of what the reality of the crisis was; a loss of prosperity and a retreat of the welfare state; for some meaning real poverty.

Interestingly, the crisis is not just 'material' or economic hardship but also the subsequent mental hardship as people 'lost hope', simply not believing in a brighter future. The austerity measures implemented in 2011 are said to have led to an increase in "the risk of poverty" as seen in many countries that implemented similar measures (Glatzer, 2012: 23). Mario Quaranta notes that: "The recent crisis was 'unexpected' " and that it "hit European economies suddenly and violently after a period of security" (2015: 2). As one of the effects of the crisis was that this sense of security was diminished, this made me wonder what the impact of the crisis had been on the *mentality* of people, and whether this was rooting, in any way, *culturally*, determining the way the people in Porto were reacting to the crisis? As Castells et al note in the introduction of their book on the aftermath of the economic crisis, the cultural effect of the crisis might be the way "the culture of *fear* rises alongside the embryos of alternative cultures of *hope*." (2012: 4). In this way they emphasise the duality of the crisis as a period of change, which to them, can result in both positive and negative changes in society. In order to look whether it posed one or the other, I have to elaborate more on the impact of the crisis on the mentality and individual lives of people.

2.1.3 *Losing dreams*

One day, during lunch, I had a conversation with Nuno, a student in his early twenties. He told me he thought that one of the effects of the crisis was that for many people it was a “reality check”: they were forced to come to terms with reality in the sense that the life-style they adopted over time was no longer sustainable. Another informant agreed, saying it was this *dream* of being middle class and living accordingly, that people had to give up, or lowering their expectations in standards of living:

Many people thought to be middle-class, but now since the crisis, they realized that they are not, or not any more.

David

Fábio voiced a similar opinion:

Now we have a lot of people with a university degree, more than there are jobs [available]. They had the wrong expectations with work. Now many young people go abroad.

Fábio

In many ways, the crisis had caused a need to change the lifestyle so many people had adopted over the last decades. Especially after Portugal joined the European Union in 1986, prosperity increased through the resulting economic growth (which I shall discuss in chapter 3). To Nuno, this reality check was not necessarily a bad thing as the Portuguese had been living at a level of prosperity that was economically unsustainable, and hence had to adapt after this was made clear by the crisis.

2.1.5 *Adapting to the crisis*

Many people, therefore had to adapt their life visions and plans. Speaking to some younger people gave me a sense of their perception of the crisis. One example was José. While having lunch with him and some of his friends, he told me he had his own business and was doing reasonably well. Like many of his friends, he had worked abroad. Others at the table had as well, or were planning to, and they all had many friends and family members who had the same inclination. Sofia, a woman in her late twenties, worked in a tattoo shop after working abroad for several years:

I worked for more than two years in London [England], in the retail industry. But then I came back, because I missed the sun. (Having returned recently, she now lived with her parents,

trying to make ends meet). It is difficult to find work, and if you have it, you can still not pay for your own house. That is why many young people go abroad

Sofia

Vitor was worried about this trend of young people moving away:

In 4 years, 485.000 people migrated, did you know that? It's another crisis [in itself]. It is the *individual solution* to the crisis. Now the problem is: where are all the young educated people?

Vitor

One informant, Silvia, who worked at the University and who was a high-educated woman in her early thirties, mentioned the so-called '*embarrassed poverty*', referring to those who thought themselves to be middle-class, only to find themselves now dependent on welfare. She told me she remembered seeing people with iPhones standing in line at the food bank; a strange, paradoxical image, yet showing the sudden change in prosperity within Portuguese society. On an individual level, people have to adapt and find ways to make ends meet; whether this means living with ones parents, working abroad, making use of the impaired facilities of the welfare state and in the worst case; standing in line at the food bank. Having sketched the initial impact of the crisis and what it meant for the economic situation and mental well-being of people, I will now continue by looking at the way the crisis is surrounded by certain *narratives*.

2.2 Narratives surrounding the crisis

2.2.1 Blame and responsibility

Regarding the first conversation I had with Maria, as described in the beginning of this chapter, shortly after wards, I came across a small article in the newspaper on the (former) president apologising for blaming the Portuguese people for not working hard enough, which Maria had told me about. This dynamic of responsibility and blame started to interest me; what did it say about the civil society in Porto and Portugal? Also, who do people blame for the crisis and who should offer the solution to it? Where do people see themselves amidst all of this as political actors who have a say in change of any kind? Rita, a young woman who was actively involved in a activist group, provided me with some insight on these questions:

[What] we have here in Portugal, [is], you know, Fado (which translates as fate), which is about individual blame. It is used in political discourse like: of course we are in crisis but it's yourself

to blame. If you want to get [a] better [situation] it's your responsibility.

Rita

The term *Fado* is well known as the national music genre of Portugal, but according to multiple informants, it is something inherent to Portuguese culture; a mentality of fatalism. If people themselves are blamed for the crisis, instead of the government or other institutions, whose responsibility is it to find a solution? In comparison to other countries, in Portugal, during the crisis, there have not been a lot of demonstrations, with the exception of the demonstrations in June 2011. I will discuss this more thoroughly in the fourth chapter. Nevertheless, the distrust in politics and the government was certainly there.

This increasing distrust in politics is a general trend among many countries in Europe, and it came as no surprise to me that Maria and others expressed similar feelings. Very few governments handle the crisis in a – to the public – pleasing manner and it is generally regarded as a time of austerity and loss of prosperity by the tightening of the belt on public spending (Glatzer, 2012: 23; Quaranta, 2015). In a comparative study showing the level of distrust in political institutions in European countries in 2012, Portugal comes out among the highest, showing very high distrust in the parliament (70% of the people), the political parties (80%) and politicians (80%), all, except for the latter, having risen since 2008 (Torcal, 2014: 7). This increase in distrust can be attributed to the crisis – as other countries hit hard by the crisis such as Spain and Greece have also shown an increase – although the authors note that “the current economic crisis is not fully responsible for the decline in institutional trust” (2014: 20). With this conclusion, they diminish the impact of the crisis in that regard, saying it does not really constitute a notable change from before.

What then, explains the low level of demonstrations while the distrust in politics is high and the country is in an economic crisis? Exploring this question I started to distinguish certain narratives, which might explain this cultural side of the crisis, which I argue, is characterised by *passivity*.

2.2.2 *Passivity and fatalism*

During my fieldwork I started to wonder about how people regarded the lack of demonstrations, or political engagement in general, and if they agreed on this point. Asking this question to several people brought me to the notion of *passivity*, namely: a sense of not really reacting towards the crisis in the political domain. This passivity, according to many of my informants, is something *inherent* to Portuguese culture:

[The] Portuguese are like dreamers, you know. They accept and live with the situation and dream of becoming rich through winning the lottery or something. The old don't really have the strength [and] the young, they go to other countries to work. [For example] many nurses go to England.

José

[The Portuguese] people don't believe in politics. They don't vote, but they also don't want political change. People don't care and this is something I really don't understand. Many people grow up like this, not learning to raise their voices. I think education is important [in that regard].

Fábio

Generally amongst my informants a certain pessimism could be derived, which stems from years of crisis and austerity measures but is perhaps also rooted *culturally*, visible through these narratives. This passivity and pessimism were showing in the way people told me about the crisis. They were shrugging their shoulders when giving their opinion about the situation the country has been in over the last couple of years, not believing for any positive changes to arrive soon. Moreover, it seemed people simply got *used* to the crisis. The crisis, in that sense, became the normal situation – it became *normalised*. Arguably, this is a way of adapting mentally; lowering expectations of politics, prosperity, standard of living and having a say in their own future. Some of my informants were of the opinion that the Portuguese simply accepted their fate, showing the sense of fatalism I mentioned earlier.

It was not hard to imagine that the crisis over the years had been exhausting for people mentally, to the point that they no longer seemed to care. But to what extent were these narratives actually creating the crisis as an event and a period? This mentality of passivity and pessimism perhaps comes from Portugal's historical trajectory, which was something I discussed with Rita:

Me: There seems to not be a lot of activism, is that true?

Rita: I think it's true, but it's not just in Porto, it's in [the whole of] Portugal, when you compare it to other countries. I think people from sociology can explain this much better. But I think this has some connection with the history of the country, the history of the movements and [the fact that] we came out of a dictator period 40 years ago more or less. And it was a very particular period, a very long dictator period with very specific characteristics.

Rita & me

2.3 Can the crisis be regarded as a disaster?

As I started out with the question to which extent the crisis can be seen as a disaster, I noticed that my informants found it difficult to really *define* the crisis when being asked to; whether it was its starting point, duration or other specifics. It makes it difficult to see the crisis as a disaster as it has developed over time and has been going on for several years, with the end not clearly distinguishable. However, it *does* show certain elements of a disaster, namely; sudden economic and social problems which *uncovered* the vulnerability of both the state and individuals within society. Natural disasters are characterised by drawing reactions and forcing adaptations to cope with the problems at hand. Although people are adapting economically and mentally, the crisis in Porto, and Portugal in general, however, is also characterised by a certain passivity and a fatalist mentality. Adaptation by getting used to the crisis, rendering it as the normal state of things – by changing one's expectations and dreams – can also be seen as a *maladaptation* (as opposed to adaptation) to the disaster on the long term, which I will discuss in chapter 4.

What I have tried to show in this chapter is the way the crisis has become culturally embedded, through these narratives, transforming it, in a way, from a disaster towards a *normalised* state of things. But to further explore whether the crisis is to be seen as a period of change, perhaps even a new episode, we should also look at whatever it posed a change from – in other words; the past.

Interlude 2



I went to the large shopping mall near my house; a very modern, multiple-story building filled with stores of well-known and expensive companies of electronics, fashion and life-style products, as well as a cinema. This area looked a contrast to what else I had seen of the city with its many broken, old buildings. The people present were not really shopping, but mostly drinking a coffee or sitting around on the benches as it was no weather to stay outside that day. Similar to the many empty and unused highways Portugal is known for, it made me wonder how rapid the modernisation of the country must have been. This shopping mall seemed to me a paradoxical symbol of modern capitalism, promoting a lifestyle of full-out consumerism, in a country hit hard by an economic crisis. It is a stark contrast of a life-style promised, and a reality changed – or perhaps never reached⁶.

⁶ Vignet based on fieldnotes

Chapter 3. The crisis in perspective of history

3.1 The crisis as a period

To further elaborate on whether the crisis can be viewed as a distinct period in time, I will relate the crisis to some particular historic events in the same way as my informants did in making sense of the crisis. Doing so I will combine their narratives with other sources as well as literature in trying to explain and clarify the way the crisis is culturally and historically embedded. Daniel Knight notes the relation between past occurrences and the present crisis is often visible in narratives:

Social and economic anxiety is rationalised by the proximity of past crises and primarily expressed through narrative, combining past and present in polytemporal embrace and assisting the negotiation of crisis experience. (2012: 2)

In other words, according to him, the way the crisis is experienced is very much the result of the local context with its particular characteristics. Indeed, I will argue that this experience in return might shape the very outcome of the crisis in the context of Porto, through the narratives of passivity and fatalism as they are historically rooted. In chapter 2, I have looked at whether the crisis is to be regarded as a disaster, which it is to some extent. However, it was also difficult to define by my informants as a period with a clear beginning or end. João Caraça notes that: “The 2008 crisis has had a cultural dimension of intensifying and accelerating nothing less than the emergence of a *new historical consciousness*” (in Castells et al. 2012: 30). Is such a consciousness visible in the context of Porto? As he argues that history is “ultimately an exercise in pattern-making”, where does the crisis as a period in history fit in? And does it really constitute a different period, phase or transition?

3.1.1 *The beginning of the crisis*

In chapter 2, I mentioned the austerity measures as perhaps being the beginning of the crisis for many people. In favour of this argument – in 2011, after the announcement of big austerity measures by the government – there were big demonstrations in many major cities in Portugal by what was called, “a Geração à Rasca” or “the Desperate Generation” (Baumgarten, 2013: 1). I discussed these events with two informants involved in political activism and gained some useful insights on the initial period of the crisis:

Yes, the big demonstrations. I think it was around 2011 or 2012. It was interesting because we actually had people on the streets. One of them was compared to the big protests after the 25th of April, of 74'. 10 percent of the Portuguese [population] were on the street, in Porto, Lisboa, Faro [etcetera].

Rita

I asked them if they considered the demonstrations a success, and they responded:

Rita: It perhaps succeeded with one government, [that] of [former prime minister] Socrates, but it didn't succeed with [the] Troika.

Carlos: That's a big question. I think it didn't have a lot of consequences for the country. The demonstrations couldn't be sustained because of the lack of political organisation. Also, after this started a period of huge emigration among which were many people who attended these demonstrations.

Rita: Also, people started to have their lives completely cut down you know; it was like, no jobs, or jobs with very precarious conditions. They started to see their lives go [out the window].

Rita and Carlos

Contradicting the narratives of passivity and fatalism (as mentioned in chapter 2), *there* in 2011, people felt the urge to go on the street, something that last happened during the Carnation Revolution in 1974 (which will be discussed in chapter 4). Although my informants were divided in their opinions on whether it was a success, the government of then prime minister Socrates, failed to pass the proposed austerity measures resulting in new elections. It was a success, however, in the sense that it was said that people “had found their voice again”⁷. The demonstrations – of which the participation is estimated to have been between 200.000 and 500.000 protestors – arose spontaneously after four people posted a manifesto on Facebook (Baumgarten, 2013: 5). In this manifesto, the inclination was as following:

We, the unemployed, 'five hundred Euros people', others who are being underpaid for their work, slaves in disguise, working without contracts, with short term contracts, working students [...]. We that up until now have lived like this are here today to give our contribution to unleash a *qualitative change* in our country.

Cardoso and Jacobetty *in* Castells et al. 2012: 193

⁷ Bruno Simões. Um ano depois, a geração à rasca deu lugar ao Portugal à rasca. *Jornal de Negócios*. 12-03-2012.

Here a strong argument for viewing the crisis as a disaster at *that* moment in time can be recognised, as people reacted towards a sudden event, calling for a need of change. Interestingly, despite its success – but in line with the narratives of passivity and fatalism – the demonstrations were never repeated. The reason this event did not reproduce itself can be found in the way people eventually got used to the situation of the crisis as it became normalised (see chapter 2), as well as the nature of civil society and organised activism as I will show in chapter 4. A further argument for seeing the crisis as a distinct period is the way people compare it to the past.

3.1.2 *Putting the crisis into perspective of history*

Many of my informants would compare and relate the current situation to other periods in history, thereby putting the crisis in perspective:

We [Portuguese] were always poor, like 40 years ago. Now, even with the crisis it's still a lot better than before. But people always want to compare [the level of prosperity] to [that of] the wealthy countries.

Vitor

This relativist point of view was something I encountered throughout my fieldwork. Another informant agreed, sharing the same narrative:

The Portuguese people continue to live well, more or less. I used to say I didn't feel the crisis. But now I know many families who lived well [before], had salary cuts and had to adapt [to the current situation].

Filipe

Similar to adapting one's expectations and life-style (as noted in chapter 2), putting the crisis into perspective by comparing it to a history of poverty, serves as a way of normalising the crisis. Indeed, although recognizing the hardship of the crisis – either for themselves, people in their environment or the country in general – the history of poverty was often referred to:

Portugal was always very poor. Where I grew up, near the sea, I remember seeing the poor people walking on *one* shoe, as it was forbidden to walk without shoes. Also, they made soup out of bone marrow, because they didn't have any other food.

Maria

By putting the crisis into perspective of history, people were in a way dealing mentally with the crisis, and it thus serves as a *coping* mechanism.

3.1.3 Historical transitions of Portuguese society

Having assessed the crisis to be a disaster to some degree, there is always a process which leads up to it. In that sense – and to get a clue on whether the crisis should be regarded as another transition – we have to look at the historical transitions that occurred in Portuguese society over the last four decades.

The one that stands out is the end of the dictatorship period which started in 1926 after a period of economic hardship and lasted until 1974. It ended after years of colonial war and the death of long-time dictator Salazar causing the legitimacy of the regime to decline. The war had resulted in financial problems and a coup d'état was initiated by the army. Subsequent events came to be known as the Carnation Revolution and it was followed by the transition towards democracy and the creation of a new constitution in 1976. One of my informants remembered vividly:

It was a very positive time. I had to flee from Portugal to escape being drafted for the war, and I could finally return from [the country I fled to]. Everybody was on the street, and they put carnation flowers in the barrels of the soldiers. There was no bloodshed, it was very peaceful.

Pedro

Interestingly, this event is remembered in different ways by my informants as well as other sources. In literature, the Revolution is said to have been a failure in the sense that it led to an unstable revolutionary period (Royo, 2003: 5). However, it is still celebrated every year on the 25th of April as Freedom Day. Amongst my informants the opinions were divided between regarding it as a success or a failure:

At the time, people were just happy with the little improvement of freedom, because before there was repression.

Nuno

The revolution was started by the army, not by the people. It is not real. It was the beginning of social measures by the communists in the 1980's, which still cause problems now.

Fábio

Why is it relevant to discuss the dictatorship and the Revolution of 1974? Discussing this period is

of importance because of several reasons. First of all, it amounts to a large part of Portuguese modern history, having lasted for roughly five decades (from 1926 until 1974). Secondly, the change from authoritarian rule towards democracy in the 1970s posed an important transition in society. Thirdly, the transition towards democracy – despite being similar to that of Spain in many aspects – resulted in different situations between the two countries afterwards (Avezedo, 2008). Comparing both countries can give us insight in Portuguese society – as opposed to the Spanish society – in terms of civil society and political activism both found to be different throughout the crisis. One of my informants noted:

The period of the revolution is only now starting to be discussed and there is not yet a consensus on this period; whether it was good or bad, and what actually happened.

Silvia

Following the Revolution there was a period of transition named “Processo Revolucionário Em Curso” or the 'Ongoing Revolutionary Process' which was a turbulent time for Portugal (Quaranta, 2015). During such a period, which can be seen as the aftermath of the Revolution, society afterwards has to be negotiated. Andreas Wimmer proposes the concept of the *cultural compromise*, to look at the way culture changes are being negotiated within society (2002: 28). To him this is negotiating process takes place within the “arena of social relations and communication” in which “elements that all actors involved can recognise as congruent to their respective long-term interests” are forged. Certain moments in history, such as the Revolution can therefore be regarded as *windows of opportunity*, the question remaining whether the current crisis, or its aftermath, can be seen in a similar fashion. One of my informants, Pedro, told me that some people were saying: “We need another Revolution”, voicing a nostalgia towards this time of change in Portuguese history. As the Revolution is still remembered every year on the twenty-fourth of April – which is a national holiday – how does it relate to the way people react to the crisis?

I came across the documentary “A Metáfora ou a tristeza Virada do Averso” (which translates as “Metaphor or Sadness inside out”) by Catarina Vasconcelos which provided more insight on the meaning of the Revolution, and also the way this meaning is still contested:

“Was that what you won on the 25th of April? To drink Coca-Cola?” the narrator says. The documentary is a personal account, relating it to Portugal's particular history. The author states the documentary is about “the present, which is a sort of struggle between the past and the future. It's about not letting die something that is important to us”. As the film continues it makes remarks about the history of the dictatorship and the subsequent revolution: “We are from a country that for over half a century was half a country, and to say things, people could

use only half of the words”. In a personal message a young man calls out to his mother, the generation of the revolution: “Mum, the world has changed [...] I don't know where you took the revolution to [...] I didn't know how to start remembering.

Metaphor or Sadness inside out, 2013

The documentary shows that the period of the dictatorship is still relevant today, and questions the meaning of the Revolution and what it has really brought Portuguese society. How *should* it be remembered? Has it really been the transition it is often said to have been – one of democratisation, modernisation and increased prosperity? Are these values and what was gained still present during the present-day crisis?

3.1.4. *European integration, democratisation and modernisation*

Another important transition in Portuguese history is the country joining the European Union in 1986. The transition towards democracy is directly linked to the aspired membership of European Union, which both Portugal and Spain saw as a crucial in achieving and maintaining a democratic regime. (Royo, 2003: 5). Europeanisation and democratisation, in that sense, were considered to be complementary processes. Indeed, some authors state that the quest for membership itself played a vital role in the fall of both authoritarian regimes, although both having a different instigator and having followed a different course. In the Portuguese case it is said to have been *social* revolution, while in Spain it was *political* reform (Fernandes, 2013: 3). Interestingly, Tiago Fernandes, concludes that in this way “The Portuguese civil society organisations became much more robust and came to play a much more important role in politics than their Spanish counterparts (2013: 3). His assessment would contradict the narrative of passivity I so often encountered among my informants, and also the assessment of a weak Portuguese civil society as shown in the present-day crisis. I will elaborate on this point in the fourth chapter.

To return to the influence of the European Union on Portuguese society after its incorporation, the economy went booming, leading to a rapid increase in prosperity (Bretto, 2002: 3). Historically being a country of emigration – with exception of the half a million people arriving after the Revolution⁸ – this slowly changed towards becoming a country of immigration in the 1990s. The economic effects of the current crisis can be seen something resulting from history, as Carneiro et al. explains:

For decades, the Portuguese labour market operated in a fragile equilibrium characterized by a very large portion of low qualified, low-wage, low-productivity jobs. Many of those jobs [...]

⁸ The so-called “Retornados”, which left the former Portuguese colonies after they gained independence.

were destroyed with the event of the financial crisis and the adjustment program under way. The workers displaced from those jobs face near insurmountable prospects to find a suitable job.

Carneiro et al. 2013: 455

The period of European integration and modernisation as being a period of solely positive change is therefore questioned by some of my informants:

Have you seen the useless highways? They are all empty. With the European Union a lot of money came in, but it is spent in useless way.

Fábio

The crisis in that sense has made visible the negative sides of these modernisation processes, uncovering them as unsustainable.

3.2 How does the crisis relate to history?

The crisis is constructed and maintained through the use of narratives, which are historically and culturally shaped. In that sense, they form a continuation of the past. Similar to Knight's observation of the Greek having a collective 'history of traumatic past', the Portuguese also show signs of a similar historical narrative ingrained in the collective memory (Knight, 2012: 6). These are, for example, narratives of acceptance of economically difficult times. In the fourth chapter I will try to show the way the crisis is a continuation of processes now made visible and accelerated by the crisis. I will also show the way these processes change the context of Porto and how contestation of these changes is visible, nonetheless.

Interlude 3



The oldest part of the city is called Ribeira, which translates into “riverside” as it is the area located near the river. It is an area with large tall buildings and between them small streets and alleys. Walking around, one notices the many empty and deserted houses and the strange mixture of tourists finding their way and the original inhabitants of which many are old and part of the poorer segments of society. As they look on from their porches and balconies, they can see the tourists passing by, posing a stark contrast in level of prosperity. The riverside has turned into a promenade and is often crowded with tourists. There, the buildings are well-maintained and show bright colours and the prices in the cafes and restaurants are a lot higher, discouraging the local Portuguese to attend these places⁹.

⁹ Vignet based on fieldnotes

Chapter 4. The crisis and its aftermath

In the previous two chapters I have shown that the crisis could be seen as a disaster, but also as a *continuation* of history through cultural narratives as well as Portugal's historical trajectory. Both can be said to have created the vulnerability to the disaster that is the crisis. This chapter serves to show how Porto is changing and that this is not uncontested. I have chosen to highlight the development of tourism as this was often mentioned by my informants as the economic turnaround of Porto, although it was also recognised as being two-sided. To the extent that we can see the aftermath of the crisis taking shape in Porto it is also a continuation of other processes. Trying to make sense of this tension between sudden change and continuity, I will show that through tourism Porto is changing but that it can be viewed as both positive and negative.

4.1 How Porto is changing

4.1.1 *Tourism and gentrification policies*

In 2001 Porto became the cultural capital of Europe, a prestigious title a city carries for one year, often involving an increase in tourism and the cultural sector¹⁰. In Porto, this meant the gentrification of parts of the city such as Ribeira – as described in Interlude 3 – which used to be a deserted, poor neighbourhood through the effects of migration towards peripheral areas of the city in the 1980's (Balsas, 2004: 398). As this process is still under way, over the last years Porto has become one of the 'new' attractive cities in Europe, whereas before this was more concentrated towards Lisbon. This is not coincidental, but actively pursued through strategies of the city's government itself, as explained in the short film “Porto Revival”¹¹:

The film alternates between images of the city with people walking around in the streets and an interview with the mayor of Porto, Rui Moreira. As is narrated, he is “a man on a mission, to give back the city to the people of Porto”. The mayor himself speaks: “Now, and I think because of the crisis, and also because of other changes in society, people are going back to the public space. [...] People want to go out, to listen to each other, to enjoy [themselves]”. About the gentrification of the past years he states that: “Cities have to be able to turn themselves upside down, in the real sense of the word, and give that to citizens”. He continues: “The city was a sort of monumental ghost town” referring to the period before Porto was the capital of culture; before the tourism and rejuvenation of the city centre. “What we thought was: how can we keep

¹⁰ As explained on the official website of European Capitals of Culture

¹¹ Serventi, Cesare. 2015. *Porto Revival*

the remaining population in place” he says, then explaining the plan to reconstruct the buildings, many of them owned by the city, and rent them for low prices back to the original inhabitants.

Porto Revival film

Whether these plans and promises of the mayor are to be implemented and with the presumed effect remains to be seen as it is a process still very much going on. Back in 2004, Carlos Balsas elaborated on the nature and effects of the European Capital of Culture title on Porto and other cities and states that:

[...] The European Capital of Culture in Porto belongs to the category of 'urban propaganda projects' mainly designed to channel public investments and market the city to the outside world.

Balsas, 2004: 397

Although this is accompanied with the hope of having a positive effect on the local economy and face of the city itself, Balsas notes that:

The unintended consequences of swift planning processes without due public participation can undermine the expected effects and skew *civic* agendas.

Balsas, 2004: 397

Although being published in 2004, gentrification, reconstruction and emphasis on tourism are processes which have accelerated over the last couple of years. As the face and reputation of the city is changing, my informants were divided in their opinion on whether the policy of re-construction and gentrification were beneficial to *all* the inhabitants, especially the poorer segments of society. film I described. The inhabitants of the old city centre – who carry an image of being poor and the area as being unsafe – are the remainders of a history of spatial segregation dating back to the dictatorship period. Instead of investing in this structural social issue, the government focusses on stimulating tourism. An informant knowledgeable on this topic explained:

What you see now is public money being used for private projects; for the reconstruction of buildings to house hotels, private schools or touristic purposes.

David

In that sense, the assessment Balsas made in 2004 might rings true to a certain extent concerning the

current social situation in Porto.

4.1.2 Tourism as economic adaptation

Although tourism is said to be giving “new life to the city”¹², opinions were divided amongst my informants concerning the costs and the benefits of gentrification – which is very much tied to that of the tourism industry. Although through the influence of gentrification and tourism Porto is changing quickly, this change has not been uncontested. Some claim the benefits of gentrification are for everybody, providing “secure, clean streets and reconstructed buildings”¹³. Elaborating on the dimension of gentrification and tourism is important because it could be seen as a counterweight to the crisis, providing an economic solution. This relation was clarified by one of my informant, Bruno, who was a member of a group that comes up with ideas to improve the city, in the following conversation:

Bruno: We were lucky because, when the crisis started in 2008 or 2009, also the tourism arrived. [In that sense] it helped to diminish the effects of the crisis. Tourism brings investments and opportunities for people.

Me: “But do you think those opportunities are the same for everyone?”

Bruno: “Maybe more for the young people. They are more energetic and maybe more positive. Also, they can adapt and multi-task”.

Me: “But still many young people go abroad?”

Bruno: “Yes, this is a problem. But I have the feeling that with tourism we can retain some of these young people”.

Bruno and me

Tourism has become an important economic dimension in Porto. However, some of my informants expressed their worries about the growth of tourism in their city:

What if the tourism stops? Now it's booming, but how long will that last? Will it continue?

Fábio

Another informant voiced similar concerns and even saw similarities between the kind of development tourism was becoming and the situation in the country as a whole:

¹²Source: www.noticiasmagazine.pt/2016/um-pais-para-turista-ver/

¹³ Source: O Público, 26 April 2016 “O que beneficia os turistas beneficia os residentes” Ana Rute Silva. <https://www.publico.pt/economia/noticia/o-que-beneficia-os-turistas-beneficia-os-residentes-1730104>

Now we have a touristic bubble, like we had other bubbles. It's always a cycle. Will tourism lead to a sustainable economy? I don't know

Vitor

Due to tourism itself, especially the city centre was changing rapidly and in that sense was a topical issue for many of my informants. One of them, Miguel, who was connected to a non-political organisation concerned with changes in the city, wrote an article voicing his opinion on the matter:

“Porto [...] now lives in unbalanced times. The city was never like it is now [and] the *Portuenses* (the inhabitants of Porto) are proud of this recognition”. He concludes that simply: “Porto is in fashion”. This has resulted in a certain pride and euphoria, especially among the young people. But, according to him, tourism can also bring problems: the city center is in danger of becoming “one giant hotel”. He observes that: “there is a population disappearing as the city they grew up in is becoming too small”. This being a tragedy in itself, it is also bad for tourism: “The tourists are also interested in the inhabitants and how they live [and] Porto is in danger of losing this”. Concerning the future and what path Porto should take he asks the question: “Do we want to have a city which is typical, with a strong identity, or a city essentially touristic, without inhabitants in the historical centre; a city like so many others?”.

Article written by Miguel¹⁴

Miguel was concerned with the way the city is changing, although still being quite optimistic about the increase of tourism in general. Another informant was more pessimistic about the changes occurring in Porto:

Porto is changing in a bad way. The city is rebuild for tourism. [The effects are] problems with job rights and people [who] have to move because the rents go up. The money doesn't go to the people. The investors are not very conscios. It will be a bubble; it's impossible to last.

Rita

The growth of tourism and gentrification can be seen as a combination between global processes and local government policies. Through gentrification, under the pretension of doing general good for the city, Porto opened up for investors, and over the last couple of years, as many of my informants told me: buildings were bought, reconstructed and used for tourism. As local people – amongst which some of my informants – were taking part in this and benefited by using Airbnb¹⁵ to

¹⁴ In order to keep the identity of my informant anonymous, I will not put a reference here.

¹⁵ An online marketplace that enables people to list, find, then rentvacation homes for a processing fee.

make a little money on the side themselves, the increase of tourism cannot be said to be a bad development per se. Why, then, is it relevant to discuss tourism in relation to the crisis? In a way it shows how the aftermath of the crisis is manifesting itself and taking shape in the context of Porto.

4.2 Negotiating the aftermath

To distinguish the crisis itself from its aftermath is not easily done. Rosalind Williams (*in* Castells et al. 2012: 23) describes the effects of the economic crisis in the United States in the context of a university campus. As she was looking for the *cultural* aftermath of the economic crisis – which in that context took the shape of austerity measures – she came to find that the changes which had occurred were not necessarily due to the crisis, but instead it “may be a revelation of cultural processes already under way that have been reinforced”. Indeed, she dubs the crisis in America a “human disaster” which has as “its most salient features” the tendency to “accelerate deep economic shifts that are already under way” (*in* Castells et al. 2012: 23). Similarities are visible between this case-study and the context of Porto. As it is a city in economic crisis but changing due to tourism and other processes, it can perhaps be assessed in a similar way. In many ways, the crisis has made several processes visible, but to what extent does the aftermath of a crisis really provide opportunities for change in society? I have introduced the concept of the *cultural compromise* in chapter 2, as a way to look at the negotiation of cultural change within society (Wimmer, 2002: 28). To Wimmer, this negotiating process takes place within the “arena of social relations and communication” in which “elements that all actors involved can recognize as congruent to their respective long-term interests” are forged. If the crisis can be considered a period of cultural change, this process should be under way and visible. As noted before, however, the level of activism, through which demands for negotiation could be expressed, is low. Gentrification and development of tourism mask the social-economic problems which are itself perhaps only magnified by the crisis, but the 'vulnerability' of these people, is something created historically (as seen in chapter 3). Another way it relates to the crisis is that tourism boom is set to become a new crisis, as it is currently constructing a new vulnerability, namely, the economic dependence on tourism.

4.2.1 Narratives in relation to change and contestation

No change occurs without contestation. However, this contestation in Porto seems to be weak. To what extent do the narratives of passivity and fatalism (as introduced in chapter 2) possibly influence this? Michael Gilson states that narratives are central to the negotiation of the

realities of power and authority (*in* Knight, 2012: 2). However, Daniel Knight notes that “new strategies of adaptation are often derived from previous experience” and that in that sense “history informs cultural repertoire” (2012: 4). Could it be the case that Portugal's history of dictatorship, poverty and late democratisation (as described in chapter 3) influence the reality of the crisis, and the way the aftermath takes shape today?

I gained more insight in Portuguese *civil society* and its relation to the crisis through a newspaper article containing an interview with sociology professor Elisio Estanque:

A society that does not shout at its frustrations has many problems” is the title of the article. Estanque states that “the street is not the enemy of this government” which is perhaps surprising, as the last 5-6 years have been of “economic difficulties of all kinds , with a growth in poverty, unemployment rising as well as migration”. He continues by stating that: “The Portuguese are in waiting, tired and exhausted by punitive measures”. Asked whether this passivity is due to the crisis or more inherent to Portuguese culture he answers: “It is *both*. The cultural traits and heritage, our historical tradition of Catholicism but also the experiences of the [political] regimes throughout the twentieth century [...] and the fact that we are a society of a very late modernisation. [All this] has caused for very particular and specific aspects in Portuguese society¹⁶.

The way Porto is changing can therefore be seen as the outcome of the power-relations between different groups and actors in society. Although the crisis could provide a window of opportunity, not everyone benefits evenly from these opportunities. For example, tourism is being presented as the economical solution the crisis, while it only is an opportunity for a certain groups, leaving many 'in' the crisis. As said before in chapter 2, young people can go abroad to work, invest in tourism, or change jobs more easily as they are higher educated. In this sense, the development of tourism can be seen as a legitimisation of certain policies while at the same time ignoring the many social problems the crisis still poses. Returning to the narratives of passivism and the weak civil society, like shaping the crisis, both allow the aftermath in Porto to take this shape. One of my informants noted pessimistically:

The problem is that people don't recognise social problems as political problems.

Rita

¹⁶ An interview with Elisio Estanque by Liliana Valente. *Público*, 1st of May 2016. “Uma sociedade que não grita as suas frustrações tem muitos problemas”

4.2.2 Political activism

As described in both chapters 2 and 3, there seems to be a certain passivity in Portugal, which is also visible in its weak civil society, characterised by increasingly smaller unions and the low amount of demonstrations historically (Baumgarten, 2013: 4). These cultural and historical characteristics of Portuguese society influence the way not only the crisis is shaped but also its aftermath. I have briefly mentioned the big demonstrations in March 2011, on which I will now elaborate further to see the relation between political activism and the crisis. In the Dutch program *Tegenlicht*¹⁷ the question is being asked: after the many demonstrations that happened worldwide - mainly in response to the crisis – *what happens the next day?* Although people might be calling for revolution, do these events really lead to any significant *change*?

Portugal had a revolution in 1974 as discussed in chapter 3. In response to the austerity measures, on March the 12 of 2011, the biggest demonstration since this Carnation Revolution took place (Baumgarten, 2013: 1). According to Britta Baumgarten, this demonstration and several follow-ups should be regarded as “part of a bigger picture of worldwide mobilisations against austerity measures and for participatory and deliberative democracy” (2013: 1). In other words, in regarding the crisis as it amounts to a *global* phenomenon, these demonstrations occurred all over the world. Furthermore she notes that this was also a notable event as it played a role in the 'internationalisation' of Portuguese activists; which “[was] a way to become stronger and more visible” (2013: 14). This being said, she notes that: “their activities are predominantly oriented towards a national framework” (2013: 2). Instead of being a large cultural transformation regarding civil society – which remained weak – the event of March the 12th, 2011, rather signalled an organisational change of Portuguese activism. As Bauman and Bordoni mention that: “a crisis, in its proper sense, expresses something positive, creative and optimistic, because it involves a change, and may be a rebirth after a break-up (2014: 3). It indicates separation, certainly, but also choice, decisions and therefore the *opportunity* to express an opinion”; to what extent has this been visible in Porto and Portugal during the crisis?

Curious about the way the crisis and the changes in the city were being contested currently, I made contact with an activist group. I attended an event in which they took part which was called the “*Marcha contra precariedade*” or the “*March against insecurity*”:

On the 1st of May is International Labour day, and I was invited to join an event organised by an activist group of whom I had interviewed two people a couple of weeks before. Arriving on the small square in the centre at the agreed time, nobody had yet arrived. As the sun was very hot

¹⁷ Tegenlicht. De Man door Europa. 6th of March. 2016. VPRO

that day I went in search of some shade to wait in. Slowly a small group gathered and I eventually recognised some people I had met before. The event was a collaboration between different groups. They started putting up banners with different slogans ranging from comments on labor to general ones such as “This has to change”. There was a rainbow flag, representing gender diversity. The one that stood out was: *Marcha contra precariedade*, or the “March against insecurity”. “It's always the same people” a young woman told me, expressing a feeling of scepticism. “It's always the same groups of activists and they go to each other's events; the communists, the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) [...]. They are all high educated people, and they form a little bit of closed groups. What they should do is talk to normal people”.

They were not merely protesting against the effects of the crisis itself, but also against more general policies and developments visible within the context of Porto, and Portugal nationally, which have resulted in this feeling of *insecurity*. As it was aptly called the “March against insecurity” it perhaps best summarises the mental hardship that – as the crisis arguably enters its aftermath – keeps being sustained.

4.3 The crisis continues

A sense of insecurity is what could be said to be a general feeling concerning the changes going on in Porto. Although for some, the tourism is reason to be optimistic, others foresee problems in the near future. In what is arguably the aftermath of the crisis, it is visible how Porto has adapted (or perhaps merely changed) economically through tourism, although social-economic effects of the crisis persist (as seen in chapter 2). In a sense, the crisis serves as a legitimisation for certain policies to be adopted while it is hiding or ignoring certain societal problems. As the crisis makes many of these processes visible, it is also a time suitable for change. As noted in the introduction, any systematic crisis is in need of change, as the system no longer seems to work. As the crisis in Porto and Portugal lingers on, it is to a certain extent a window of opportunity in which negotiation of change is possible. The development of tourism is a good example of the process of adaptation and negotiation between different groups in society. However, any real changes on the level of social–economic wellbeing do not seem to be occurring. Instead, neoliberalist economic policies are adopted in response to the crisis. This is visible in the austerity measures and policies such as the short term contract and the lowering of minimum wages to stimulate the economy. Also, there is a retreat of the welfare state and an emphasis on the individual to cope with a societal economic crisis. Such changes are always contested to some extent as different groups in society have different goals. However, as activism and civil society in Portugal can be assessed as weak, in

the context of Porto it is mainly the local government stimulating tourism and gentrification that takes the upper hand in shaping the aftermath. Whether this will benefit the different groups of society in Porto equally remains to be seen. In that sense, the crisis serves as a legitimisation for certain policies while ignoring the societal problems which are still the effects of the crisis.

Chapter 5: Can the crisis be seen as a period of cultural change?

These are people of suffering, not of joy. [...] Of pain, of drowned sorrow, of wet eyes, of thoughts of the past. Of bleary gaze, of deep-rooted fear, of lack of future, of disillusionment; of resignation.

Pedro Neves, 2012. “Agua Fria”¹⁸

5.1 Recap and conclusions from the empirical chapters

Let me recap the way this thesis was built up. I had formulated the following subsidiary questions in the first chapter:

- ³⁵/₁₇ Can the crisis be dubbed a disaster, and thus as a distinct period in time?
- ³⁵/₁₇ How does the crisis relate to other historical periods or events in the context of Porto and Portugal?
- ³⁵/₁₇ What narratives do people use in making sense of the crisis?

In order to be able to relate and differentiate between the crisis as a global economic phenomenon and the crisis as a period of societal or cultural change in a local context, this thesis is built upon the following theoretical pillars:

- ³⁵/₁₇ The analogy of a disaster or 'disaster-theory'
- ³⁵/₁₇ The constructive elements of narratives
- ³⁵/₁₇ The concepts of cultural change and the role of crises within this concept
- ³⁵/₁₇ The transition from modernity to liquid (or late) modernity

The three empirical chapters (chapters 2, 3 and 4) served to present the data needed to elaborate on these subsidiary questions. This thesis has been about whether, we can – or indeed should – view the crisis from a cultural perspective. How does one evaluate societal or cultural change at a moment in time so close to the 'event'? Defining the crisis as a period has proven to be problematic. Although there are multiple signs of the crisis still going on, it also shows signs of reaching the aftermath in the context of Porto.

In chapter 2 I have explored to what extent the crisis can be seen as a disaster. The analogy of a disaster proved useful to some extent, as it relates to cultural change. As it simplifies the crisis

¹⁸A short documentary about being Portuguese.

in several ways, it showed us that the crisis as a period is dynamic as it changed from a disaster-like event towards a more permanent static period in time. A permanent state of crisis, to borrow the words of Bauman and Bordoni, is perhaps recognisable. However, the crisis exceeds the analogy of a disaster for several reasons. First of all, it is difficult to generalise the experience of the crisis and the influence it has on people's lives. Secondly, as the crisis developed over time and it is unclear whether it really has reached the state of an aftermath. In chapter 2 I have also introduced the narratives that surround the crisis, mainly recognisable as narratives of passivity and fatalism.

In chapter 3 I have traced the origins of these narratives as they relate to events and periods in Portuguese history, as well as reconstructing the process that led up to the crisis, to a certain extent. In a way, this is similar to the way my informants put the crisis in perspective of history in their process of sense-making. The way Portuguese society has changed over the last four decades is arguably the process that led up to the crisis we see today. Its *vulnerability* – whether economically, politically or socially – can be seen as the effect of rapid modernisation, stimulated and accelerated by (joining the) the European Union. Portuguese society changed to one of consumerism, individualisation and neoliberalism – as seen in privatisation, increase of free market regulations and short-term contracts, as well as the retreat of the welfare state. In the sense that the crisis was a reality-check, some of these developments were stalled and shown to be unsustainable – visible in the life-style and expectations people had to give up.

In chapter 4 I have sketched the changes occurring in Porto, in what could be regarded as the aftermath of the crisis. Although, as seen in chapter 2, the crisis is still going on for many people, the increase in tourism is presented as being the economical solution for the city of Porto. While the government is failing in dealing with the social consequences of the crisis (as illustrated in chapter 2) it is stimulating the tourism industry through policies of gentrification of the city. In regard to the negotiation or contestation in this aftermath, narratives of passivity and fatalism are visible, as political activism seems to be small and not strongly supported within society.

5.2 “Let's see what happens”: Answering the main question

Let us return to the main question: can the crisis in the context of Porto be seen as a period of cultural change? Through narratives the crisis is partially culturally constructed as an event and period. The narratives of passivity and fatalism, as seen throughout the empirical chapters, create a negative imagery in regard to the crisis. However, some of my informants were – although mildly – becoming more positive, mainly due to the new government. My informant Vitor perhaps summed it up well by stating that:

This new coalition [that formed the government] was a surprise for everyone. Before everyone was more pessimistic. The mentality is now: let's see what happens.

Vitor

As a new government could be seen as a fresh start or new phase within the crisis. “Let's see what happens”, however, also refers to the stance of passivity so often mentioned, albeit in a more positive tone. It still shows signs of a stance of fatalism; of individuals accepting a situation instead of collective action and adaptation on a cultural level. In that sense, the crisis is still rendered as the normal state of things, normalised through certain narratives. Although it is difficult to assess these narratives as having a real impact on the crisis itself, on the level of human mentality, I believe this cultural side should be recognised. These narratives are signs of the “cultural repertoire” constructed historically, especially relating to political activism and civil society. I do believe there is some level of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' recognisable in these narratives, meaning people maintain these narratives through self-description, creating the image of the: “passive Portuguese”, “the people that take things as they come”, “the people that suffer”, and so on. On this level, cultural narratives and mentality persist and possibly add to the maintainance of the crisis as a period.

By asking the question whether the crisis in the context of Porto can be seen as a period of cultural change I have found it is both characterised by a static and stagnant set of forces as well as a dynamic set of forces. The first category include those which make the crisis linger on. Through the narratives of passivity and fatalism, which result from past experiences and periods in time, the crisis is maintained as a more-or-less accepted and normalised state of things. The second category relates to the fact that many of the processes that led to the crisis in the first place, are continuing, some even accelerated, as is visible in the increasing amount of neoliberal policies and austerity measures. These add to a sense of insecurity that makes up a large part of the experience of the crisis. In regard to negotiating or contesting any cultural change in what would be the aftermath of the crisis, the first set of the forces seems to have the upper hand. This is visible in the way the social-economic situation as effect of the crisis remains. In this sense, the crisis in the context of Porto perhaps fits the assessment of Bauman and Bordoni in what they call a “permanent state of crisis”. This permanent state of crisis is visible in the way new crises follow eachother, such as the potential touristic bubble which is seen as the economical solution to the crisis, but is prone to becoming a crisis of its own in the future.

5.3 Reflection

5.3.1 Research limitations and shortcomings

Having done 'just' three months of fieldwork, and only talking to so many people, it is difficult to sketch a complete image of the crisis in Porto. Therefore, the conclusions regarding the main question remain abstract. However, I feel that this effort has provided several starting points for future research as it looks at the many different connections the crisis has to Portuguese and Portuguese society, emphasising the cultural side and the way history plays a role in its course as well as its outcome. Also, this research does not cover the global side of the crisis and the way it developed globally on the economic level or how this relates to global cultural change. I will leave it to other researchers (and perhaps other disciplines) to explore these topics.

5.3.2 Suggestions to the anthropological field

I hope this thesis can add to existing knowledge on disasters, the economic crisis, cultural change and narratives. Also, I hope it can give some insight on doing fieldwork regarding these topics and in the context of an urban area. Regarding the crisis, I think there is still much knowledge to be gained about the division and relation between its global and its local forms. Also, the way an economic crisis develops beyond being an economic disaster, and in different contexts, is a topic worth of future research.

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